

Daniel - The Son of Man and the Saints

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Shabbat shalom, everybody. Good to be with you here today. We are still in the Homewardbound series—a series that covers the prophets, specifically the exilic prophets. These are the prophets who warned Israel before, during, or even at the tail end of the Babylonian exile, when they were taken from their land, separated from their temple, and watched it get destroyed. They felt the wrath of God poured out through exile. But there's also a time when that exile ends and it's time to go home. These are the messages the prophets had for Israel who had been sent to exile.

There are many prophecies speaking about a great king that comes and doesn't simply invite us to come home—he brings home with him. That's what we've been exploring. Last week we went over Daniel, specifically chapter 7, which is a huge milestone, as we'll see in the New Testament. In [Daniel 7](#), we saw four terrifying beasts.

The Prophetic Imagination

Because the prophets—there's something called the prophetic imagination. These men were used by God as a conduit for his message to the world. Some of them acted it out with their body. Some spoke it with their words. Some spoke it with their actions in their subversive servitude to Babylon. But every one of them was unique. We've discussed before why biblical prophecies have so much poetry in them. It's to spark the imagination of what God is actually doing.

Daniel had a vision of four terrifying beasts rising up from chaos, and then this little horn beast that comes out speaking boastfully against Yahweh. Then the throne room scene where the ancient of days takes his seat in flaming glory. And we know what the message is. We learned that no matter how powerful the beast of the world may seem, God is still on his throne. That's the core message of Daniel: Babylon will not win. Babylon will not overpower you. Babylon will fail. The King is on his throne.

A Third Scene

But Daniel's vision doesn't end with the divine judgment of all the beasts. There's a third scene that changes everything in the chapter. And it introduces us, of course, to the mysterious figure who will transform how we understand the conflict between empire—the world's evil empires that rise up—and the kingdom of God.

And so today, I want to talk about [Daniel 7](#) a little bit more, but I want to discover who receives the kingdom when the beasts are judged, and how this ancient vision finds its ultimate fulfillment in some of the most expected ways possible in the New Testament.

The Vision of the Son of Man

In [Daniel 7](#), after Daniel sees the ancient of days judge the beasts, something remarkable happens. It starts in verse 13. It says, "In my vision at night, I looked and there before me was one like the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. He approached the ancient of days and was led into his presence. He was given authority and glory and sovereign power. All nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away. And his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. The eternal kingdom."

But who is this mysterious figure here? In Hebrew, son of man simply means a human—it's a guy, it's a human being. But this isn't just any human. This represents humanity as God had always intended it.

Dominion Over the Earth

There's something very subtle in the creation account that God charges mankind to do, and that's to have dominion over the animals. You have dominion over them. You're responsible for them. You take care of them. You're the rulers and reign of all of creation. You're not supposed to become one.

This is exactly what Daniel is about: what happens when humans become beasts. We act like beasts. We show our fangs. We have our claws. We act so primitively. We respond to offense or disagreement in a way that is beastly. Remember back in the 2000s it was "beast mode," right? Pastor Ed Harris came out kicking. That's not scriptural. Loved head. We're not in beast mode. We're in human mode because we're supposed to be authentic, full humans, the way that God intended. And if you want to know what that looks like, his name is Jesus. That is what God's humanity looks like. That's the call for all of us to emulate.

Beasts Versus the Son of Man

We have this figure in [Daniel 7](#) named the son of man. The human being is rising up. After all these beasts have worn out the saints and had this destructive, violent oppression of earth, this human being pops up.

Daniel's prophetic vision reveals a gross contrast. The beasts rise up from chaos. They represent power becoming inhuman—rule through devouring and fear and spreading lies. They receive temporary dominion, but then they're ultimately judged. The son of man represents what happens when human power remains as God intended: serving rather than devouring, loving instead of hating, forgiving instead of holding that resentment.

The son of man comes after all this is done. The son of man comes from heaven's throne and represents humanity restored to Yahweh's intention. He rules through service and justice, and he receives eternal dominion and establishes an unshakable kingdom. The son of man here is, of course, representing Yeshua. I mean, we have the luxury to be able to know what's happening here. But it also represents what happens when human power remains human—serving rather than devouring and emulating the character of Yahweh rather than rebelling against it.

