

Empathy for the Wicked – Caiaphas

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MAIN VERSES

[Daniel 7](#) • [Mark 1:14](#) • [Mark 1:15](#) • [Matthew 26](#) • [Jeremiah 29](#) • [Leviticus 11](#) • [1 Corinthians 8:6](#) • [1 Corinthians 6](#)

So this week we're going to do something slightly different. This week we're not going to just start out with a narrative of a character to try to find some details about their personality. This week we're going to prime the story first by reading from a chapter of the Bible. Is that okay? Can we come to church today and read the Bible? Awesome.

A Fear About This Message

And this message—I was speaking to Jason about this earlier because I have a fear of this message. The fear is that I will not allow the Word of God to speak with the power and the significance that it should to the believers who are reading it. We're going to be reading today from Daniel chapter 7.

The thing about Daniel chapter 7 is it is imperative to understand that a lot of ministries have a mission statement and a vision statement. Yeshua's mission statement was to usher in the kingdom of God on earth. That was his mission according to Mark. His vision statement was chapter 7 of Daniel. This is how he's going to accomplish the mission.

And so I would ask that you would remember that above all else. I would ask that after today you would go back and reread chapter 7 in light of Yeshua using it as his vision statement for his ministry on earth. His vision statement is this: to snuff out evil and darkness in the words of the serpent, and deal with death, and deal with the trauma that we as human beings have caused in God's good creation. [Daniel 7](#) is God's formula for how he's going to deal with that. [Daniel 7](#) is the formula for how his kingdom is going to be made manifest on earth.

The Villains Series

So with that being said, if you're unfamiliar with this series that we've been embarking into, the last few months we've been exploring the darker characters in the Bible—the wicked, the vilified villains of the Bible—to try to discover what made them who they are known to be. What downfalls did they have? Where did they trip up in life? What caused a shockwave of events and decisions in their lives? And what can we learn from that? Because if we read about the villains of the Bible and all we do is condemn them and we don't learn from them, then how are we ever going to keep ourselves from ending up like them?

[Daniel 7](#) is the chapter of the Bible that Yeshua—Jesus himself—orbited his entire ministry. In fact, the title he uses for himself is taken from this chapter of the Bible. So turn with me to Daniel chapter 7. Turn to your Bibles or turn to Daniel in your Bibles. If you don't have a Bible app on your phone, Blue Letter Bible is a free one, or you can go to Google. If you're cool and hip, you'll have a browser on your phone called Safari. You can click that and just type in [Daniel 7](#) in Safari. If you're not as trendy, you might have Chrome, so go ahead and click on that. It works the same—just Daniel chapter 7.

Diving Into the Vision

And I'm not going to have slides today for this chapter because it's 28 verses, and I want to invite you to dive into this chapter with me. So yeah, turn to chapter 7.

The backdrop of chapter 7, if you're unfamiliar with the book of Daniel—it is a very gnarly read, a very interesting book. The backdrop to the book of Daniel is that the Judeans, the Jews, have been overrun by the Babylonian armies, by a Babylonian king named Nebuchadnezzar. They've been displaced. They watched their cities burn. They watched the temple of their God burn to the ground. And now they're forced to live in Babylon in exile.

And the book of Daniel follows our hero Daniel and several other leaders from Judah as they stay faithful—or struggle to stay faithful and committed—to God living in this new strange pagan land. And what's interesting is that their sense of holiness and loyalty toward God is a priority when you read through the book. It's absolutely a priority when they're in this strange pagan Babylon the Great. But what's interesting is they don't make any effort to hide from their new culture or government. Not a bit. They're given Babylonian names that they tend to just accept. Yeah, that's a pretty cool ring to it. They learn the pagan language of Akkadian. They wear the clothing. They even get jobs working for the government. And they don't slack off working for the government either. They actually do very well. They actually put energy into their jobs working for Babylon.

