



Potomac Hills

Presbyterian Church, PCA



By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

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Daniel 7:16-28

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English Standard Version

“The Triumph of the Son of Man”

This is the 7th sermon in the series on the book of Daniel entitled,
“A Broken World and a Sovereign God.”

Daniel 7:16-28

“I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. ¹⁷ ‘These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.’ ¹⁹ “Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, ²⁰ and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and 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. ²¹ As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom. ²³ “Thus he said: ‘As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. ²⁴ As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. ²⁵ He shall speak words against the Most High, and 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. ²⁶ But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. ²⁷ 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;

their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.’²⁸ “Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.”

Heavenly Father, once again we have come to Your Word and we confess that in our ignorance, we struggle to understand it. There are people here this morning who need to hear the message of this Word. So we ask that by the power of the Holy Spirit, You show us Your sovereignty and teach us our great need for faith in Your Son. Do this in and for each of us, this morning, in Jesus’ name, and for His glory, Amen.

INTRODUCTION: *The End of the World*¹

Imagine me as a prophet ... I had a dream in the night, and visions passed through my mind. A great bull, sleek and fat, vain and self-satisfied, filled the landscape. And there arose a ravenous bear, which struck down the bull, and those who loved the bull wept bitterly. However, after a time the bull asserted itself again and once more filled the landscape. I was told the exact time of the bull's return, but I am forbidden to make it known.

Obviously, the bull represents an increasing stock market and good economic times, whereas the bear represents a declining stock market and more difficult economic times.

Most of us would love to know the future, especially the economic future. It would be nice if in fact I could tell you the exact date of the bull market's return. But I'm not a prophet and this is all made up.

In this message, however, we're going to consider the visions of one who was indeed a prophet of God ... Daniel. Chapter 7 begins, **Daniel 7:1**, “*In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter.*”

This is the beginning of the second half of the book of Daniel, the last six chapters. The second half is very different from the first. In the first six chapters Daniel interpreted the dreams of others, telling them what God was doing in their lives. But in this half he'll have his own frightening, overwhelming dreams and encounters with God. We're in a section that will not only feel different but will also have a different message.

And we have to ask the question, “Is there a way to understand these Biblical passages, a way that through **sane and sensible interpretation** uncovers the message of these passages for believers in all times and places?”

If we understand the central purpose of these passages and focus our attention on what's **clear and straightforward** rather than on what's complicated and obscure, then we'll find blessing and encouragement in the apocalyptic portions of the Bible. And what's more, Christians who disagree on the end-times can agree on these central truths ... whether the Lord returns sooner or later.

Now, to understand any kind of writing, we need to understand its purpose. And so let's step back and review ...

BACKGROUND: *Understanding Apocalyptic Passages*²

¹ The Introduction is adapted from the sermon, “*Four Beasts from the Sea*” by Steve Zeisler, Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, CA, 3/18/01.

² The definition of Biblical Apocalyptic is by Dr. Duguid who adapted it from *The Apocalyptic Imagination* by John J. Collins and *Old Testament Apocalyptic* by Paul Hanson.

The word “Apocalyptic” simply means revelation. This is why the Book of Revelation is also known as “The Apocalypse of St. John.” As I said last week, we instinctively know when a sentence doesn’t make much sense, such as one that begins, “The stars will fall from heaven, the sun will cease its shining, and the moon will drip blood . . . and the rest of the country will be partly cloudy with scattered showers.” A pretty obvious mismatch – The first part of that sentence is apocalyptic; the second part is a weather report. And that’s the problem with a lot of these end-times scenarios books. They’re taking apocalyptic literature and trying to make it sound like a weather report.

And it just doesn’t work. So what does work? Well, first of all, we have to define what apocalyptic literature is, and once again, I’ve printed it there in your sermon outline.

Biblical apocalyptic is a revelation of the ending of this present age, which is an age characterized by conflict, and its replacement by the final age of peace. It shows us ahead of time the end of the kingdoms of this world and their replacement by the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ. The revelation is unfolded in complex and mysterious imagery, and has the purpose of comforting and exhorting the faithful.

Therefore, apocalyptic literature proclaims a theology **of hope** to those whom the world has marginalized. It reminds us that God is presently on His throne and that **He will ultimately triumph**. And those who read apocalyptic literature **correctly** — those who take the time to understand what **Daniel** and **Ezekiel** and **Revelation** are all about — these are the ones who see Heaven open **and know how the story ends**. And so these are the ones who look forward . . . **with unshakeable hope** . . . to **the last day** when God acts to bring in the final triumph of the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

That’s the point of apocalyptic literature. “Yes, it’s bad, but this is not all there is; the best is yet to come. And when it comes, you will see that Jesus is victorious. And the followers of Jesus will win with Him.” And with the resounding words of Handel’s *Messiah*, we shall proclaim, **Job 19:25**, “*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth.*”

And so, with that in mind, let’s continue our study of the Book of Daniel, since we’re not following this in chapter order but chronologically, now we’re in the middle of chapter 7, and now we’re dealing with the interpretation of the strange dream Daniel had that we first read about last week.

Which means that we have to look at . . .

v. 7-8, 16-18: **THE MEANING OF THE BEASTS**³

Now last week we read about this vision and I want to go back and look at his description of the fourth beast, starting at verse 7, “*After this I saw in 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 beasts that*

³ The Exposition of the text and the Applications are adapted from *Daniel: Reformed Expository Commentary* by Dr. Ian Duguid, pages 105-121; *The NIV Application Commentary: Daniel* by Tremper Longman, page 176-198; the sermon, “*The Dream in the First Year of Belshazzar*,” by Rev. Geoff Thomas, Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth, UK; *ESV Study Bible*, Daniel study notes by Dr. Duguid and Dr. Paul Wegner.

were before it, and it had ten horns. ⁸ I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.”

Now if you remember, in this vision, Daniel sees **monsters**. Now these aren't just large and dangerous, like the Tyrannosaurus Rex of *Jurassic Park*. Rather, they're terrifying because they're **evil**, they're agents of **chaos** and **destruction**, and they're utterly **opposed** to God.

And if the fourth beast represents the Roman Empire, and many scholars think it does, then it emphasizes its **ruthlessness**. The Roman Empire was significantly different than the earlier empires, for it far surpassed them in power, longevity, and influence. The world had never before seen anything like it.

And so what happens next? Starting with verse 16, “I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. ¹⁷ ‘These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.’

The four great beasts, each more frightening than the preceding one, seem to indicate the number of kingdoms or kings represented in the vision. Most interpreters see these as representing the same kingdoms as the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2. And **if that’s true**, then most likely, they’re Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

However ... Ancient Greece is no more. Ancient Rome is no more. Rather the pattern of successive evil kingdoms simply tells us what it’s going to be like, that this is all part of God’s plan, and therefore, we should prepare accordingly.

And the text seems to support that ... because when the angelic interpreter explains to Daniel what the dream means, he doesn’t clarify the identity of the kingdoms. That suggests that **a proper understanding** of the vision doesn’t rest on resolving this question of **who** the beasts represent. In fact, the attempt to identify the various beasts actually directs us **away** from the proper understanding of the vision, which is not on **who** the beasts represent, or **when** these things will happen, but on **what** the vision of the beasts is trying to teach us. It’s **not** about writing history in advance as much as it’s making a theological statement about the conflict between the nature of evil and the victory of God.

The focus of **all apocalyptic literature** is on **the constant continuation of trials and conflicts and persecutions until the return of the King**. And so to identify the beasts as four **PAST** empires is exactly the **opposite** of the message of apocalyptic literature. For apocalyptic literature, nothing less than the coming of the new age can change this world. Until the coming of this new age, the darkness will not lift significantly. And therefore, with such a view, the message of Daniel 7 is that life in this present age will **ALWAYS** be this way until the end of the age.

And I think it's striking ... that the superpowers of our own age still customarily represent themselves by predatory animals, such as the Russian bear, the Chinese dragon, and the American eagle. The beasts of this present world may change their shape as times pass, but their lust for power and violence continues.

And if you follow the past empires theory, then Nebuchadnezzar turns into Darius, who becomes Alexander the Great, who becomes Antiochus Epiphanes, who turns into Caesar. However, these fierce rulers are followed in turn by Nero and Domitian, the great persecutors of

the early church. Last century we've seen manifestations of the beast in the persons of Hitler and Stalin and in the gas chambers of Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz and Dachau. More recently we've seen the manifestation of the beasts in Saddam Hussein and Kim Jung Il ... and on the killing fields of Cambodia and Kosovo and Rwanda [And if you come to Sunday School next week, you're going to learn something about Rwanda]. And the persecution of the saints around the world has only increased, as we see in the torment of Christians in the Sudan and in China today.

And don't for a minute think that the beasts aren't at work in our country. I just heard this week about a predicament that a large, well-known church in Seattle is facing. The adult film industry (a **stupid** name if there ever was one) is hosting an **amateur** film festival in that city near that church, and in order to enter a film in said film festival, this **church** must appear in it. And this church has had to hire full-time, 24/7 security to keep people from making these films inside their church.