Two Powers in Heaven

And here's what we can't miss with this vision. I was speaking to someone before the service, and [Daniel 7](#) has caused a lot of controversy within the Jewish community even before Yeshua. You have a human that rises up from the beasts. He's riding the cloud Bentley of Yahweh. I mean, that's God's chariot, and according to Deuteronomy, he's the cloud rider. So God rides in the clouds, but God is not riding in the clouds. It's this human figure, this divine human, and then he can have access to the throne room. He has this authority, and when he comes back riding out, he reigns and rules over a kingdom that includes all nations and all tongues and all tribes, and it lasts forever.

And the issue—the controversy—is how can there be these two powers in heaven. That's where Dr. Cohen, a Jewish scholar, wrote a book called *The Two Powers of Heaven*. It's really dense, but it goes through the history of that controversy. Doesn't really resolve it. It's just a commentary about the arguments that happened for the past thousand years over it. But it's obvious to us who that's talking about.

Who Receives the Kingdom?

But here's the thing about [Daniel 7](#) that I don't want you to miss. In the latter part of it, when Daniel's explaining it, Daniel doesn't mention the son of man being the one that rules over the

kingdom. In the interpretation that Daniel has for the vision he saw, he says, "And then the kingdom is given to the saints of the most high to rule over and it'll be every tongue, every tribe, everything. It lasts forever."

So is it the son of man or is it the saints? That's the question for [Daniel 7](#). And there are several different approaches, but I have one that's my favorite because I'm a believer. And there are a couple of things you can't miss.

In [Daniel 7:18](#), it says, "The holy people of the most high will receive the kingdom and possess it forever." And in verse 27: "Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms of heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the most high. His kingdom will be everlasting."

The son of man is not simply representing himself. He's representing the corporate destiny of God's people—a restored Israel, a renewed humanity, everything that Isaiah saw, the community that fulfills God's original intention to be truly human rulers in a world full of beastly empires.

A Hope for the Exiles

For Daniel's original audience, the Jewish exiles in Babylon, this was really controversial and revolutionary. They're living under a beastly empire, watching their conquerors become increasingly inhuman. And what did Daniel promise them? God. You don't have to become like the beast to survive. Yahweh will raise up a community of people who will remain truly human even when surrounded by beastly behavior. And it was also pretty encouraging to be captives in a foreign nation and be told, "You will be the rulers one day." Don't skip over that. God is encouraging his people through their punishment and giving them hope.

But again, it raised that haunting question. Who is this talking about? And when would it happen? Like, when we're stuck here in Babylon. When is this going to happen? When will we truly be the rulers? When will the kingdom come? When will the son of man come? When will all this happen and the beast be defeated?

Waiting for the Messiah

They studied [Daniel 7](#) and longed for an era where the saints of the most high would possess the kingdom. Some thought it would be through military power because that's the path of least resistance when conquering. Yeah, pick up a gun. Beep. Others thought that perfect Torah obedience would be the trigger. If we could all just keep Shabbat enough, if we meet the

threshold, the gates will open and Jesus will be uncaged to come back. Still others thought that supernatural intervention would have to be employed. But no one imagined how it would actually unfold.

The Son of Man Revealed

And then one day, 500 years later, a young Jewish man from Nazareth in the first century began calling himself a specific title: the son of man. This was Jesus's favorite self-designation. It was his favorite title. He used it more than "son of God," "Messiah," "Christ." Why? Because Yeshua is making an unmistakable claim. I am the fulfillment of Daniel's vision. I am the true human who perfectly embodies God's intention for all people.

But Jesus doesn't replace Israel's calling. He fulfills it and then he shares it. He is the true Israelite who never became beastly, who perfectly images Yahweh's character, and who uses power to serve and not devour.

Through his death and resurrection, he creates the community that Daniel saw, the saints of the most high that receive the kingdom of God. But when does this transition happen? When does the son of man receive his kingdom?

The answer comes on the most unlikely evening: Yeshua's arrest and trial before Caiaphas and the Jewish religious authorities. You know the interview with the high priest of Israel.