It's fascinating because God calls them to do that. In [Jeremiah 29](#), it's written to the people of Babylon, to the exiles in Babylon. [Jeremiah 29](#) starts off, in the first section of it, states that God tells his people when they're in Babylon, when they're in exile, when they're in the strange pagan place with the strange pagan government and all these strange pagan things—plant roots. Don't stop flourishing. Get married. Have kids. Love your children. Have grandchildren. Continue to live life. Don't run and hide. No—in fact, invest in the pagan cities that he's placed you in. In fact, pray for the welfare, the welfare, the prosperity of the pagan cities that you find yourself in. Pray for the welfare and try to invest in the cities that are far from God. Be a light wherever God has planted you. Be involved. Let them see you and who you represent.

False Prophets of Isolation

[Jeremiah 29](#) has a very, very, very intimidating verse in there. It essentially says: if anyone tells you not to do these things, if anyone tells you that this pagan land is pagan and the end's going to come and you don't need to have kids because the end's going to come, or if they say, "Well, this is a pagan place and you're so set apart that you don't need to be invested in it. You don't need to put your hands to work with the people in this place. You don't need to do the work of God in this pagan place"—if God says in [Jeremiah 29](#) that there's anyone that comes to you and says that you need to hide and go off-grid from Babylon, then they're a false prophet. It's heavy stuff.

And the book of Daniel shows the well-known heroes of the Bible just doing that—sticking it out but also struggling to stay loyal in the areas that God has called them to be loyal to.

So chapter 1 starts out with food. Food. Daniel and his friends refused to eat the food of Babylon. Why? Well, it's a relatively smaller step versus idolatry, a way of worshiping God. [Leviticus 11](#) sets food. It says that a way of eating is also a form of worship. So Daniel says, no, we will continue to worship our God in this way.

As the book continues, there's a big statue. All the Judeans are like, "We're not going to bow down to that." It almost gets them killed. Later on, there's a ban on prayer. Daniel's like, "No, I'm going to stay loyal to my God." It's a struggle, and it shows where and how the heroes of the Bible stayed loyal to God in the pagan land.

I love Daniel. That's my rant for today.

A Believer's Role in a Godless Kingdom

What is a believer's role in a world ruled by a kingdom that doesn't know God?

Daniel 7 is a dream that Daniel ends up having, a vision that disturbs him greatly. It's about what happens when corrupt world powers, fueled by selfishness in individuals, overtake the world. What happens when the people who are pursuing their own selfish desires and living at the expense of others form governments and kingdoms and go around killing and stomping on the people of God? And Daniel 7 is such a big deal because God lays out a plan of how he's going to deal with this.

How is God going to deal with what happens when sin infects the entire world? How is God going to deal with the violence that has overtaken the world? How is God going to deal with this issue? And it goes on to basically say that God's going to appoint a king whose kingdom will be everlasting and eternal, and the dominion will never end, and this king will have all power and authority in heaven and on earth. And when he comes down, the beasts of the world, the sin of the world, the personification of sin will be defeated. You get it? It's the gospel message.

And so bear with me as we dive in and wade through 28 whole verses of Daniel chapter 7. You ready? Who's excited? Okay, got to keep the motivation up. That's great.

The Vision Begins

So Daniel chapter 7, verse 1. I tell you what—let's all have a vision like Daniel. Let's all have a vision like Daniel. And we're going to do this very simply by closing our eyes. So I'm going to ask you to close your eyes for half the chapter. I'll tell you when to open it back up. And I want you to imagine the things that Daniel sees. Are we good with that? Some of you feel vulnerable closing your eyes for a minute or two? Okay.

So everyone close their eyes and I'll read Daniel chapter 7. In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. Daniel declared, And the mind of a man was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. And it was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And it was told, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back.

And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I saw the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth. It devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the other beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and

behold, there came up among them another horn, a little horn, before which three of the first horns were plucked out from its roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things. And as I looked, thrones were set up. And the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was white as snow, his hair on his head like pure wool. His throne was fiery flames. Its wheels were burning fire like a chariot. A stream of fire issued and came from before him. And a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. And I looked, then, because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking, and as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season at a time.

