

18/5/2008

Rev Robert Denham

Today I want you to think about 4 situations, and how you would respond to them.

[a] You are in church, and a preacher says “Jesus Christ is Lord”.

[b] You are in a car on the Pacific Hwy, and you cannot help but notice a huge billboard with “Jesus Christ is Lord” on it.

[c] You are in Martin Place Sydney, and a man is approaching with a sandwich board, on which is written “Jesus Christ is Lord”.

[d] On TV, Rove McManus is to hold a discussion on Jesus Christ is Lord.

Did any of those situations not feel right? Did they jar on you? Do you feel it seems appropriate to say “Jesus Christ is Lord” in certain places not others?

For the people of Israel, saying God was their Lord in down-town Jerusalem seemed to fit. Many agreed. But to the Jews in exile by the rivers of Babylon, after nearly 70 years of domination by Babylon, it jarred. It did not seem to fit. Many doubted. Some were hostile.

It was in that very situation that God reassured Daniel that God is Lord. And Daniel 7 today speaks to us when we feel that Jesus is Lord seems not quite right.

Chapter 7 opens with Daniel in the 1st year of Belshazzar’s reign. We heard of his downfall in chapter 5, but here, the book has backtracked a bit. Daniel is still living in the start of this hard hearted mocking king’s reign. Daniel has a dream.

The scene is set in v2: *The 4 winds of heaven are churning the great sea.* It may sound a bit blasé to us but it was the sort of setting that tingled hairs on the back of Jewish necks. It spoke of evil and chaos undoing the orderly things of God.

Then in v3-4, *4 beasts arise from the water.* Not plastic Godzillas, but significant beasts.

v23 says they are 4 kingdoms, yet v17 gives it a twist as the Hebrew says they are kings. The 1st was a lion with eagle’s wings. The 2nd a savage bear ripping through human spare ribs. The 3rd was a ruling leopard with 4 wings and 4 heads. And the 4th was a beast with iron teeth, crushing devouring trampling.

Some try to identify the reign each beast corresponds to (such as to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, The Medes, Persians, maybe Greeks and the Romans), but instead of doing that much at all, I want us to see the overall picture. As each beast is presented, they are ferocious animals, who become more and more human. Yet the 4th is indescribable in form, except as a beast with iron teeth. Daniel has

seen a progression through time. Often we think we are getting smarter or progressing from bad to good. But this progression is the opposite. It is growing further away from God’s order. Further from His way. It shows the ugly side to human power. Like the way that nuclear scientists were shocked to see the sparkling new energy they thought of in such glowing terms during the 1930’s and 40’s being used in such evil ways for weapons of war.

If we look, we can still see the beasts in our world: people taking advantage of situations to grab power, profit, prestige and pride. They can seem to be ever present, just packaged slightly different, yet more rapacious. The greedy, pushy, backstabbers seem to win. They dominate so much.

Yet before these beasts are focused on too much in his dream, they are swept away before another throne. In v9-10, there is an Ancient of Days.

*As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. 1000s upon 1000s attended him; 10,000 times 10,000 stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.*

Daniel glimpsed another reality. God himself is the great judge, and what a judge!! Grasp onto that scene.

For this gave them meaning to history, and it gives meaning to our lives! The New Testament says that it is the day of judgment when Jesus will judge.

Daniel 7:11-12 sees the beasts’ end. They are judged. Even the most fearful is overthrown. God is King! It is very significant! Think of all those who threaten, all those who try to overpower. All attempts at autonomous human power will be overthrown.

And the outcome in v13-14 was that the Son of Man was given the authority, glory and sovereign power. Who is this Son of Man? We may immediately think of Jesus Christ, but not so fast. We first need to think about the beasts and the one like a son of man in the Old Testament.

In Daniel 7, the one like a Son of man is in stark contrast to the beasts who tried to be man-like. The one-like a son of man comes to God to receive power, authority and glory, and does not try to wrest it for himself.

It reminds me of Genesis 1:26 where God gave mankind the authority over the creation. And Psalm

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8 where it says *You, God, crowned man with glory and honour. You made him ruler over the works of your hands.*

And it contrasts starkly with mankind's constant desire to refuse God's way, giving of this rule, authority and power, by greedily snatching it for itself in selfish, corrupt, disastrous ways. They do to each other and our world what those 4 beasts did.

In Daniel 7:18 the one like the Son of man is identified as the saints of the Most High i.e. they are the believers. Saints in the Bible is ALWAYS used to refer to those who believe God. We are saints if we believe in Jesus Christ.

The authority and rule of this world is taken from the grasping claws of the beasts and given to God's people, those who trust Him.

And in the New Testament, we find that Jesus is the Son of Man. So how can we be the son of man, and he is? It is simply that we are united in Him as we trust in him. It is when through faith, we trust in Him as Lord, that we too are brought into that group who will reign and will see God's purposes for our world restored.

So even though it may jar to see someone state that Jesus is Lord, whether on a billboard, on TV or in church, it is the ultimate reality. For God has given us in the Bible the overall plan for how this world will end.

We often feel stuck in the middle, in the midst of greed, pain, backstabbing and beasts raging through. We see their power. We fear their gnashing and trampling. And we feel crushed and defeated. We too soon forget that their judgment is coming, and that their accounts will crumble. Their bottom line is destruction, whereas in Christ, we have the victory. Jesus is Lord!