

God's Eternal Dominion

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[0 : 00] Alright, well I'll pray and then we'll get stuck into it a bit more. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, thank you for giving us your life-giving word and thanks for revealing to us things that are beyond description.

Please help us to understand your word well this morning and to live in the light of it. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well if you found reading Daniel chapter 7 a little bit perplexing, a bit strange, you'll join the club.

I'm sure it's strange for all of us. That's because this is a style of literature that we don't normally come across. It's really in the Bible that we come across as part of this language.

In Daniel 7 we're taking into the very throne room of God a place that is indescribable yet real nonetheless. But language doesn't have categories to describe the reality of it all, to communicate what it's actually like.

And so we come across a language called apocalyptic language. You'll find it in Isaiah, in Ezekiel, in Zechariah, in Revelation. And we get a glimpse of things beyond this world.

[1 : 11] It's a language of pictures. That's the language. It's a language of things like something. But not exactly the same as something.

And God in his mercy shows us the things of eternity in language that we can't particularly understand clearly. But describes stuff that is like what it really is. Both frightening, but also comforting.

And we see two things of, in this sort of two major apocalyptic dream scenes. We see what's going to happen and we see how things are going to be arranged for all eternity.

So we're moving into the second half of the book of Daniel now. Chapters 1 to 6 was prose. You can sort of read it fairly simply. But chapters 1 to 6 gives us the stuff to help understand chapters 7 to 12.

So Daniel's shown us that it's God who orchestrates things according to his will. He is the reason why certain kingdoms rise and certain kingdoms fall.

[2 : 18] He's in control of it all. Behind the rise and fall of the kingdom of this world, God rules in perfect, righteous, powerful ways. Now our historians and social commentators will give an earthly explanation for why kingdoms come and go.

Various reasons why they rise and fall. However, it's God who is in charge over the rise and fall of every nation. So God is in charge today over the Japanese, over the Chinese, over the European, over the Middle Eastern, over the Western civilizations, over every civilization.

God is in control over all kingdoms. The Lord of heaven and earth is ruling in absolute unopposed sovereignty. And everyone will give an account to him.

God, the maker of heaven and earth, the Lord of heaven and earth, is the major power in the world today, right now. He is ruling despite what might otherwise appear.

And as we understand and come to grips with that truth more and more, we can have greater and more confidence in biblical Christianity. That's worth believing, which we're sticking with.

[3 : 29] As the people of Daniel's day, who were living under foreign oppression, could do. Now, the big thing that Daniel 7 reveals to us is this.

No matter how things look in this world right now, no matter how beastly a kingdom or authority in power seems right now, no matter what things look like right now, and no matter how bad things get or how the mocked God might be, one day, one day, all will be revealed.

God's mighty rule will be revealed in apocalyptic ways. And what we will see is everything inverted. Everything is going to be turned upside down.

And God's people will be raised to rule over the people that oppressed God's people.

And they will be judged. And every rebellious beast and ruler and political power and kingdom of the world will be under the authority of God's people.

[4 : 45] So in Daniel chapter 7, we have sort of two major apocalyptic dream scenes that show us just that. So let's have a look at the first one, the defeat of the beast in verses 1 to 8.

We're taken back now to a time earlier in the book of Daniel, to the first year of Belshazzar's reign. It's about 550 BC, right? Belshazzar is the king of Babylon.

And this time it's not the king of Babylon who has a dream, but Daniel who has a dream. And there are four beasts coming out of the sea. It's reminiscent of the scene of chapter 2, where Nebuchadnezzar has a dream and there are four kingdoms.

But notice the language, it's like, right? Like a lion, like a bear, like a leopard. And the last one is terrifying and dreadful. It's nothing like anything else before on earth. Now we can speculate who these beasts are.

Lots of people do and equate them with various world events today. But that would make the book of Daniel irrelevant to the people who are reading it in Daniel's day. Suffice to say that the first one looks very much like Nebuchadnezzar, the beastly ruler of Babylon, who was in opposition to God, who was humbled by God.