Okay, open your eyes. Was this kind of cool? Yeah? It was kind of gnarly looking vision there with all the beasts and the wings and the big bear. Did you guys all see the beast going over the earth and eating people? Slashing them, stomping on them? It's pretty violent. Dreams are meant to be violent. These monstrous-looking Godzilla movies all come out of the ocean, right? And they're eating and stomping and blowing fire and whatever, just destroying people. It's very violent. It's very disturbing.

And then you have God, where? In his throne room, where he sits down. Did you notice that? The court was seated. He sat down. And did you also notice that there's more than one throne in the throne room? It's plural. The thrones were set up. God's throne had fiery wheels on it. It's kind of like a chariot in the ancient Near East. They had something like a mobile, like a car, with fire. Flames shooting out. It's cool.

The Beasts and the Throne of God

So in verse 15, we're going to continue, and Daniel wants an explanation for all of this crazy, scary, and yet awesome aspects of his vision. Okay, so verse 15. As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me, was anxious. So Daniel is going to get the interpretation of this gnarly, wicked-looking dream. Everyone's on the same page? It's a lot of reading.

The four beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, ever, ever. Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different than all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped out what was left with its feet. And about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn

that came up before, which three of them fell. The horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them. Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, in the time when the saints possessed the kingdom. Thus he said, As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all of the other kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down and break it into pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall after them. He shall be different from all the former ones, and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High, and he shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law, and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. His kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Here's the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me. My color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.

I want to let you guys know that I changed colors. This scared me so much. Something about this chapter, if you noticed, flips back and forth. It also makes different figures in part A and part B synonymous. So you have all of these beasts that are destroying God's creation and wearing out the saints of God, the holy people of God. They're killing them. But then you have a singular figure in the first half of the prophecy, the vision—a single figure that rises up and sits down in the throne room of God. He sits on the throne. He sits in the throne room of God, or at least he's given all authority in heaven and on earth. The Beast pours out its wrath. Death occurs. And one like the son of humanity, the son of Adam, the Son of Man, comes riding in the clouds of heaven before God, and he's given supreme authority in this chapter.

The Son of Man has made synonymous with the holy people of God. Kind of like how Jesus is sometimes or many times synonymous with Israel. He represents the people. It's through him that the people of God become the people of God.

The Son of Man Title

And this is important because throughout the New Testament, his disciples and those after him, even today, they've come to call Yeshua by the Greek word that means "King" or "the Anointed One"—the Christos, or in English, the Messiah, or in Hebrew, Mashiach. But this is not the title that Yeshua took on himself. When Peter said "You're the Christ," Yeshua

acknowledged it, saying "Yeah, you did pretty good." He acknowledged the title, but he never preferred that title. No, he chose another title: the Son of Man. It appears 88 times in the four Gospels alone.

Remember, we spoke about this last week when we discussed Judas. Yeshua was referring back to this chapter when he was talking to his disciples about how the beast would kill the Son of Man. But through his death, the beast itself would be destroyed. The Son of Man would be lifted up, exalted, sit down in the throne room of God, given all power and all authority in heaven and on earth—who would rule an eternal kingdom which the people of God would inhabit. Then at the end of [Daniel 7](#), this king becomes synonymous with God himself, and God will do this in his kingdom. He has complete authority over all creation and the people of God will serve him. And in the dream it says that his dominion is eternal over creation and all will serve him. It's a pretty stout vision that Daniel had.

And here Yeshua comes bebopping on our endowment. Son of Man. I'm that guy. I tell you, the Son of Man will be exalted. And people are like, "What are you talking about?"

The Two Powers in Heaven

The concept of multiple powers in heaven—just for you Bible geeks—is called the Two Powers in Heaven. And in pre-Christian Judaism, it was an accepted interpretation that there were multiple powers and rulings in the heavenly realm. At the throne, there was more than just a singular rule or reign in heaven. It wasn't until after Christianity took a form that Judaism changed its stance on that.

