

A Vision of the Future: Christ Reigns Forever
Daniel 7:15-28

*"...So that a the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father."*

Philippians 2:10-11

Introduction: Mother's Day is a complex day because being a mom is in itself complex. At first blush, it seems simple enough: give birth, care for, raise up, and send out children. But as one realizes the work, responsibility, pain, anxiety, and tireless effort of motherhood, there is a natural growing admiration and affection for all moms. Sometimes we don't realize all of this until we ourselves become parents and grandparent, then have the ability to look back in appreciation and forward with anticipation to our own experience. Mom's spend the most time with children, thus often have the greatest insights, experience the greatest frustrations (is this room messy again), give the greatest and often unseen sacrifices of time, and like Mary in Luke 2, treasure these things and ponder them in their hearts (2:19), often not knowing how to express all they are feeling in terms of pride, sadness, joy, discouragement, regret, and happiness in looking at their kids. Motherhood is a tremendous gift, one that should be acknowledged and celebrated, rather than taking it for granted. The more we understand what mom's bear and take on, the more we are able to honor, know, and thank them.

In a similar way, I believe this parallels our relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus is central to our lives, but often we only give partial or token acknowledgment, or take Him for granted, or perhaps we don't actually know all that He has done or will do. Sometimes we revert to a true picture of Jesus, that He died, loves, and saves, but not a complete one. We see Him as bringing things to the earth now (peace, justice, righteousness), that are true in the sense that He brings people to the Father through His blood, but will only bring those things in completion in the future, when He comes again. Or we try to take those things in our own hands, bringing them about in perfection when we do not have the means, power, or the promise to do so. In fact, I believe without knowing what Jesus promises us in the future it limits and hinders us from knowing and worshipping Him in the present.

- We are called to **KNOW JESUS, and knowing Him breeds endurance** - Paul said he counted everything as loss because of the *surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord* (Phil. 3:8). Knowing Him was not only defined by having His righteousness through faith (9), but it was to know Him and the **power of His resurrection**, and may **share in His sufferings**, becoming like Him **in death**, that by any means possible I may attain to **His resurrection from the dead**. (10-11). Do you see what Paul does? He links our knowing of Jesus (not just knowing *about* Jesus) with our understanding of Jesus death and resurrection, but also our own resurrection from the dead. Knowing Jesus in this full way gives motivation to **endure**, to "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (14) . In the midst of the Revelation of Jesus, there were calls for the **endurance and faith of the saints** (Rev. 13:10; 14:12).
- We are called to **ABIDE in JESUS, giving us hope to be with Him** - Jesus gave the picture to His disciples of a vine and branches, saying He was the true vine, and that we are to **abide in Him and He in us**, and that by doing so, there would be much fruit produced (John 15:1-7). When we abide in His love (v8), we know we are loved and can love others. When we abide in Him, His **joy is in us and our joy is made full** (11). We are no longer only slaves or servants, but He calls us friends and discloses what the Father made known to Him (14-16). He then says that we did not choose Him but He

chose us (16) and appointed us to go and bear fruit, since this brings glory to the Father and proves that we are disciples (8). **Here is the point:** Abiding in Christ has present advantages (love, joy, fruit, friendship), but it all sets us up for the fact that we shall **"receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever, and ever.** (Dan. 7:18). In the eternal state, He will dwell with us, and we will be his people and HE WILL WIPE AWAY TEARS from our eyes (Rev. 21:3). In other words, God gives a kingdom reigns forever to be with US, those that He chose and called friends. We abide with Him now by faith, but one day we'll feel His fingers that will wipe away tears from our eyes.

Knowing and understanding the future is important to every believer, and looking to the reign and rule of Christ is both motivating and hopeful to all who strive to know our Savior in completeness. That is exactly what we see in the second part of the dream that Daniel saw in chapter 7. He saw a future of an eternal reign of a **5th Kingdom**, after a terrifying look at four kingdoms, the fourth being ruled by a "*little horn*" that grew, took out 3 of 10 kings, waged war against the saints, blasphemed God Himself, and was punished by fire and died by the power of God. This little horn will have delegated authority for a short amount of time in the future, but he will not have the final victory.