The High Priest's Role

Let me tell you something about the high priest. The high priest is called the Christ or the Messiah in [Leviticus 4](#). It's a whole chapter about the protocols of the high priest, the anointed priest. Ha coenha msiach. The high priest is the one that was anointed with oil. He was the Messiah for Israel. The high priest represented all of Israel. That's the guy. That's what Yom Kippur is all about—through the high priest comes everything.

So we have this up until recently no-named handyman from Nazareth, as the Bible describes him, standing before the Messiah, the representative of all of Israel: Caiaphas. And Caiaphas asks him a question. He says, "Are you the Messiah, the son of the blessed one?" Yeshua responds in [Mark 14:62](#): "I am. And you will see the son of man sitting at the right hand of the mighty one and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The Twist: Identifying the Beast

This is one of those scenes where we miss it—Yeshua quotes [Daniel 7:13](#) directly. He's claiming to be the son of man in the vision. That's not the point. I mean, that's what we get excited about, but that's not what's entertaining here. Here's the twist: Jesus is telling Caiaphas that he—the high priest—is about to play the role of the beast, and has been for a while.

Think about the scene. Here's Caiaphas, the high priest of Israel. He should be representing God's values, shepherding God's people, seeking justice. And instead, in this moment, he's conducting a legal trial, seeking false testimony, using religious authority to destroy the Messiah, claiming to defend God while violating everything God stands for.

In Matthew's account, he becomes so upset that he grabs the devil-stitched collar on his high priestly garment and rends it. It's something specifically told to the high priest never to do in Deuteronomy. Now, if you're a little Bible nerd and you like to play with assumptions, making connections, and approaching scriptures differently, there's an approach that winks an eye to this: if a duty is off, if an officer is off duty, how do you know he's off duty? He's not wearing the uniform. Now, that's a fun connection—not like a deep theological principle, so don't get carried away with it, but it's a fun approach. It's like, huh, that's interesting, and it fits right in with everything else that's going on here.

The battle of [Daniel 7](#) is about to play out right now between Yeshua and the high priest of Israel. This is not a pagan king of Babylon or Pharaoh of Egypt. This is the high priest of Israel. This is the temple of Israel. This is Jerusalem, the city of God. Scripture is full of beastly battles likened to [Daniel 7](#)—the serpent in the garden, Pharaoh, Egypt, Goliath, Babylon. But the climax is shocking: the last and greatest battle is not with the pagan empire at all. It's with the high priest in the temple.

The religion that was devoted to God itself has become like the little horn in [Daniel 7](#) that mocks Yahweh as a way to leverage power, to control, to hurt, and to manipulate. It got tense. You have the high priest representing Israel before God, and you have Yeshua staring him in the eye, claiming to be Daniel's son of man. In that moment, what Yeshua did—what upset Caiaphas so much—is that he called the high priest the worst beast of all in [Daniel 7](#) and made himself known as the true anointed of God.

He says, "Whatever the beast does to me, it will be vindicated by God. I will be the one in God's throne. I will be the one that reigns over all of creation like you were supposed to teach the people to do. I will be the Messiah of Israel." All of that was said in that one verse when he said that to Caiaphas. That's quite the slam. Yeshua looked at the high priest and said, "You are the

greatest enemy of God in his kingdom." That's why Yeshua cried over Jerusalem—because that had become Babylon, indistinguishable. It's going to be destroyed. And it was.

Kingdom Through Cross and Resurrection

But how does Yeshua receive this kingdom? How does the Son of Man triumph over the beasts? The son of man doesn't receive his kingdom by conquering the beast through superior force or violence or control. He does not try to use worldly efforts to manipulate and control the beast. He does not entertain negotiating tactics and ethics with the beast. He doesn't try to work with the beast to bring about God's kingdom. He receives his kingdom by allowing the beasts to do their worst to him and then, raising from the dead, he shows that the power of the beast is simply a facade. All of it. And then he puts the beast down.