[5 : 57] And the last one, the worst beast, is also defeated by God. Fortunately, we're given the interpretation of the dream in visions later on the chapter.

And then verse 9 to 12, the vision continues. The courtroom scene is established. The Ancient of Days takes his seat on a fiery throne.

You see there? One with wheels of fire, with fire coming out from the throne. A stream of fire issued and came out from him, verse 10. It's reminiscent of the fiery furnace of Daniel chapter 3, where Nebuchadnezzar had heated up as hot as he could to go out destroying those opposed to his rule. The Ancient of Days is served by a crowd beyond number. Many thousands served him. And many tens of thousands are ready there before him. And he judges over all.

It's a courtroom scene of dazzling size and power and authority. The whole world, at one level, stands before the Ancient of Days. And the books are opened and judgment begins.

[7 : 08] It seems that the fourth and last beast with the horn is not silent before the judge, the Ancient of Days. The horn's a symbol of power.

And verse 11, he's no match, though, for the one on the throne. No matter how great, how intimidating, how beastly he is, the Ancient of Days is defeating him.

No king or kingdom can stand before the Ancient of Days. And the beast is killed and destroyed. And he's then thrown into the fire and destroyed. Unlike Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

No one rescues him. No one rescues this beast that's thrown into the fiery furnace, inferno. And after this great arrogant beast is destroyed, there are still other beasts, you see, living in opposition to God.

Have a look at it there with me. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. There in verse 12.

[8 : 11] There are still other beasts living in opposition to God. Their lives are prolonged for a short period of time. But God takes their ruling authority away from them.

God's judgment is discriminating and it's just. And yet there's a time after it when these lives are prolonged for a season and a time.

A short time follows the judgment of the beast until the ultimate end comes. So that's Daniel's first awesome apocalyptic vision into the time of the judgment.

So it looks something like this. Here's a bit of a slide to try and represent what's been going on here. You've got the Ancient of Days rules for all eternity. And you've got these beasts who are there on the earth.

And then there's the first judgment when the first beast, the first judgment comes and they're destroyed. The great beast is destroyed. And then there's a time for a while.

[9 : 17] And then there's the final judgment when the rest of the beasts are done in. Ancient of Days rules. Judgment days comes and the beasts are defeated. And then there's a time when the beastly lives continue and the world lives a bit longer.

A time when the rain though is over and final judgment comes and all the beasts are defeated. But that's only the first half, right? What it'll be like.

There's more to fill in the picture. And so now we have the apocalyptic scene dream two. The Son of Man rules.

This dream brings to a climax, really, the insights that Daniel has into heaven. One like a Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days.

Coming on a cloud. Now the Ancient of Days is clearly the Lord God Almighty. It could be translated Ancient One.

[10:19] Psalm 90 says this. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had informed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

He is the Ancient One, God Himself. And the Son of Man is presented before Him the Ancient of Days.

And the Ancient of Days gives Him dominion, both realm and reign. Gives Him glory, gives Him a kingdom. And this dominion is a glorious reign. It's over all people, nations and languages.

Everyone and everything will serve Him. The beastly beasts of the world will serve Him. No one can stand against Him. This dominion, this rule is everlasting, never comes to an end.

The dominion is indestructible. It can't be destroyed there. Let me just read it out to you. I saw in the night visions, and behold, there, verse 13, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a Son of Man.

[11:20] And He came to the Ancient of Days, and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, and glory, and kingdom. And all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.

And His kingdom won, that shall not be destroyed. It sounds just like the description that Nebuchadnezzar and Darius gave of Daniel's God back in earlier chapters of Daniel, Daniel chapter 4 and Daniel chapter 6.

But look at it with me, Daniel chapter 4, just to remind you, Daniel chapter 4, it's on the slide, I think. At the end of the days, I and Nebuchadnezzar lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised not at Him who lives forever.

For His dominion is never lasting in dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and He does according to His will among the hosts of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

And none can say His hand, or say to Him, what have you done? This Son of Man coming to the Ancient of Days, which Daniel sees, is very much like Daniel's God Most High.

[12:35] So it looks something like this. Here we go. Dream scene 2. The Ancient of Days rules in unopposed glory, and the Son of Man appears.

I hope you like the animation. Did it come? Push that button. One more button. Yes! All right. The Son of Man appears, and there He is, and given rule.

And He starts to get ruled, and then continues to rule forever. Well, what's the interpretation then of this, in verses 15 to 18?

Well, comfort first. What Daniel is saying is that the four beasts will rise, but they'll not prevail. Verse 17. Have a look at it with me. Verse 17.

These four great beasts, the four kings who shall rise out of the earth, but the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever, and ever.

[13:36] Daniel asked one of the millions who stood before the throne, what it's all about, and he learns that the four beasts, the four kings, and the saints will actually rule, and receive a kingdom, and possess it forever, and ever, and ever.

These beastly kings will not rule forever. The saints of the Most High will. And things are going to be inverted, you see. But remember, this is what the Son of Man is going to be given as well, back in verse 14.

So in some incredible way, what Daniel sees is a Son of Man, who is a divine figure, is also identified with the saints of the Most High.

But it won't necessarily be easy for the saints of the Most High. The fourth beast will be very beastly and destructive towards the saints. Come down to verse 23 to 25.

Thus he said, As the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms. And he shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.

[14 : 49] As for the ten horns out of the 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. He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints to the Most High, and shall think to change the times of the law.

And they shall be given into his hand, for a time, times and a 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 dominion shall serve and obey him.

The court sits in judgment, the dominion of the fourth beast is taken away, and given to God's holy ones, his saints, the saints of the Most High. And again we see that the saints of the Most High will be given the kingdom forever and ever.

The saints of the Most High have the same dominion as the Son of Man. Now, for Daniel, an ancient Israelite, in Babylon, under the reign of foreign beastly kings, this would change the way that you thought about things.

[16 : 12] The kings are not worshipping the true and living God of heaven and earth. They are the beastly kings. As is every kingdom and ruler that has lived in opposition to God.

And in the end, they'll be judged. By the saints, notice, of the Most High. And there's an eternal kingdom of God coming, and God's people will rule eternally in it, and over it.

Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, will be judged by the saints of the Most High. That's the guaranteed eternal reality. You might not see it now, but that's how things are in the throne room of God, where it counts.

The table's going to be completely turned upside down by God himself, as Nebuchadnezzar already confessed, back in Daniel chapter 4, and Darius after him.

Which then pushes us to try and understand who this Son of Man is, really, doesn't it? In the first instance, and most importantly, the Son of Man is a truly human king, a truly human being, not a beast.

[17 : 40] The Son of Man was God's favourite way of addressing the prophet Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel, who was also in Babylon. Ninety-three times, Ezekiel's called Son of Man.

God addresses him as Son of Man. And Daniel's also called a Son of Man, in chapter 8, verse 17, we'll get there. So, Son of Man is a way of speaking about truly human people, truly human beings. God's kingdom is going to be ruled by ones who are in the appearance, like humans, in the image of God, not beasts. So, it's one like a human that approaches the Ancient of Days, who is this one, like a Son of Man.

So, it looks something like this. Son of Man is fully human. But in the second instance, the Son of Man is also God's people, Israel.

Psalms 80 speaks about Israel and other places. the Holy People being the Son of Man. And here in Daniel, chapter 7, verse 18, we see that the everlasting kingdom is given over to the saints, the Holy Ones, God's chosen people.

[19 : 04] So, the Son of Man is a way of referring to God's chosen people. This is the one who approaches the Ancient of Days, is like faithful Israel.