Short word about timing: Some have rightly asked this week about the timing of this passage. Remember we were given a picture of **4 beasts**, which paralleled the statue of Daniel 2 and represented **Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome**, each one being a real, earthly, literal rule on the earth. Clearly Rome was the focus of Daniel's dream here, but it seems to refer to things that will **STILL** happen in the future, even though we know Rome's empire has come and gone historically. There seems to be a **significant gap** that would have to be accounted for, so that 10 kings of Rome will rise and the Antichrist, or little horn, will take control. The answer is: there is a huge gap, and we are living in it. We are living in a time called the "time of the Gentiles" and what some refer to the *church age*, the time between Jesus' first appearing on earth and His return. If you read the OT record, it's incredibly difficult to see that gap. In fact, the disciples did not see it, since they believed Jesus was going to fulfill His promises of the **2nd coming** while they were with Him at His crucifixion. They were not **WRONG** in anticipating an earthly kingdom, they simply had the timing wrong. Often in Scripture the timing of the 1st and 2nd coming are put right next to each other, but are separated by thousands of years. It's a lot like looking out across a mountain range and seeing the next peak that seems close, only to realize the huge valley in between. Let me give you one example:

Isaiah 61:1-2 reads, "The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor; and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn." This was an OT prophecy of the work of Messiah, and as Jesus began His ministry in Nazareth, He entered the synagogue and read this passage, applying its message directly to Himself, **"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."** (Luke 4:21) He was the fulfillment to those captives of the law and sin, and brought freedom through His life and death in the good news of the gospel. But if you compare the two passages (Isa 61:1-2 and Luke 4:18-19), Jesus stopped in the middle of a sentence, and left out the part about His **2nd coming**. This is what Daniel 7 does. It brings us to the historical fulfillment of 4 kingdoms, but then leaps ahead (with a significant gap) to a re-forming of Rome in the future. Though we have markers for when that will happen, no one knows exactly when that will come about.

CORONATION OF A KING (13-14A)

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like the son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him, and to Him was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom."

In Daniel's dream, the little horn was brought to a court room (10-11) where he Ancient of Days was seated on a throne, with fire and a myriad of angels. The little horn came in with boastful and blasphemous words, but was shut up when the books of his deeds were opened, and he was killed (12). All the other beasts continued on for a time, but their authority was diminished, since a **5th and final kingdom was coming**. This kingdom had a qualified king who was given the kingdom by the Ancient of Days himself. How do we know this?

1. Jesus said He'd come back in the clouds - Clouds were associated with deity in the ancient world, since no mere mortal could ride on them. In **Acts 1**, Jesus was lifted up off the earth from the disciples by a cloud into heaven (1:9), when 2 messengers in white robes said, that Jesus would return in the same way that He left (1:11). **1 Thess 4:17** says that believers on earth will be caught up with Jesus in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, what we refer to as the Rapture. **Revelation 1:7** says that He is coming *with the clouds* and every eye will see him. When Daniel saw clouds, it signaled significance.

2. Son of Man could only be One Person - Many have postulated who this son of man could have been, from an angel to the people of Israel, but it could only be Jesus Christ Himself. Son of man signals that this was an individual, a human but one like none other. But how do we know this points to Jesus? **Matthew 24:29-30** says, *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heaven will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the son of man, and then 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."*

Not only this, but Jesus Himself CLAIMED to be the son of man. When Jesus stood before the High Priest He was on trial for His life. The council brought false accusers and those who would give bad testimony against Jesus to try to find justification to put Him on the cross. But they could find none. So finally the High Priest asked, **"Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"**, to which Jesus responded, **"I AM, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."** (Mark 14:61-62). At this the priest tore his robes in feigned horror and gave the verdict of blasphemy, condemning Jesus to death. In other words, they knew exactly what Jesus was saying, as He nearly quoted Daniel 7:13, claiming that He was the One the Father was giving the kingdom.

3. The Ancient of Days Gave a Kingdom to the Son - Here it is clear that there is a differentiation between the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man, as one gifts the other a kingdom. In **Revelation 5**, God possessed the Title deed to the earth in a scroll sealed with seven seals, that would have to be broken in order to unfurl the scroll. No one was worthy to open it, but weeping stopped when the **Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the Lamb** was worthy to take the scroll. He alone could open the scroll and possess the earth.

Why is understanding this so important to our thinking today? **1) Jesus rules now and reigns in our hearts, but He will reign on the earth in the future** - Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father now (Eph. 1:20) and has put all things under his feet. We are seated with Him (Eph. 2:6), meaning we experience His authority in a positional sense, and that NOTHING else has authority over us. But He will reign in the future on the throne of David (2 Sam. 7), and that will be visible, personal, and literal, where He will bring wrath to those who oppose Him and life to those found in Him. **2) We were a gift by God to the Son in salvation, and that signals a Kingdom that will be given as well** - The Father gave us to the son, the sheep to the great shepherd (John 10:29), and Jesus was faithful to die for His own. We believe that

by faith. But Jesus was also given a **kingdom by the Father, one that will be for 1000 years** (Rev. 20:1-6), where Satan will be bound, where He will rule and reign, and will be with His own (Dan. 7:18). The kingdom of God is about salvation now, has obvious implications now (love, mercy, humility, justice), but will come to completion and fruition in a future earthly kingdom.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A KINGDOM (14b; 27)

"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..."