The cross is the judgment of the beasts. When religious and political authorities crucify the son of man, they expose who they really are, their true nature. You have the religious empire—Caiaphas uses God's name to destroy God's son. The political empire—Pilate chooses expedience over justice. Economic empire—the money changers turn worship into profit. Military empire—the soldiers mock and torture the innocent, following orders or not. Just like in the Holocaust, or like during the rape of Nanking, or like Nisur Square in Iraq—soldiers of the Beast. Every form of beastly power converges at the cross to destroy the one truly human being. And in doing so, they expose themselves for who they really are.

The resurrection is the son of man receiving that kingdom. When God raises Yeshua from the dead, he declares that true humanity has triumphed over the beastly empire. And this is the example of how you do it. Daniel saw the son of man approaching the ancient of days and receiving dominion. The resurrection is that scene played out in history. The Father declares that the Son now has all authority in heaven and earth.

Saints Receiving the Kingdom

Remember, [Daniel 7](#)'s prophecy is repeated twice—the first part of the vision and then the interpretation. The vision has the son of man receiving all the power and authority. But then Daniel says, "The saints receive all the power and authority." Guys, that's the paradox. Through the risen son of man, we become the saints of the most high who receive the kingdom.

Paul captures this in [Ephesians 2:6](#). What's he say? God raised us up as Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. We're not waiting for some future event. We are the saints, and we have received the kingdom through our union with the risen son of man.

Unless we're just faking it. Unless we don't really care. Unless we love the identity of being a follower of Yeshua but not the calling. And if that's you, then you'd find really good company with your high priest, Caiaphas. The New Testament is not for the faint of heart. It is that radical. It has a cause.

Living Out This Reality

So what does that mean for us? Well, hopefully we are the fulfillment of Daniel's corporate vision. We're not waiting for it to happen. We're living it out right now. Yeshua lived out his identity representing who? All of us. And we live out our identity representing who? All of him. The question is: will we live like we know who we are?

First, we need to choose to remain human when the world becomes beastly. And that's hard. When economic systems become predatory, we choose to practice radical generosity. You have to choose which master you serve, and your heart is clearly seen. Sometimes it's hard—it's hard to be generous, especially in an empire. Pro tip: it's not the easiest route to go. When political powers become tribal, we pursue reconciliation across divides. The labels the media has told us to put on whole demographics of humans is an unacceptable practice by Christians. Them, they, whatever labels—you know the ones we're familiar with—it's part of our culture. That's a label. That's a label. That's a label.

When technology begins to dehumanize us, we prioritize authentic relationships. And when religion becomes controlling, we offer grace and liberation that only the true King gives. And most importantly, we don't fight beasts by becoming beasts ourselves.

Don't Become the Monster

There's a whole genre of filmmaking that plays off that very principle: horror films. In classic horror films, you usually have someone that's really bad, a monster, whatever. In old classic films, it was always what? The sweetest innocent person that ends up becoming the one that defeats the monster at the end. Takes out the evil person. But at the end of the movie, the survivor—she's nowhere near the same person she was at the beginning because she had to become the monster in order to kill the monster. And that's the irony and the paradox of those types of films, because it's too easy to do. And for many of us, we think that's the only way to do it.

Yeshua offers an alternative. Humans are called to have dominion over the beasts, not devolve into one. We overcome beastliness by becoming more human, the way that God intended,

through the son of man.

The Daniel Strategy

Second, we practice the Daniel strategy. How did Daniel practice anti-imperial subversion? He served excellently in whatever sphere God had placed him in, but he never gave ultimate allegiance to any human system, any empire, or any nation.

We're called to do hard things in this world. We can participate in economic systems without worshiping wealth—which we're taught to do from birth. We can engage politics without idolizing political power. That's how we do it. We can use technology without letting it define our worth. We can serve in religious institutions without confusing them with the kingdom. They are not the same. We can be in the world without being of the world.

That is the subversive message of the prophet Daniel. He is a dent within the empire like Oscar Schindler, working within the Nazi system, appearing to serve it, but subverting it from the inside to save lives. He does not march against the regime with loud defiance. Why not? It wouldn't be very effective. He uses cunning and bureaucratic loopholes to topple the structure of power.