The saints who approach the Ancient of Days, God Himself. So, it looks something like this, the Son of Man. And thirdly, as we move into the New Testament, the one like a Son of Man is Jesus.

It's His favourite way of speaking about Himself. Who He Himself is the representative of national Israel. It's used of 82 times in the New Testament, 78 times on the lips of Jesus.

Jesus speaks about the future in terms of Him sitting at the right hand of the Father. Which unites the themes of Daniel chapter 7 and the Son of Man theme with that of the Messiah, the kingly ruler Messiah.

Have a listen to Matthew chapter 25. I've got it on a slide here for you, I think. When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

[20 : 23] Matthew 25 is talking about when the Son of Man approaches this Daniel 7 realm. Then He will sit on His glorious throne.

That's when He comes to the Father. before Him will be gathered all the nations and He will separate people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

So, Jesus is the Son of Man who will ultimately rule over the nations. There will be no opposition, there will be no rebellion against Him, no doubt who rules and who doesn't, but also Daniel sees Him as a suffering saint, the suffering righteous Israelite.

Remember Mark chapter 10 verse 45, the one who gives His life as a ransom for many. There is no doubt that Jesus is referring to Himself as the one who comes to the Father, who is like a human but He's much more than a human, He's divine and yet to become the Son of Man He must go through death on the cross so that He can bring people into the eternal kingdom of God.

But there's more, God's people, Christians who are in Christ are raised with Him and so are caught up in Christ and also are Son of Man.

[22 : 01] Have a look at this slide here, Ephesians chapter 2, we read it a couple of weeks ago, but God, rich in mercy because of the great love which He loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ by grace you've been saved and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

So all believers are caught up in Christ Jesus and all believers are Son of Man as well. and we are told that we will judge the world with Jesus.

1 Corinthians chapter 6 speaks about we will judge the angels. So Christians are the saints, are the holy ones of God who will rule and who are ones like a Son of Man who comes to the Ancient of Days.

So what Daniel's seeing is an incredible truth picture. You can't draw it, you can't comprehend it exactly but somehow what he sees he's seeing something like the saints caught up in this divine figure who is human as he approaches the Ancient of Days to rule over the world and the kingdom forever.

He's representative of all God's saved people and all God's saved people are now in him and we with him will judge the nations.

[23 : 54] That's a massive picture. Well the question is when does this happen? when will we see the one like a son of man coming to the Ancient of Days?

Has it already happened? What's the future look like? When will the judgment of those in opposition of God the beast take place? Well one thing is for certain that if we were going to be ruling the kingdom of God now in our present state it wouldn't work so well.

It wouldn't be good for anybody. I was in a conversation with some blokes in the gym the other day and they were talking about how messed up the world was and how corrupt all the world leaders were and how much they messed the places in and I asked them well how would you fix it?

I'm hoping they might ask me what I would do but they never did. Anyway the answer I was told was to remove the leaders by force.

and then he would replace all those people with people who would do better and the question in my mind was well who would be better?

[25 : 12] If it's just another person like you wouldn't not be so crash-out either. They'd be prone to doing just what the people they replaced would do fallible leaders.

We've already got them. We need a much bigger change don't we than the one that he proposed which is exactly what God has done.

For we Christians will one day be raised and made perfectly holy perfectly righteous when the final judgment day comes and then as new creatures we will rule with Christ Jesus the ascended Christ who is perfect over the new creation for all eternity perfectly.

So there's an apocalypse now and there's an apocalypse then. Daniel saw the reality that God rules and that God ultimately wins.

Daniel saw that God's people win and that God's people ultimately rule. Not the Babylonians not the Persians not the Greeks not the Romans not any other nation that's risen up since.

[26 : 34] And yet this apocalyptic dream was not the dream that's just a little bit silly right. This dream is like a nightmare and it's a nightmare that you don't wake up from and go oh that was good it's just a nightmare.