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.

This leads to the obvious next question: **what will His kingdom be like?** We get a description in Daniel 7.

- It will be one of **Absolute Authority** - The word that was used over and over in Daniel 7 is **dominion**. Here, dominion or authority is taken away from the beasts (7:12, 26), and given to the Son of Man. As Jesus establishes His earthly kingdom, the beast and false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20) and Satan himself is bound for 1000 years (Rev. 20:2). Jesus will rule as a total dictator, King of kings over the earth. There will not be any voting or committees, no protests or wars. He will reign with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15) and will put down any and all opposition swiftly. He will bring about perfect justice since He alone can rule without pride, ulterior motive, or inconsistency. Jesus is king now, but He will rule AS KING one day, and that will be a monarchy that independent, freedom loving people can finally accept.
- **He will receive glory and honor** - Authority alone can only get one so far. If you have authority, one can gain power, wealth, and notoriety, and can get people to do what you want. But authority cannot get people to give honor or glory. Honor is given to the One who deserves it and by those who see the value of the object being honored. In the Kingdom of Christ, all will bow their knee to Him, confessing Him as Lord in worship (Phil. 2:10-11) and will see Him as sovereign King of King, Lord of Lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:14-16). Until that day, Jesus is continually being dishonored by those in our world, either taking His name in vain, ignoring His existence, or living like they are gods themselves. But the time of dishonoring will come to an end. Even believers today dishonor Him every time we sin against Him. It's like cheating on a new bride each day, and having them welcome us back every time. Christ is glorified in saving His own, but the day where we dishonor Him will come to an end. This is the deafening answer to **"How long, O Lord, til you make things right."**
- **It will be a literal, earthly kingdom** - The whole contrast in Daniel 7 is between **4 beasts, 4 kingdoms that dominate the earth and one that will rule them all**. Just as in Chapter 2 where a stone not made by human hands wipes out the statue, so the son of man's kingdom will wipe out all others. Is there hope for sinners if there is no reign of Christ? Absolutely. But it would miss out on a vital promise given to the Son and the saints of the Most High, that God would bring about on this earth. We can play out the realities of the Kingdom as believers, but until Christ reigns physically, all that we are trying to do now will actually happen then.
- **It will be universal in scope** - There will not be any part of this earth nor any inhabitant that will be out of the scope of Messiah's kingship. All the people's of the

earth, from every tribe, tongue, and nation will serve Him. This is where healing of nations, partiality will die, and ethnic differences will be united together. The point will not be inequality or a lack of justice, but everyone will unite together in the serving and obeying of our King, together. The gospel is the only thing that can heal injustice, the only thing that can unite sinners, and the Kingdom will be a visible expression of the power of Christ to change the hearts of mankind and purify them. This is a glimpse of a promise that we all long for, that we will see ourselves and others properly, in light of the glory of Christ, and will willingly serve Him, not ourselves, and will no longer look down on someone because they look different than us.

- **It will be ETERNAL** - This 5th kingdom will not pass away, will never be destroyed, and will continue on forever, forever, and ever. After the completion of the events of the Tribulation, after the seals are broken, trumpets blown, and bowl judgments are released, after the beast and false prophet are dealt with, a kingdom will be established on the earth with Christ as the King. At the conclusion of this, Satan will be released, will be decisively defeated and thrown into the lake of fire, as well as Death and Hades. The dead will be judged, and that will usher in an eternal kingdom where heaven and earth are connected, the sun is no more, and the nations walk in the light of the Lamb. This is where Jesus will make all things new (Rev. 21:5), and wipe away every tear.

Today is a day of joyful sadness, of hopeful heaviness, of thankful weightiness. Mother's Day reminds us of this reality. As we look at the landscape of our world, we wonder, "How long, O Lord." Things are not fair, just, or right, and we're not sure its getting better. We weep for the world our kids are grandkids will enter into, but we do all of this with knowledge. Knowledge that Jesus not only saves those that the Father gave Him, but that Jesus will be given the Kingdom of this earth, and we will reign with Him, where He makes all things right, is finally honored for who He is, and establishes it forever. That is hope for Mother's and everyone today, and every day.