

Sermon – 28/10/2007 am

Kingdom without End

Study Text: Daniel 7:9–14

Chapter seven stands out as a pinnacle in the book of Daniel, and indeed in the whole Bible. The passage before us tells of the coming of the Messiah who was given universal and everlasting dominion over all the kingdoms of this world. The passage is both prophetic and apocalyptic, telling about the coming of the kingdom of God and of Jesus as the King of kings.

Jesus began his ministry saying the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15). In Jesus, God showed his hand as it were with regard to this world and its future. Jesus said *My Father has committed all judgment to the Son* (John 5:23). He also said after his resurrection that all glory in heaven and on earth has been given to me (Matthew 28:18).

Jesus did not simply come to give you a better life in the here and now. Many are encouraged to become Christians with the promise of a better life, of a happy marriage, of healthy children, of a big house and all sorts of comforts in this world. Jesus did say I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10) but it is wrong to interpret this verse in such a worldly way. As Paul said if in this life only we have hope in Jesus we are of all men the pitiable (I Corinthians 15:19). Jesus came to overthrow all the kingdoms of this world and to establish the kingdom of God. Your salvation has cosmic and eternal dimensions.

In a dream Daniel saw four powerful, devouring beasts come out of a raging sea. These beasts symbolised kingdoms of this world, kingdoms ruled by men. The last beast in particular was horribly vicious and destructive. As Daniel heard it speaking boastful and blasphemous words the scene in his dream suddenly shifted. He saw into the heavenly throne room in a vision much like that which John was given in Revelation 4.

Ancient of Days

As Daniel watched he saw thrones put in place and the Ancient of Days seated (7:9). This title for God is unique to Daniel and this chapter. What does it tell us about God? Most probably it is to highlight his enduring nature over against the ephemeral nature of the beasts. *From everlasting to everlasting you are God* (Psalm 90:2).

The Ancient of Days had hair like pure wool and a garment as white as snow. Here is a picture of absolute purity and holiness. It is a picture which John also had in his vision. He saw one like the Son of Man whose head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow (Revelation 1:14).

While the white wool and snow reflect his purity and holiness, the fire surrounding his throne is symbolic of judgment. The throne itself had wheels like the chariot throne which Ezekiel saw in his whirlwind vision (Ezekiel 1). John saw lightning coming from the heavenly throne which he saw. Fire came from heaven to consume the sacrifice made by Elijah, a sacrifice

which lead to the judgment of the prophets of Baal. The disciples of Jesus understood God's judgment as fire from heaven when they wanted to destroy an unwelcoming village of Samaritans (Luke 9:54).

There is no mistaking this scene as that of a courtroom. First the judge was seated, all the court was seated, and then books were opened. These days we see men bringing into the court trolleys loaded with books. All the evidence is put forward in order to make a just judgment. In the courtroom in heaven the books were opened. This is God's record of the deeds of all people. John also saw these books opened (Revelation 20:12). The judge is seated ready to make his just and eternal judgment upon the nations, upon small and great, rich and poor, the dead and the living.

The scene is complete with a myriad of servants standing around the throne. Servants often line the walls of a courtroom ready to do the bidding of the judge. This was the case in India anyway. These are probably angels ministering before the Lord. John saw thousands upon thousands of these angels actually singing as they gathered around the throne of God (Revelation 5:11). The number is not literal. He was not counting them. There were too many to count.

Beast Is Slain

While Daniel watched the Ancient of Days take his seat upon the throne it seems the little horn of the fourth beast continued uttering pompous words. But he would not do so for much longer. The judge was seated and the court was in session.

As Daniel watched the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and thrown into the burning flame (7:11). Some refer to this beast as the antichrist. The beast of course symbolises kings and a kingdom (7:24) which in the first instance points to the Roman Empire. This beast is very similar to the beast of the sea which John saw in his vision, the beast that spoke pompous words and blasphemies against God for 42 months (Revelation 13:5, 6). This beast symbolises antichristian government in this world.

The beast was slain and cast into the fire. Since fire flowed from the throne of the Ancient of Days it is apparent that the beast was condemned and slain by order of the judge. The beast of the sea was similarly cast into the lake of fire after a brief battle against the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:20).

The other beasts were removed from their thrones as already implied in the vision. They seemed to just fade away but the sovereign God was behind their demise. Nothing in this world happens without God knowing. In fact nothing 'just happens' in this world outside the will of God. As our confession 'states the decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass' (Shorter Catechism 7).

Son of Man

Daniel's first vision comes to an end with the appearance of another figure, *one like the Son of Man* (7:13). Coming on the clouds of heaven, he came before the Ancient of Days. *Son of Man* indicates one having human form in contrast to the form of beasts exhibited by the other

kingdoms. The Son of man enters into the presence of the Ancient of Days without danger and without judgment or rendering obeisance. No other human could do this.

Why did this 'one' come to the heavenly throne? *To him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom (7:14)*. He was anointed and installed as king over all the peoples, nations and languages. God sits in heaven and laughs at the nations that exalt themselves against him for he has set his king, his anointed one on his holy hill. He has given his son the nations as his inheritance (Psalm 82). The title 'Son of man' is clearly a Messianic title. Messiah means Christ or anointed one.

Why this title 'Son of man' or 'one like the Son of man'? What does it mean? 'Son of man' indicates having human form. God gave Adam dominion over the creation but he failed to obey God and forfeited this dominion. 'Adam sinned and lost his dominion, falling short of the glory of God. Since then we have sought rapaciously to recover that dominion, without letting go of our sin. When the Son of Man came however he became the servant Adam failed to be; he reflected the glory of God in his obedience to him'. Jesus was obedient unto death. Therefore God highly exalted him and gave him all authority in heaven and on earth (Philippians 2:9, Matthew 28:18).

Son of Man therefore takes on a specific and exalted meaning in this passage. It takes on a divine as well as human aspect. As a title it is not without ambiguity and it is probably for this reason that Jesus chose to call himself by this title. It is a Messianic title but not one the Jews were familiar with. By using this title Jesus could clearly claim to be the Messiah, the Christ of God, but avoid much of the misunderstanding that surrounded the term Messiah in first century Judaism and among Jews even till today. Using the 'Son of man' title, Jesus spoke of giving his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He was the suffering servant Isaiah spoke of. Jesus could also use this title to speak of his coming on the clouds of heaven (Matthew 26:64) as portrayed in this passage in Daniel.

One like the Son of man inherited all the kingdoms of the earth. He was given universal dominion. *The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ (Revelation 11:15)*. He was given everlasting dominion, dominion that will never pass away and his kingdom will never be destroyed (7:14). He was given glory as the only one worthy to rule the nations of the earth because he was slain to redeem us to God by his blood. *Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing (Revelation 5:12)*.

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon