

Christ The King- Daniel 7, Revelation 1:4-8

- A friend of mine in Tasmania has a t-shirt with the head of Jesus with a crown of thorns on it,
- The caption underneath read,
- Meek. Mild. As if.
- Gentle Jesus meek and mild is a popular image of Jesus.
- Leaving aside the fact that in ancient Greek culture 'meekness' was a virtue,
- With a much tougher face than the wimpy, modern day understanding,
- It's still the Sunday School version many have of Jesus.
- There is a more sophisticated variety in which Jesus ridicules Pharisaic hypocrisy,
- And whips the traders out of the Temple,
- But even this Jesus has a very human ordinariness about him.
- At one level that's okay,
- Because the whole point of the incarnation was to be just like us,
- To live with human frailty,
- To wrestle with human limitations,
- To experience a real human life.
- But the problem is that we can forget this very human Jesus,
- Is also the pre-existent Son of God,
- And the resurrected Messiah who is even now seated at the right hand of the Lord Almighty.
- It's very easy to live with a 'gentle Jesus meek and mild',
- Who calls us to do nothing more than be nice to one another,
- Rather than the risen Lord,
- Who calls us to be a holy nation and kingdom of priests.

- Turn to the gospel reading in your Bulletins and look at the amazing question Pilate asks Jesus;

"Are you the King of the Jews?" John 18:33

- Where do you think Pilate got the idea to ask Jesus that?
- You might think that that was a charge the Jewish leaders levelled at him,
- 'Hey Pilate we've brought this man Jesus to you because he's been promoting himself as our king.
- 'That's a treasonable offence because we've already got a king,
- 'And he, like us, is loyal to Rome and the Emperor.'
- But that's not it.
- Nowhere in any of the passion narratives of any of the gospels is the title 'King of the Jews',
- Raised by the religious hierarchy as a charge against Jesus.
- It's a title that seems to just spontaneously emerge from Pilate's mouth in that question.
- It's not even to be seen in the gospels on Jesus' own lips.
- In fact the only time we read the title 'king of the Jews' is when the wise men,
- Foreigners from the East ask Herod;

"Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." Matthew 2:2

- And yet sixteen times it's used of Jesus during his trial.
- So where does it come from?
- Why was it so key to Pilate's understanding,
- That he had a sign made to go above Jesus on the cross that said:
- "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." John 19:19**
- Jesus may never have referred to himself explicitly as the King of the Jews,
- But there was a great deal of messianic expectation around at the time,
- And Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God arriving,
- Would have made it unnecessary for him to claim the title personally.

- From the time of King David the monarchy took a downward dive.
- Although there were some good kings,
- None of them,
- Not even David really,
- Achieved the standard that God had set for the ruler of his people.

-And yet throughout the Old Testament you see this great figure being promised and looked forward to.

-Even at the beginning of David's reign there's an impressive promise made to him by God;

"Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever." 2Samuel 7:16

-Given the fact that earthly kingdoms all rise and fall,

-How could David's throne,

-His dynasty,

-Last forever?

-One way of course is for king after king to keep arising and ascending the throne,

-As the previous king gets old and dies,

-On and on forever.

-But that doesn't seem to be what other verses in the Old Testament imply,

-And what history has evidenced.

-Just have a look at the Daniel reading in your Bulletin and v14.

-One like a son of man comes to the Ancient One,

-That is God, and;

"To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed." Daniel 7:14

-This isn't the picture of a dynasty of kings but of one ruler.

-One person who's given an everlasting dominion.

-Not only that,

-But this king's rule will extend across the entire world,

-Every single nation, peoples and languages will serve him.

-This king's rule won't be limited to Israel like David and subsequent kings' were,

-His kingdom won't fade away,

-It'll be invincible.

-His rule will be like nothing that has ever existed on earth.

-So who is this 'son of man' who gets to be this king?

-Well it depends on where you look.

-The phrase occurs 95 times in the Old Testament,

-And every time it appears it just means a human being,

-Or someone who looks like an ordinary human being.

-You can see that distinction in the Daniel reading on the Bulletin at v13;

"I saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven." Daniel 7:13

-In the book of Ezekiel,

-Where the other 93 occurrences are,

-It's used by God or an angel as a title for Ezekiel;

"Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." Ezekiel 2:1

-When we get to the New Testament,

-Of 82 references,

-All but four of them come from Jesus' lips about himself.

-'Son of Man' is Jesus' most common name for himself;

"Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the **Son of Man** has nowhere to lay his head." Matthew 8:20

"I want you to know that the **Son of Man** has authority on earth to forgive sins." Mark 2:10

"The **Son of Man** must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Luke 9:22

-If we consider all those self references,

-It's pretty clear Jesus is acknowledging himself as the 'son of man' in Daniel's vision.

-That conclusion is confirmed by the story in Acts 1,

-Where the disciples lose sight of Jesus ascending into a cloud,

-And the angels say to them;

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Acts 1:11

-This linking of the cloud of Jesus' ascension,

-And the vision of Daniel is no coincidence.

-Especially when Luke later describes the martyr's death of Stephen,

-And his dying words;

“Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’”

Acts 7:56

-What did Daniel see?

“I saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him.” Daniel 7:13

-The Son of Man and God, the Ancient One, together.

-And finally those words from our reading in Revelation 1;

“To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. ⁷

Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him,” Revelation 1:5-7

-Just compare those words from Revelation with the words of Daniel.

-Notice the repetition of key terms,

-‘Glory and dominion,

-‘For ever and ever,

-‘Coming with the clouds.’

-There's no escaping the conclusion,

-That Jesus is the king the Old Testament prophets were looking forward to.

-Jesus is the king who would sit on David's throne and rule over an eternal kingdom.

-And if you want a final picture that shatters the image of 'gentle Jesus, meek and mild',

-And a clue to the enormity of Jesus' Lordship,

-Listen to these words from Revelation 19;

“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron sceptre.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: King of kings and Lord of lords.” Revelation 19:11-16

-As complex as the imagery is,

-There are a number of things which point to the identity of this awesome figure.

-White is symbolic of victory and the rider of this horse is victorious.

-All of revelation is about the struggle between good and evil and who ultimately triumphs.

-The victor is this rider.

-Who's also called 'Faithful' and 'True'.

-Jesus said he was 'the way, the truth and the life',

-And as we heard in John 18,

-Jesus said he came into the world to testify to the truth.

-On his head are many crowns.

-Crowns are a symbol of kingship,

-The rider has many crowns which symbolises complete rule over many kingdoms.

-Again remember Daniel 7 and the one like a son of man having dominion over many nations.

-He's dressed in a robe dipped in blood.

-This is an allusion to the crucifixion and Jesus' blood shed for our sins.

-Finally the rider is named;

“ . . . his name is the Word of God.” Revelation 19:13

-A phrase that echoes the opening words of John's gospel;

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1

-And resonates with his description of the incarnation;

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14

-Gentle Jesus, meek and mild?

-Or the Lion of the tribe of Judah,

-The victorious rider who's words strike down the nations,

-Who rules with an iron sceptre,

-Who is King of kings and Lord of lords,

-And who's coming back to rule forever over all creation?

-Does that change your view of Jesus in any way?

-More importantly does it change the way you live each day?

-If your Jesus only calls you to be a nice person,

-To do unto others as they would do to you,

-Then like Pilate,

-Like the Pharisees,

-Like the priests, scribes and teachers of the Law,

-You've misunderstood who Jesus is.

-At his trial in answer to Pilates question,

-Jesus responded;

"You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." John 18:37

-Jesus means more than just hears his voice,

-He means being obedient to his rule.

-What Daniel saw as the Ancient One gave the Son of Man dominion and Kingship,

-Was the people of all nations and languages serving him.

-It was what John saw too,

-A holy kingdom,

-Priests serving his God and Father.

-It was for this that Jesus came and died,

-And it is to this that we are called.