Jesus in the Prophets – Daniel Ch.7 – the Son of Man

1. Introduction

a. As we look at how Jesus is portrayed in the prophetic scriptures we find a description of him that he referred back to over and over again during his ministry. In Daniel 7 Daniel is seeing events in the heavens. These are the events of the final spiritual battle between the rebellious sons of god who have dominion over the rebellious nations on the earth. They are described as like beasts who come up out of the sea – out of the chaos and destruction which exists without God's presence.

Dan.7:2-7 *Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.* ***3*** *And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.* ***4*** *The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings……* ***5*** *And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. …….. .'* ***6*** *After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. …… behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong.*

b. These are the same four kingdoms that we saw in Daniel 2. The important thing to recognise is that this is primarily a battle being fought in the heavens.

c. Yahweh created two realms – the heavens and the earth – and each was populated by a host who were created to be imagers of him within their realm. He created sons of god to co-rule in the heavens and sons of man to co-rule on the earth. The problems came when the sons of god broke through the boundary and tried to establish their rule and power over the sons of men.

d. This is why what Daniel sees next is highly confusing to him.

Dan.7:13,14 *"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.* ***14*** *And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.*

e. What on earth is a son of man doing in heaven!!! No human can enter heaven and live! This being has to be divine to be before Yahweh and yet he looks like a man! How can this man be coming before the throne of the Ancient of Days, as he sits in judgement in all his power and glory, and not die!

Dan.7:9-10 *"As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire.* ***10*** *A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgement, and the books were opened.*

2. Son of Man

a. The most common word in the New Testament and throughout Christian history to refer to Jesus is Christ, the Messiah but if you read through the four Gospels accounts, you'll notice, if you pay attention, that "Christ" is the least used title by Jesus himself.

b. He never calls himself Christ in public, he only ever does it in private and even then, it's in a kind of ambiguous or oblique way. You never see a sentence where Jesus says, "I am the Messiah." There are a handful of stories where other people call him that and he immediately calls himself by a different title, The Son of Man.

c. For example, in Mark 8 Jesus takes the disciples aside and says, "Who do you all say that I am?"

Mark 8:27-30 *And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" **28** And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." **29** And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." **30** And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.*

d. Peter responds by calling him the Messiah (Christ) and Jesus instructs them to tell no-one and then goes on to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the chief priests and elders.

e. The thing we need to understand was that the title Messiah was very loaded politically. To the Jewish people the Messiah was going to come and destroy all their enemies. To the occupying Romans that was a significant threat. There were many people walking around saying they were the Messiah. Jesus wasn't the only one. In terms of royal overtones, messianic figures in Jesus's day could be claiming to be the true representative of the ancient Kingdom of David.

f. Son of Man is the phrase that Jesus used most often to talk about himself. So why does Jesus like this title, the Son of Man, and where did he get it from? Clearly from Daniel 7. When Jesus constantly refers to himself as The Son of Man he is alerting his listeners to Daniel's vision. But why?

3. An empty throne

a. What Daniel is seeing in his vision is the Eden cosmic mountain where God dwells on his throne. Humans were invited to share God's throne and rule over the world, but they rebelled, and so they were expelled out of the garden and holy mountain. The whole biblical story is about how could humans be restored to the throne to rule the world alongside God.

b. Daniel 7 is repainting the Garden of Eden Genesis 1 and 2 setting, and depicting the absentee human rulers and the fact that there's a glaring absence that God wants filled. Hence the image of an occupied throne and empty throne beside him. What has been needed from Genesis 3 onwards is a human who can ascend the Holy Mountain, go back to Eden and become the truly human one who will rule the world alongside God. And that's what Daniel's vision is about. From Genesis 1 onwards we see God's desire to rule the earth in partnership with humans.

c. However, in Daniel's vision we see that instead of a human ruling, you have an empty throne, and you have wild beasts trampling humans in the world. Daniel sees this unoccupied throne alongside the flaming Ancient of days and then suddenly, on a

cloud coming up to the throne is one like the son of man, a human one. And the human one comes, sits down at the throne in God's territory.

d. This one human is elevated out of the trampled mass of humanity and brought up to rule the world alongside the Ancient of Days. Then all the nations are honouring and serving and worshiping this human and the Ancient of Days together and the Son of Man is given authority over everything.

e. So by constantly referring to himself as the Son of Man Jesus was emphasising that although he was human he was also divine. By his death and resurrection, he would be the first human to be able to enter back into Eden and rule with the Ancient of Days. By doing so he would open up a way for humanity to regain their true identity and purpose – to reign with Yahweh in a restored Eden.

4. Fully God and fully man

a. When Jesus called Himself the Son of Man, He was identifying with the human race. Daniel's use of "one like the son of man" speaks of His eternal destiny as a man on the earth. He will be fully God and fully Man forever.

b. Jesus embraced the frailty of humanity during His time on earth. The phrase "son of man" was used in the Old Testament to refer to weak humans. Ezekiel used this term nearly 100 times to emphasise his own human frailty in being a weak man made of clay. It is remarkable that the uncreated God became human and was hungry, tired, thirsty, etc.

c. Jesus is committed to partnership with redeemed humans. His eternal companions are human. He will bring His Bride into the glory that He inherits <u>as a man</u> from the Father

5. Authority to judge

a. Jesus called Himself the Son of Man to emphasise that He is the only man with authority to judge (evaluate) the human race. Jesus has been appointed as the judge of all the nations. In this role, He evaluates every person and nation and then dispenses rewards, discipline, or judgment.