This is real. It's a nightmare that you don't wake up from and it goes away. This is a nightmare you wake up from and it becomes real.

It must happen. And if it frightened Daniel shocked him so that he lost his colour lost his composure went pale was greatly alarmed what Daniel was seeing was the defeat of the beast the son of man must suffer terribly and be given over to him and killed himself before he can defeat the beast.

At the cross is where the beast is defeated. His beastly rule lingers on since so it looks something like this. you've got the cross and the judgment comes and the beast is defeated and now the son of man has ascended and reigns on high and now there are Christians in the world as we live in this world now.

But the son of man has been given all rule and the saints and Jesus and Christians are also caught up in him right now.

[28 : 20] This horrendous dream before the victory of God's saints before the victory of God the son of man will come the suffering and the stress from a beast that devours the whole earth that tramples down and breaks the earth to pieces that beast has come when the heavenly authorities conspired with the Roman rulers and the political beastly powers and the rebellious religious leaders a beastly alliance of princes and principalities and politics and people nailing the son of man to the cross and another beast will come that speaks against the most high usurping the rule of god most high a beast that will wear out the saints of the most high who are given into his hand for a short time and times and a half a shortened time and so the days are something like this the son of man is now reigning in authority and we're now in this short time of period now where we're reigning with

Christ but we're not there yet we're seated with him but we're also here in St Lucia and when it's last day's time now and then there's a new creation about to happen fully and finally on that last day but you see there in verse 26 the beast will be consumed and destroyed on the last day at the final judgment the son of man brings about the new creation the unopposed kingdom of god and then verse 27 the saints of the most high the son of man will rule for all eternity over every dominion and it will look something like this but something far more glorious than this something which can scarcely get our minds eye around in the midst of god's people being in a foreign land under the earthly rule of the babylonians daniel's shown what things will look like when things are set right in the end and what we heard from the mouths of the beastly babylonian kings we now see more vividly and accurately in the vision that daniel saw the lord god the lord is god most high he is king most high his kingdom's all eternal it'll never be destroyed and the son of man's been given authority to rule over it but the son of man is us is jesus under his authority it's the way things were in the beginning but god brings about a new creation with the son of man ruling and the new creation rightly under him which includes us caught up in christ this is a vision that will enable god's people to live in the world while we wait for the exile to end while god's people continue to be harassed by regimes opposed to the lord god most high see daniel's not a book to read to find out when the world will end daniel's a book for god's people to be comforted while we live in this world waiting for it to be renewed god is all-powerful and all-knowing and nothing happens without him he's the ultimate judge who will deal with all the kingdoms and all the rulers no matter how beastly are and his plans wonderfully somehow include us in christ jesus the saints the saints of the most high you and i will one day be perfected and by our union with christ we are caught up with him as the son of man reigning with him in glorious eternal reign righteous rule of the eternal kingdom of god and as christ jesus judges the world we who are caught up with him will also judge the world and so the table is going to be turned on all those who live in the world opposed to the ancient of days we dream of a world of peace a dream of a world where there's everything as it should be where there's no sickness no suffering no violence no death a dream where there's no rulers opposed to god's world everything going right daniel was shown it daniel was shown it and he was shown how it would come about and that world's coming but it's not quite here yet the apocalyptic dream of the world in perfect order is still to come god's revealed to us in his word it's amazing that we've got an idea of what it's like he's revealed to us mysteries that are far greater than we can possibly comprehend and make up on our own this is the guaranteed glorious future and this is our guaranteed glorious future so we need to set our minds on things above where christ is seated where we are eternally seated with christ not on earthly things that perish or worldly leaders that fail let me pray our father in heaven we thank you for this incredible picture of what our future looks like please give us faith to believe and we thank you for the great hope that we have of being with you for all eternity in a perfect kingdom where everything is as you'd have it be help us set our minds on these things and lead others towards it as well we pray in jesus name amen who who