Notice in [Daniel 7](#)—the thrones were set up. If you want more information on that, there's a great book by Jewish professor Alan Segal called *The Two Powers in Heaven* because that's what he was studying after Christianity carried it forward. You guys ever wonder in [1 Corinthians 8:6](#), Paul seems to link Yeshua with the divine authority? So [1 Corinthians 8:6](#), go back and check it out afterwards—Paul takes the Shema and modifies it to include Yeshua. You should go back and check it out. Paul understood the concept of [Daniel 7](#).

So that's the setup of today's message. It's a big setup, and it's a lot. You still good? Still good. Okay. If you walk away with nothing else, I want you all to repeat this after me: [Daniel 7](#) is the plan of action that Yeshua followed to defeat sin, death, and the powers of darkness.

Enter Caiaphas

So this week we are exploring someone deemed a villain of the Bible due to using his position of power, his appointed glory for selfish pursuits—Caiaphas. Caiaphas was the high priest during the time of Yeshua's arrest and execution, his trial, and he remained high priest for about six more years or so after. And the narrative that we're going to read today is drawn from Matthew's recording of the events in Matthew chapter 26. You're welcome to follow along.

And just like the other messages in this series, I want to invite you to imagine being in the room 2,000 years ago in a dark building with open walls, late at night—the guards outside by the fire warming themselves. I want you to imagine hearing the shuffling of feet going across the tile floor, slight commotion of chaos as the mixture of classes and wealth enter through the narrow entrance. You see, on the street they engage in combative debate over the law and religious authority, but here, out of the public eye, they hug and they greet each other warmly. A Roman liaison stands in the corner leaning against the wall and he pokes his head around towards Caiaphas, the symbol of power in Judea, the high priest himself.

The Trial Before the Sanhedrin

Sir, I thought your customs forbid such a trial this late in the evening. It seems quite a bit out of order for your people. Rules, customs, traditions. Caiaphas turns and grins. They are always subject to the situation of rises. Rules follow what's best for the people in the community. The prisoner has arrived, the Roman guard announces at the door. Moving out of the way, two men with clubs dangling from their belts force a third through the door who is in chains. A slight murmur breaks out among the men in the room.

Caiaphas stands unmoved, staring intently. This is the man Yeshua, the one the lay people follow. His disciple led us right to him. One of his men did try to attack us, but then they all ran away, leaving us there alone. The high priest's servant in the corner of the room reaches up, rubbing his ear as if everything that happened was just a dream.

So you're the one causing all this trouble. Caiaphas speaks down to this man, still standing with his head to the ground. Drops of blood fall from his face to the dirt. Caiaphas leans over to see a man appearing as if he'd already been beaten. Blackened eyes, dirt smeared, blood mixing on the palate of his face to form a runny mud. Looking at the guards with disapproval: Did you beat him to death? They shrug their shoulders.

False Accusations

"Let the court be assembled and ready themselves to hear the witness accounts of this man's crime against God, the God of our forefathers, the people of Judea, and Caesar himself, overseer of the known world," the herald announces. A witness speaks up immediately. "He spoke against the authority of Rabbi Shimon, asserting he was not fulfilling the Torah with his interpretation of the law." Caiaphas rolls his eyes. That is not a grave enough accusation. Half of the Pharisees in the room agree with that.

Another witness steps forward. "Well, he condoned working on the Sabbath. He said you could do whatever you want on the Sabbath day." Such as what? "Well, if you're a doctor and you need to give aid to somebody, he said you could go to work on the Sabbath." Caiaphas stares at him with a stoic face that just shows such blank contempt. The witness walks away. "This should not be so difficult," he says softly.

Just then, two witnesses step forward. One, two. Oh, good. Look, someone who knows how a legal trial works. Looking at the previous witness, take note. What is your account of this man that he should be brought here today? Speak. The two men stand formally. One on the left speaks up. "This man, he said he would destroy the house of our God, the symbol of our people, the place where the intersection of heaven and earth meet. He said he would destroy our temple and that he would rebuild it in only three days."

The second witness immediately speaks up boldly. "This account is true by my own testimony as a second witness." Turning arrogantly back towards Yeshua, still remaining quiet, turning his head as if irritation had met disappointment: Have you no response for these accusations that you have plans to demolish the temple here in Jerusalem, the icon of your own people, the very house of God? Yeshua remained silent, head down, staring at the floor. Caiaphas looked around at the court, confused. "Did you beat him to death?" he asks the guards, who shrug their shoulders.