And furthermore, as if things could get worse, the film festival is requiring that the **pastor** of this church must appear in these films. This pastor, quite well-known, is having the videos of his sermons and conference talks downloaded so they can be cut and spliced and put into hundreds of these profane films. How would you like to be that guy? This is a full blown attack on that guy because **he preaches the gospel** in a city **where the gospel is not welcome**.

And that's evil. And that's of Satan. And beasts are at work all around us.

This continual presence of the beasts in our world shouldn't surprise us because every human manifestation of evil is simply a reflection of the work of the Great Dragon, Satan himself. In Revelation 13, we see a beast rising from the sea.

Listen to this **description** ... from the **Bible** ... **Revelation 13:1-10**, *"And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. ² And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. ³ One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. ⁴ And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" ⁵ And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ⁶ It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming His name and His dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear: ¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. **Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.**"*

So here is the persecuting power of the antichrist, a beast that combines aspects of each of Daniel's creatures into one, a lion-bear-leopard with ten horns. Wherever we are in time, and wherever we are in place, frightening monsters array themselves against the Lord and against His anointed one, the Messiah Jesus.

So as the Apostle Paul reminds us in **Ephesians 6:10-12**, *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand*

against the schemes of the devil.¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over **this present darkness**, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

And all that is true, but it’s essential to notice that the focus of the chapter as a whole is not on the monsters themselves. And so we see ...

v. 18-28: THE **END OF THE BEASTS**

After all, the purpose of the passage is not to give us nightmares, but to calm our nightmares. The focus of Daniel 7 is on the coming Day of Judgment, when these monsters will receive **justice** and **God** wins the final victory. Which is precisely how the interpreting angel sums up the message of the chapter, verse 18, “*But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.*”

The angel is not fixated on the identity of the beasts; rather, the central point is the certainty of the final victory of the saints, a triumph which lasts forever. Now in verse 19-22 Daniel presses the angel with a question about the identity of the fourth beast, “*Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet,²⁰ and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and 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.²¹ As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them,²² until the Ancient of Days came, **and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.**”*

And yet the angel’s explanation adds very little to what Daniel already knows. Nor are there sufficient details given for us to identify this beast, verses 23-27, “*Thus he said: ‘As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.²⁴ As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings.²⁵ He shall speak words against the Most High, and 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.²⁶ But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end.²⁷ **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; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.**”*

The description of the time of trial and judgment is vague enough to leave the identity of the beast uncertain. And, I think, the reason for this vagueness on the part of the angel lies in the fact that his primary interest is not in the boastful horn of the beast. In fact, the angel’s answer sidesteps Daniel’s question to reemphasize his earlier point in verse 22 about the judgment to come and the triumph of the saints.

It’s as if the angel is saying, “Daniel, you’re missing the point. Yes, the horn of the beast will assault God’s people and it will be a trying time for the saints, but look beyond the horn. The point of this vision is that the time when the beasts will oppress the saints is **limited** by God. Beyond it lies the scene of the heavenly court, where the beasts will be destroyed. Then sovereignty and power will be handed over to the saints of the Most High God. And His kingdom will never end.”

And yet, you get the impression from verse 28 that Daniel still doesn't understand the angel's message, neatly setting us up for the rest of the book of Daniel. And so, at the end of the chapter, Daniel remains troubled by the vision. Though it ends well from the perspective of the godly, it paints a picture of continued and difficult oppression. The divine victory doesn't come easily, but through a cosmic struggle.

Daniel 7 is a vision in two parts. The first part reveals that the world is under the sway of evil. The second part shows us that God is in control and will ultimately judge the rebels. Daniel's vision, both here and in chapter 8, culminates at the end of history, when God will come and rid the world of evil and set up His own eternal kingdom.

So ... with all that said ... where does that leave us?

After all, we still live in this present evil age. And so I think there are two applications for us. There may be more, but there **are at least** these two. And these are not applications about what **we should do**, but these are applications about what **we should know** ... about what we should believe.

APPLICATION #1: THE NATURE OF EVIL

Daniel 7 paints a horrifying picture of evil. The hybrid beasts represent powerful, destructive forces that intend to harm others. The iron teeth and bronze claws of the beast intend to rip into its prey, and the godly know that **they are the beast's intended meal**.

Many Christians around the world today immediately understand this image. Christians in many countries know and experience the harsh rule of regimes that hate Christianity and go to great lengths to squash it. Today ... this morning ... Christians in China, Indonesia, India, throughout the Middle East, Sudan, Ethiopia, and even on our borders in Mexico, live in daily fear of losing both their freedom and their lives. These brothers and sisters in Christ have no trouble recognizing the beast-like nature of the world in which they live.