Work for Justice with Unshakable Confidence

Third, we work for justice with unshakable confidence. Not because we think we can perfect earthly systems, but because the Son of Man has already received his kingdom when we're part of it. We know it's coming, and it's getting sooner every day. When we see injustice, we work to change it, knowing God's justice will ultimately prevail. When we encounter suffering, we offer comfort, no matter the circumstance, knowing the Son of Man has already triumphed. When we witness evil, we resist it, no matter where it comes from, what it is, or whose name is on it. We know the beast's time is limited. This hope does not make us passive, but it makes us bold. Or it should.

Already and Not Yet

We live in a time that many theologians call the time of the already and not yet. The Son of Man has already received his kingdom and we're already citizens. That's what Philippians says: You're a citizen of another kingdom that's not even here. But we're not experiencing it in its complete fulfillment. Beasts still roar. Empires still become beastly. Evil still seems to win battles. The Ancient of Days is still on his throne. The books are still open. The kingdom that the Son of

Man received will never be destroyed. And we live as a people who know that every beastly empire is temporary, that true humanity has been restored through Yeshua, and that justice will ultimately prevail.

Daniel's message to the Babylonian exiles is the same for us. What he spoke to them is very simple: In spite of present appearances, God is in control. But we have something that Daniel's audience could never dream of. We've seen the Son of Man receive his kingdom and we've been included in it.

You Are a Saint of the Most High

So this week, when you encounter beastly behavior—whether it be on TV, whether it be outside, or whether it be in the mirror—if we're honest, you are a saint of the most high. Your citizenship is in the kingdom that Daniel saw and that Yeshua inaugurated. You serve the Son of Man, the one who remained perfectly human even unto death, who triumphed over every beastly empire. And you live in the kingdom that will never be destroyed. Every earthly empire will pass away, but the kingdom you belong to is eternal.

This doesn't mean that you withdraw from the world. Please don't do that. It doesn't work well for the kingdom. It means that you engage it with confidence. And I think that's just what this message is about. It's to remind you who you are today. It's to remind you that Daniel saw you in the vision. He saw you. And that's something I think that some of us need to hear from time to time: Be bold.

You are a citizen of heaven while serving as an ambassador on earth. You are the fulfillment—along with all of us—of all of this. You're part of that. And so this week, I would encourage you to live like you know you are. Live like you know who you are and live like you know how the story ends. The beasts may roar, but the Son of Man reigns, and his kingdom—your kingdom—has no end.

Take Up Your Mantle

Are we willing to be the people of God? And if we are, that looks like only one other person. Let us conform to that and truly take up our mantle in carrying forward the mission that Christ gave to us.

[Daniel 7:27](#)—I'll end with this. It states: "Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the most high. His kingdom

will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him." Amen.

Please stand as we conclude worship today. And if you need prayer today for anything in your life, I encourage you to come forward. We have a prayer partner on either side of the stage. It's not in the middle—no one's looking at you. You have someone that will stand beside you and lift you up before the Father, no matter what you're going through and no matter what you need.

If you need—maybe you brought something in today. Sometimes we tend to hold on to things. They get heavy. Sometimes we really want to put them down, but we don't know when the right time or place is to put them down and just leave them. I'm here to tell you today, if that's you, right now it's the time and place. Leave that heavy thing behind. And we have a symbolic altar here that you can do that by walking up, just setting it down, knowing that God has never been far from you—who's been beside you this whole time. Time to come home. Homeward bound.

Ambassadors of Peace

Alina Mo, our Father and our King. Father, we thank you for this opportunity to once again dive into your word and be reminded of the expectations you have for the work of Yeshua through us, that we would be likened unto the Son of Man. So much so that when people interact with us, they have no other explanation than to say, "The spirit of God was with me. The Messiah, the power of the Messiah was with me. The authority of another kingdom that I want to be a part of is here."

Father, I ask that we would continue and be made into ambassadors of peace, ambassadors of reconciliation, ambassadors of love, ambassadors of mercy and compassion—to the point where it upsets the world, to the point where the empires notice and don't like it. May we carry forth the great calling that Yeshua has placed on us through your Holy Spirit, which is within us even now. We thank you, Father, in the name of Yeshua we pray. Amen.

[Music and applause]

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God. The Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and give you his shalom. Shabbat shalom. Give him praise.

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