The Son of Man Revealed

"Hey!" he snaps, moving in front of his face as Yeshua stares at the ground. "Hey! These men have brought accusations against you. You are on trial. Judgment is about to be drawn against you. How do you respond to these allegations?" Silence fills the hall. Caiaphas, not used to lording his power and authority and cockiness over someone without any kind of response, finds the silence awkward.

Feeling a bit frustrated with what is now an entertaining atmosphere, you, the accused, Yeshua of Nazareth, still remaining motionless: By the authority of God given to the judges, the

Sanhedrin of Israel, I charge you under oath. Under oath by the living God of our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, tell us: Are you the Messiah? Are you the king that rules over Israel? Are you the Son of God?

Slowly. Slowly. Motion breaks forth. He begins to raise his head, locking eyes with Caiaphas. The blood, the mud, the bruises, the torn clothing all begin to disappear. All Caiaphas could see was the fire burning behind his eyes, going right through him. You have said so. The souls of everyone in the room shook with the force of silence that followed.

Caiaphas, the symbol of all authority in Israel, the symbol of all authority in Jerusalem, the temple. Who else can approach the holy place inside the temple that one day of the year? Him. Who else mixes the blood of the bull with the blood of the goat and walks in and sprinkles them, making atonement for the holy place? Him. Who else puts the exact amount of incense on the coals, filling God's presence with a cloud of glory? It's him. His authority goes all the way back to Aaron.

Who does this poor rabbi think he is to speak to me this way? Yeshua stands straight up, shoulders back, as if he walked in that way. He then turns to the audience that makes up the powerhouse of Jerusalem, as if locking eyes with each individual Pharisee and Sadducee and scribe and member of the Sanhedrin. Burning words backed with what can only be described as a divine authority radiate from his mouth.

But I say to you, from this moment on, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One, the Ancient of Days, and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Turning his gaze back to Caiaphas. Son of Man, clouds of heaven. In an instant, Caiaphas flashes back to his childhood where he was forced to memorize the Torah and the Prophets as a child. Daniel's vision—the beasts, the mighty beasts that come against God's people, his holy people—he remembered vividly. The beasts that represent the armies of the evil kings that arise out of the earth and assault the holy saints of God.

But the redeeming character arises out of that violent confrontation. After the beast does its damage, after the beast stomps around and crushes, kills, destroys, out of the ashes of 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 1. Caiaphas thinks to himself: This man just declared that he himself is the Son of Man, the human that will be subjected to mockery and tribulation and assault, the wrath of the beast, the product of Satan himself, and that he will be vindicated on a cloud chariot. This man appoints himself as a savior of the people. This man accuses all of those who would come against him of being the beast while proclaiming He himself contains power and reign and

authority over the creation of God himself. This man claims to be the visible glory and power of God manifest on earth.

In that moment, time stood still as he froze on this thought. The memories of sitting at a desk and studying these chapters of the prophets begin to fade away. The flicker of the torches in the corner begins to become visible again. He's present in this would-be courtroom, surrounded by judges and teachers of the law, the elite. And then a loud reverberating noise echoing off all the walls made sense of it all.

Blasphemy and Condemnation

He realized the sweat had bubbled up on his arms. He could feel the heat, the rash going up through his chest, up his neck and into his face. That noise, that noise was the sound of his own anger manifest through his screaming. He felt his hands locked, clenched around the collar of his tunic. He felt the fabric give way, ripping down, exposing his chest and neck.

At that moment, realizing the spectacle he had made himself to be, he breathes. Turning to the crowd, he points to Yeshua, still standing in boldness. He's spoken blasphemy. He's spoken blasphemy. Did you hear it? What more do we need witnesses for now? He's spoken blasphemy. What do you say? Speaking to the court, some hesitant, but all are unanimous: Death. He deserves death. Yes, he deserves death. Death to him. The crowd began to quickly feed off of each other. Yes, death now. Put him to death. Blasphemer. Do it. Blasphemer.