We don't have to face those kinds of **physical** dangers. Obviously, **our faith, our Christianity**, is much **weaker** than theirs because we can be won over by such simple things as money, sex, power, and fame. Why do the beasts need to go after **our bodies** when we so readily hand them our souls?

Materialism, secularism, nationalism, racism, and all the other "ism's" are so much more benign ways of getting us to bow the knee to Baal.

The Bible, after all, teaches that all men and women are sinners. The picture of the beasts in Daniel 7 is consistent with this lesson — a lesson we learn throughout the Bible — that every man and woman at heart is a self-seeking rebel against God, and we would crawl over the bodies of our fellow human beings in order to gain some small advantage for ourselves.

In the classic statement of the scope and depth of sin in the human heart, the Apostle Paul collects a series of Old Testament quotations and strings them together in a universal condemnation of humanity, **Romans 3:10-18**, "as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." ¹³ "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

No one escapes this judgment — not the ruthless dictator, nor the benevolent president, the hard-working mayor, our law-abiding neighbor, our spouses and children, **and especially** ... not ourselves. Everyone is a sinner "swift to shed blood." The beast is in the heart of every one

of us.

But the beasts are more than individual sinners. The beasts represent corporate rebellion as well. Simply because, if for no other reason, that corporate rebellion is a product that flows from individual sin, not vice-versa. The beasts represent “kingdoms,” not just one sinner, but an organized **pack** ... of sinners.

The point is that the power of the beast is as true today as it was in the time of Daniel when God’s people were oppressed by Babylon, or at the time of Jesus when God’s people were oppressed by Rome.

But thank God, the story doesn’t end there.

But rather, it ends with ...

APPLICATION #2: THE VICTORY OF GOD

The ultimate spiritual battle behind our earthly struggles was anticipated in the Old Testament, but the New Testament rips away the curtain so that we can see the heart of the battle. This battle will continue until the final day. But Daniel didn’t just paint a picture of horrifying and seemingly invulnerable evil. We cannot leave Daniel 7 without highlighting the picture of hope in the midst of the chaos. One like a **“son of man”** rides a cloud to the rescue of those oppressed by beastly kingdoms. The precise identity of this figure had to wait until the full revelation of the New Testament. **Revelation 1:7**, *“Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him. Even so. Amen.”*

Jesus Himself is the One who rides the cloud chariot into the final battle. Jesus is the divine warrior, who will defeat the beast and the forces of evil at the end of time. How can we be sure? What makes us think that Jesus will conquer the Great Dragon, the Great Serpent, Satan the deceiver?

Because **we have a guarantee!** And **that guarantee is the cross.** Jesus defeated Satan **on the cross.** This is the testimony of the Apostle Paul, who wrote concerning the removal of our sin, **Colossians 2:14b-15**, *“This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.”* In the New Living Translation that verse reads like this, *“In this way, He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by **His victory over them on the cross.**”*

One cannot help but see that the vision of Daniel 7 teaches God’s people that, although it looks as if the world is under the power of human evil running rampant and is not under God’s control, nothing could be further from the truth.

God is in control, and there’s no question — **there’s no question** — as to who’s going to win this struggle. **Mark 13:26-27**, *“And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then He will send out the angels and gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.”*

So stay faithful.

CONCLUSION: *The Sacrificial General* ⁴

I love this story by Max Lucado ... and I think it applies to our passage today ... and I want to end with it. He starts by writing ...

The decision had been made. The troops had been deployed and the battleships were on

⁴ The Conclusion is adapted from *And The Angels Were Silent* by Max Lucado, pages 27-31. Eisenhower quote comes from the article, “D-Day Recalling Military Gamble that Shaped History,” *Time*, 5/28/84, page 16.

their way. Nearly three million soldiers were preparing to slam against Hitler's Atlantic wall in France. D-Day was set in motion. Responsibility for the invasion fell squarely on the four-starred shoulders of General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The general spent the night before the attack with the men of the 101st Airborne. They called themselves *The Screaming Eagles*. As his men prepared their planes and checked their equipment, Ike went from soldier to soldier offering words of encouragement. Many of the flyers were young enough to be his sons. He treated them as if they were. A correspondent wrote that as Eisenhower watched the C-47s take off and disappear into the darkness, his hands were sunk deeply into his pockets and his eyes were full of tears.

The general then went to his quarters and sat at his desk. He took a pen and paper and wrote a message—a message which would be delivered to the White House in the event of a defeat.