John 5:26-27 *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. [27] And he has given him authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of Man.*

b. Jesus restrained most of His judgments while on earth until He bore the judgment for our sin and was raised from the dead. His resurrection declared that the price was paid and had been accepted by God. The elders cry out that He is worthy to release the seals of judgment because He left all His glory in heaven and came to earth to bear our judgment and pay the debt of our sin.

Rev. 5:9 *And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, <u>for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God</u> from every tribe and language and people and nation,*

c. The message is twofold.

i First, that all enemies of the kingdom will surely be openly defeated. Full and final victory over all our enemies is assured.

ii Second, that Jesus in His exaltation will assume the responsibility of judging (evaluating) the human race with significant consequences. He will give eternal rewards to the faithful, and assign temporal and eternal punishment to the Antichrist and his empire. He alone is worthy to release the end-time "seals of judgment" on the Antichrist.

d. Jesus, in calling himself the Son of Man was clearly stating his authority to reign alongside Yahweh within the divine council. At his trial Jesus declaration that he was the Son of Man was the "final straw" for the high priest.

Matt.26:62- 65 *And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" **63** But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." **64** Jesus said to him, "You have said so. <u>But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."</u> **65** Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "<u>He has uttered blasphemy</u>. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.*

e. The high priest's question was to ascertain if Jesus was declaring himself to be the Messiah – the man who would come to rescue the Jews. However, Jesus' reply is almost a direct quote from Daniel 7 and thus declares that he is not only a man but the man in Daniel 7 who is also divine. This was blasphemy – declaring that he was God and as such had the authority and power to judge, including judging the Jewish authorities.

f. This was the authority that he was establishing throughout his earthly ministry and which continually angered the spiritual leaders in Israel. This is the reason Son of Man is the title he continually uses to describe himself. For instance:

Mark 12:8-11 *And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven', or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 <u>But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins</u>"—he said to the paralytic — **11** "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."*

g. The Son of Man title relates to him having authority on the earth – the authority that Adam and Eve forfeited. As Son of God he has always had authority in heaven now he is demonstrating his authority on earth having taken on human flesh.

Mark 2:23-28 *One Sabbath he was going through the cornfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck ears of corn. **24** And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"……. **27** And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. **28** <u>So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."</u>*

h. The Sabbath was created for Adam's sake and for the humanity he represents, not the other way around. The Sabbath was built into the structure of the world that was made subject to Adam. Therefore, Adam's final son (the son of man), who has recovered dominion that his great forefather had forfeited, is the Lord of the Sabbath.

6. Conclusion

a. Jesus' title, Son of Man, establishes his divine authority as a man. At his first coming that authority was shown through miraculous signs and wonders and his death on a cross. His authority was demonstrated by serving others and laying down his life for them.

Mark 10:45 *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

i Like his great ancestor Adam before the fall, the Son of Adam had the right and authority to be served, as ruler of all creatures on earth. But instead of exercising this right, the Son of Man has become the slave of all humanity, even to the point of dying for them.

ii In so doing, he has reversed the effect of Adam's sin, the death which he passed onto his offspring; the one Son of Adam has given his life as a ransom for the many children of Adam who were deprived of their life by the transgression of "the human."

iii Through Christ we too have authority and power as sons of God to serve others and give of our lives for their sake.

Mark 8:34-35 *And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.* ***35*** *For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.*

b. The title Son of Man also identifies him as the coming warrior King who will judge (evaluate) the human race and reign over the earth with His people to His Father's glory.

c. Daniel saw a man approaching God's throne, traveling on supernatural, heavenly clouds, to be commissioned as the ruler of all the nations in partnership with the redeemed.

Dan. 7:13-14, 27 *"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him* ***14*** *And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. …* ***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.*

d. Daniel saw a man, seemingly defying what God told Moses about no man seeing God face to face and living (v. 13). He was so near to God, yet without any danger. To this Man was given dominion over all the nations on earth. This was surprising to Daniel, because he understood that Messiah, as the son of David, was to rule over Israel. But Daniel sees Him reigning over every nation forever (v. 14).

e. Jesus deeply desires His people to rule with Him (Dan. 7:22, 25-27; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5). He doesn't need us, but desires us to be with Him because we are His eternal companion (Bride). When Jesus, as a man, reached this pinnacle of

participation with God on the earth, it was a breakthrough for the human race. He now beckons us to come with Him! Part of the good news is that a man made a way for other humans to participate in what is so dear to the Father and was man's intended purpose—that is, filling the earth with His glory.

John 17:24 *Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*

Rev. 3:21 *The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

f. The worthy One received what He is worthy of; part of it is His partnership with His Bride. The empty throne which he occupied is now shared with his Bride

Rev. 5:9-10 *… And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,* ***10*** *and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and <u>they shall reign on the earth</u>."*

Matt. 19:28 *Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

g. When Jesus spoke of His return to earth, He almost always mentioned coming on the clouds; in this way, He would be seen by all the nations (Mt. 24:30; 26:64; Mk. 13:26; Lk. 21:27; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thes. 4:17; Rev. 1:7; 14:14-16; Dan. 7:13; Ps. 68:4; 104:1-3). He is the cloud rider of Daniel 7 and we will come with him.

Rev. 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.*

Matt. 24:30 *All the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*