Commotion overwhelms the hall. Then an elderly man who had sat quietly in the front row begins to stand. As the commotion grows louder and louder, he shuffles up to Yeshua, looks him in the eyes, and spits in his face.

The Historical Caiaphas and Understanding the Symbol

We know a significant amount about death from historical documents and Josephus. We know he was very balanced in his politicking, his relationships, and very politically strategic as he rose in the ranks, very much involved in matters of Rome and Judea. But here we see a man dramatized but rooted in the biblical narrative of [Matthew 26](#). He had some issues with Yeshua, lost control.

And so what I want to try to get you to understand is where we're going with Daniel chapter 7. We're going to get back to Daniel chapter 7. I want to—and I heard another professor make a similar example, and it really hit home, talking about movie quotes. So let's say I say a movie

quote: "Just keep swimming, just keep swimming." What comes to your mind? What movie is that? Finding Nemo. Who said it? Dory. Who is Dory speaking to? Nemo's dad, Marlin. Did I get that right?

Speaking of Marlin. How about "Hakuna Matata"? What a wonderful phrase. What movie is that? The Lion King. Who said it? Pumba. Who is he speaking to? Simba.

So when I say "Just keep swimming, just keep swimming," who am I pretending to be? I'm Dory. And who are you if you're in that scene of the movie? You're Marlin, right? Okay, just making sure. Now, "Hakuna Matata." Who am I pretending to be? Pumba. And who are you by default in the movie? Simba. Okay.

So when Yeshua called himself the Son of Man—"I am the Son of Man, and from this moment on, you will see me riding on the clouds, exalted, seated at the right hand of God"—

So where God was seated in a throne room, he's going to be seated in the throne room. What does that mean? It means he's been given all power and authority. He's been given the authority of the throne room alongside God in [Daniel 7](#). So if Yeshua is the son of man in the story and he's telling Caiaphas that it's because of him that he's about to become the son of man riding in the clouds, who does that make Caiaphas? It makes Caiaphas the beast. Caiaphas is the ultra beast that personifies the greatest evil that God is going to deal with in the most dramatic climactic way.

Because what Yeshua is saying is, what's about to proceed is that the Son of Man is going to be mocked. He's going to be beaten. He's going to be whipped. He's going to be stripped. He's going to be humiliated. He's going to be lifted up on a cross. He's going to be nailed to wood. He's going to have a spear shoved through him. He's going to die an agonizing death. The overtones of [Daniel 7](#), and through this, the Son of Man will be exalted up in the clouds of heaven to reign and rule God's ultimate kingdom that He promised His people and the world.

Caiaphas and the Beast

The boldness of Yeshua in the court is something that I don't think we can really comprehend. The authorities of Israel, Hakuna Matata. In that moment, Yeshua says the fulfillment of [Daniel 7](#) is about to happen. Right there, in this house in Jerusalem.

Remember when we did Nebuchadnezzar a few weeks ago, the king of Babylon has a dream where he's a tree of life. It's a dream about how God is making him to be an image bearer, to rule through him, to bring blessings and justice and everything that's about God's kingdom

through him to the world. But then, Nebuchadnezzar, in the dream, Nebuchadnezzar falls, the tree is brought down, brought away. Then later in the story, right after this in the story, Nebuchadnezzar a year later walks out on his balcony and he's like, "Look at my kingdom!" Pride and selfishness. And what happens to Nebuchadnezzar? What does he turn into? A beast. A beast.

This is a central theme in the biblical story. When humans choose to allow evil, sin, pride, selfishness to overtake their motives, they become beasts. It's exactly what [Daniel 7](#) says. It's exactly what Revelation says. It's scattered throughout all the biblical narrative. Even from the very beginning, in Genesis, man was created to rule over the beasts, not become a beast, because a beast is something that is ruled over.

When Humans Yield to the Beast

And what does man do? They yield to the serpent. They yield to the beast. And they're no longer allowed to stay in the garden. No, they're given the skins of beasts to go out to the field where the beasts are. You will go live with the beasts now, because you have become a beast.

Cain. When God is trying to talk to Cain, Cain's sin is crouching like a beast at the door ready to overtake you. It's a central theme of Scripture. When we allow the conditions of our flesh to overtake us, we yield to being ruled over. The beasts in Daniel's dream are humans, just like you, that end up making up a kingdom collectively, fueled by violence and self-pursuits.

And here Yeshua is saying that it's time. It's time for that to stop. It's time for the plan of God to come about. It's time for God's eternal kingdom to make itself known here and now. So there in this kangaroo court that was thrown together in Jerusalem, the Son of Man stares into the eyes of what represented the beast in that moment, the high priest of Jerusalem. Yeshua saw this chapter in the Bible, Daniel chapter 7, as talking about him.

The Son of Man Defeats the Beast

That after this long history in the world where mankind consistently yields to becoming the beasts against God instead of the image bearers that rule with God's power, Yeshua stands in the courtroom boldly declaring that he is about to defeat the beast in [Daniel 7](#). And that the only way to destroy the beast according to [Daniel 7](#) is by allowing the beast to pour out its wrath onto him. Is to allow the beast to kill him. The only way to defeat the beast is to allow the beast to exert its power so much so that it caves in on itself from this moment on.

But I say to all of you, the Son of Man will be sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven. So it's funny because Yeshua actually modifies [Daniel 7](#). He modifies it ever so slightly. So Bible nerds, did you catch it when he said that phrase? He combines the two instances. He combines coming on the clouds of heaven with sitting on the throne. It's interesting.

Blasphemer! Blasphemer! Doesn't make any sense. It seems foolish. Staring into the eyes. Imagine staring into the eyes of a big grizzly bear. Anyone ever done that before? Good. Why haven't you done this before? It would not be a wise thing to do, right? Whatever happens next, whatever you do next, Mr. Bear, I'm going to take your power and conquer you. Doesn't make sense.

All the Beast Can Do Is Kill

What will Mr. Bear do? There's a documentary out there, I think it's on Netflix, called Grizzly Man. Anyone ever seen it? Grizzly man, yeah, it's a neat little documentary. And you wonder, they keep talking about this guy who loves bears, right? He loves bears. He's teaching kids about bears. They have all these films of him going out and hanging out with the bears and coming back teaching kindergarten classes.

And about halfway through the movie, you start to realize something's up because I haven't seen him in the movie yet. Spoiler alert, he got eaten by the bears. He got eaten by the bears. Bears didn't want to hug, okay? They ate him.

But here, Yeshua stands boldly and says, "Go ahead. All you can do is kill me. All you can do is kill me. But that, that won't be enough to keep me from the love of my God and His commitment to bring about His kingdom on earth. All you can do is kill me."

So from this moment on, from this moment on, you will see the Son of Man riding on the clouds of heaven and sitting at the right hand of the mighty one of Israel. So what happens in the story? Yeshua goes to the cross, where he's fitted with a crown and a declaration in all languages of his position as king is announced on a sign above him. And he is exalted up to the sky through nails and wood. You get it?

The Beast's Wrath Cannot Prevail

And the beast pours out its wrath upon him, everything it has. And as a result, it's conquered. It's the only thing the beast can throw at him. That's the lesson that Yeshua gives to his

followers. That's the lesson that Yeshua gives you. That's the only thing the beast can throw at you. That's it—selfish, unbridled violence, self-preservation, to kill, to rip, to talk about you behind your back, to steal from you, to hurt you.

That's all they got. That's all they got. And it isn't enough. Why? Because God is a God of life. God is a God of resurrection. God made a promise that one day everything would be fixed. One day his love would be manifest through a kingdom where a king leads by example on how to destroy and how to strip the power away from the beast. You defeat the beast by not becoming the beast. The beast's own power is enough to defeat it.

The Gospel: Repent and Believe

So what was Yeshua's mission statement in Mark chapter 1 verse 14? Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news, a.k.a. the gospel of God. What was the gospel? What was the gospel of Yeshua, the gospel of Jesus Christ? It is not, guys, believe in me and you can go to heaven when you die.

