

Studies in Daniel #7 – Son of God / Son of Man

The overall theme of Daniel is: **God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.** Dan. 4:3, 4:34, 6:26, 7:14, 7:27, Ps. 145:13

In the first three lessons, we looked at who God is: the source of true wisdom and knowledge and the revealer of secrets, that he is absolutely sovereign, and that he has an eternal kingdom. Concerning man, we saw the need for complete loyalty and obedience to God, for humility vs. pride, and for repentance. Now we will look at “special personalities” in the book. By this I do not mean Daniel, Shadrach, Meshech, Abednego, Nebuchadnezzar, or Belshazzar, but the one called the “Son of God” and the “Son of man”, another we now refer to as “the Antichrist”, the “saints of the most High”, and the angels Gabriel and Michael. We will study some of these.

Theme #7: The Son of God/Son of Man

In previous lessons we have seen a great deal in Daniel concerning the kingdom of God; that it was coming at some future time to supplant all the world empires and that it would fill up the earth. 2:44 – “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

In 3:24-25, the three Hebrews were cast into the burning fiery furnace, but Nebuchadnezzar watched in awe, and said “Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? ... Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like **the Son of God.**”

In chapter 7 there is a dream of four great beasts, representing four great kingdoms. The fourth was very strong and had ten horns, and among them “another little horn”. This will be covered more in a later lesson, but it is enough now to say that it represents what we (now in the NT age) refer to as “the Antichrist”, a man who rises up by the empowerment of Satan to try to gain world power and dominion, and will fight against Israel, Christ and the saints. In 7:9-14 it describes God (the “Ancient of Days”) sitting upon a throne of judgment, surrounded by tens of millions. “The judgment was set, and the books were opened. The little horn beast was slain and his body given to fire (the Lake of Fire, or Gehenna, see Rev. 19:20).

But then in 7:13-14 there is a remarkable revelation – “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one **like the Son of man** came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Chapter 8 is another vision, of “the ram and the he-goat”, most immediately referring to the then-future kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Greece. The great horn of the he-goat was Alexander the Great. But it continues in 8:23, describing a “king of fierce countenance” who would rise up much later, to destroy God's people and magnify himself. This is also the Antichrist, and in 8:25 it says “And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many; he shall also stand up against **the Prince of princes**; but he shall be broken without hand.”

Then in 9:24-27 there is the prophecy of the seventy weeks, which quite remarkably tells when **the Messiah** would appear and be “cut off”, dating from the time of Cyrus' decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. It also mentions the Antichrist, “the prince that shall come” to destroy the city and sanctuary.

To summarize, the book of Daniel says that God's kingdom is eternal and persistent, spiritual and heavenly, but that there will be a future time when it will become visible and earthly, replacing all the kingdoms of men, and that it will be governed by “one like the **Son of man**” – it is his dominion that will not pass away. He is also called the **Messiah** and the **Prince of princes**, and it is apparent that he (the pre-incarnate Christ) was the fourth man in the fire, the one “like the **Son of God**”.

From our vantage point, we recognize all these as references to Christ. We believe from the Bible that God is one God, and that he is eternally manifested as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This means that the Son of God existed from eternity – he was (is) not a created being. In “BC times” he existed in heaven with the Father and the Spirit, but occasionally came to earth in visible form, usually referred to as “the Angel of the Lord”.

For example,

- One of the men who met Abram when going down to Sodom for judgment (Gen. 18)
- The man who wrestled with Jacob and changed his name to Israel (Gen. 32)
- The angel who withstood Balaam (Num. 22)
- God speaking out of the burning bush (Ex. 3)
- The “captain of the Lord’s host” (Josh. 5)

There are other examples, and some of them might be debatable as to whether it was really the Son of God, or just a “regular” angel, but any place where the angel receives worship (Josh. 5 is a prime example) is a reference to Christ, because a “regular” angel would never receive worship that is due to God alone.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God

The Son of God is eternal, the Alpha and Omega, without beginning or ending, and is he by whom the worlds were made, but there was a specific time when he came to earth as a man, born of the virgin Mary without earthly father. This man was named Jesus, but called Immanuel (“God with us”). This is what is termed the “incarnation”, because the Son of God took on flesh (became a real, flesh-and-blood man). To us, the reason is well-understood, although we cannot comprehend the full significance of it. He had to become a man and endure all the temptations and hardships of life, first, so he could give his life as a sacrifice, as the ultimate fulfillment of all the different OT sacrifices, and to make them effective for all those who had lived and died faithfully to that point. His death is what we appeal to for our own forgiveness – he died for (on account of) our sins and thus redeemed and purchased us to himself. His resurrection is the proof that the holy sacrifice of his body on the cross was acceptable to the Father, and that he can justly forgive us – the penalty of our sins, Jesus bore himself.

Secondly, it was necessary for the Son to become a man so he could experience human life first-hand and therefore be able to be our great High Priest, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmity, and be our great advocate before the throne of the Father.

Why did Jesus so consistently refer to himself as “the Son of man”? Ezekiel was frequently addressed by God as “son of man”, and he obviously was not the Messiah, but in Dan. 7:13-14 it is apparent that “Son of man” is one of the titles of the Son of God, as the future king with everlasting dominion. I believe that Jesus chose to call himself “Son of man” as a somewhat veiled reference to Dan. 7:13. This kept from stirring up premature opposition amongst the Jewish leaders, who were already looking for an excuse to eliminate him. There was a proper time, place, and method for him to die, and if he had gone around openly declaring, “I am the Messiah, I am the Son of God”, he would not have survived as long as he did. This is another reason he chose to teach in parables. He was a mystery to the leaders and the crowds (Is he the Prophet, is he Elijah or one of the other prophets, is he the Messiah?), and calling himself the Son of man caused enough ambiguity in his enemies that they kept trying to get something more plain that they could use to accuse him.

As for us, “Son of God” speaks plainly of his deity, and “Son of man” speaks of his humanity. Many of the historical errors and heresies of church history have involved a rejection of one or the other of those concepts. Biblical Christianity holds to both – He is fully God and fully man, in one person.

So what do we learn of the second “person” of the Trinity from the book of Daniel? That he is

1. The Son of God
2. The Son of man
3. The Messiah
4. The Prince of princes

and he is the King when God’s everlasting kingdom will have manifestly replaced all heathen kingdoms. In Rev. 19:11-16 it speaks of his triumphant return with the armies of heaven, as KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS. This is the God with whom we have to do!

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