It was as brief as it was courageous. "Our landings ... have failed ... the troops, the Air, and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches itself to the attempt it was mine alone."

It could be argued that the greatest act of courage that day was not in a cockpit or foxhole, but at a desk when the one at the top took responsibility for the ones below. When the one in charge took the blame—even before the blame needed to be taken. He modeled a quality seldom seen in our society of lawsuits, dismissals, and divorces. Most of us are willing to take credit for the good we do. Some are willing to take the rap for the bad we do. Few will assume responsibility for the mistakes of others. Fewer still will shoulder the blame for mistakes yet uncommitted.

Eisenhower did. As a result, he became a hero.

Jesus did. As a result, he's our Savior.

Before the war began, he forgave. Before a mistake could be made, forgiveness was offered. Before blame could be given, grace was provided.

The one at the top took responsibility for the ones at the bottom.

The phrase "Son of Man" conjured the same images for the Jew of Christ's era that the title "General" creates for you and me. It was a statement of authority and power. Consider all the titles Jesus could have used to define himself on earth: King of kings, the great I AM, the Alpha and Omega, the Lord of All, High and Holy. All of these and a dozen others would have been appropriate.

But Jesus didn't use them. Instead, he called himself ... the Son of Man. This title appears eighty-two times in the New Testament. Eighty-one of which are in the gospels. Eighty of which are directly from the lips of Jesus.

To understand Jesus we need to understand what this title means. If Jesus thought it important enough to use over eighty times, it is certainly important enough for us to pay a little attention to it.

Few would argue that the title is rooted in Daniel 7, a text which is just one frame of a cinematographic masterpiece. The seer is afforded a seat in a theater that features a peek at the powers of the earth. The empires are portrayed as beasts: rabid, hungry, and vicious. But as the scenes unfold the empires fade. One by one the world powers tumble. At the end the conquering God, the Ancient of Days, receives into His presence the Son of Man. To Him is entrusted authority, glory, and sovereign power.

Picture Him blazing white ... atop a gallant steed ... a sword in His hand.

To the Jew the Son of Man was a symbol of triumph. The conqueror. The equalizer. The score-settler. The intimidator. The Starship Enterprise. The right arm of the High and Holy One. The king who roared down from the heavens in a fiery chariot of vengeance and anger toward those who have oppressed God's holy people.

The Son of Man was the four-star general who called his army to invade and led his troops to victory. For that reason when Jesus spoke of the Son of Man in terms of power, the people cheered. When He spoke of a new world where the Son of Man would sit on His glorious throne, the people understood. When He spoke of the Son of Man who would come on the clouds of heaven with great power and authority, the people could envision the scene. When He spoke of the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power, everyone could imagine the picture.

But when He said the Son of Man would suffer ... the people stood silent. This didn't fit the image ... it's not what they expected. Put yourself in their place. You've been oppressed by the Roman government for years. Since your youth you've been taught that the Son of Man would deliver you. Now He's here. Jesus calls Himself the Son of Man. He proves He's the Son of Man. He can raise the dead and still the storm. The crowds are growing. You're excited. Finally, the children of Abraham will be set free.

But what's this He's saying? **Mark 9:31b-32**, "*The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And when He is killed, after three days He will rise.*"³² *But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask Him.*"

Wait a minute! That's an impossible, incredible, intolerable contradiction of terms. The Son of Man being betrayed? The Conqueror — killed? The Ambassador of the Ancient of Days — mocked? Spit upon?

But such is the irony of Jesus wearing the title "the Son of Man." It is also the irony of the cross. Calvary is a hybrid of God's lofty status and His deep devotion. The thunderclap which echoed when God's wrath collided with His love. The marriage of heaven's kingship and heaven's compassion.

Jesus wears a sovereign crown but bears a father's heart.

He is a general who takes responsibility for His soldiers' failures.

But Jesus didn't write a note, He paid the price.

He didn't just assume the blame, He seized the sin.

He became the ransom. He is the General who dies in the place of the private, the King who suffers for the peasant, the Master who sacrifices Himself for the servant. He is the Son of Man who ... as **Mark 10:45** says, "*...came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.*"

And He did that for you. And if you believe that, if you receive Him as your Lord and your Savior, then, as Jesus said, **Mark 14: 62**, "*... you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.*"

Think about that. You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

Heavenly Father, at this time, we pray that You would give us the strength to go on in a fallen and broken world because we serve the Son of Man, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the One who lives, and reigns, and is coming again ... in glory, now and forever. Amen.

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Galatians 1:3-5

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”