The time has come, he says. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news. Believe that God is doing what he promised to do. Believe that God is coming to defeat the beast. Believe that God's holy people will enter into a kingdom where they will reign and rule by God's authority as his image bearers once and for all. And everything that the serpent has done will be turned in on itself. And though there will be beasts that still live in the world for a time, they will not have any power when God birthed his magnificent eternal kingdom through his king known as the Son of Man.

Repent! The kingdom of God is near! The kingdom spoken about in [Daniel 7](#), the kingdom that squashes the beast, that has ruled the world for too long, the kingdom that gives life, the kingdom that invites you to rule creation as an image bearer of God, the kingdom that has a king that leads by example, the kingdom of God has come near.

You Become What You Yield To

How do we empathize with Caiaphas? It's easy. You get mad at God's grace. You get mad that you are not allowed to rule this world your way. You get mad that God wants to turn you into a human being that doesn't have a heart of stone but has a beating heart of flesh for his kingdom. You get mad that you can't live at the expense of others. You get mad that your power to push others down, to gossip about others, to steal from others, to look at others in lust, to do

violence towards others, to judge others, to view yourself as righteous above others, you get mad that your sin is not enough to save you.

That's how you empathize with Caiaphas. Nobody likes to be reminded that they have traded in their calling to be an image bearer of God, God's hands and feet on earth for the identity of a mere beast that roams the land looking for ways to get one up on everyone else. When you allow yourself to be overtaken with that in those areas of your life, you forfeit your status as a fully human being that God created you to be.

It's the story of the garden. It's the story of the Bible. You yield to become ruled over by a beast, by becoming a beast yourself. When you reject God's authority over our lives and you go on living as if, "Hey, I'm just human nature. It's animal instinct. This is just how I am." Someone who is committed to God's love and new creation and resurrection life, that doesn't sit well with them. [Daniel 7](#) gave Yeshua hope in the power of God's life-giving justice. And he calls you to stand in that hope alongside him.

Transformation in the Kingdom

So worship team, if you guys want to get set up. 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Paul speaks about this. He speaks about the animals that are interested in being in the kingdom. He speaks about the beasts that are roaming the earth, but they still want to maintain their identity as a beast. He says, the kingdom of God. Do not be deceived. Neither the sexual immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will enter, will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Facing the Beast

Every moment leading up to that night looking into the eyes of Caiaphas had been anticipated before creation. So I don't know where you're at today in your life. I don't know what you may or may not have been struggling with, but I do know this: I do know that God's love is powerful enough. That's what Yeshua leaned on in that moment facing Caiaphas. And I hope that he gives you not just through visions of a prophet in Babylon, but I hope he gives you the hope to be like him for you today.

Will you continue to look at others and think, I need to take away from them in order to bring value to my life, I need to lust after them, I need to do violence towards them—physical or non-

physical—this is what I need to do to rule? Or will you follow Yeshua and allow him to conquer the beast within you?

Ambassadors of the Kingdom

This is how God's coming kingdom can be a reality now. This is how new creation can be tasted now. And that is how a resurrected life can be seen, felt, and experienced even now and flow on throughout eternity. Because the kingdom of God has been birthed and you are called to be ambassadors of Christ, ambassadors of the king, ambassadors of that kingdom. So follow him and go into the world and face the beast. Face the beast like Yeshua did. That's the hope that he gives to us.

Time of Worship

So please stand as we enter into a time of worship as we conclude services. There is a prayer team on either side of the sanctuary. And these individuals are committed to standing alongside you in whatever situation you might find yourself, in whatever struggle of life you find yourself in. Allow them to hold your hand and approach the exalted King who reigns and rules at the right hand of God and soars in the clouds of heaven, whose kingdom is forever and ever. Amen.

About Founded in Truth

Shalom, I'm Matthew Vanderels and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives.

If this message impacted you or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we would love to hear from you. Send us a message through our contact form on our website and let us know how God has used this ministry to edify your faith and relationship with Him.

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