

SESSION 15: HE SHALL REIGN AND WE SHALL REIGN

Daniel 7 has long been used to support various end-time scenarios, particularly, the emergence of the anti-Christ. It could be argued that the main point of Daniel 7 is often overlooked; verses 26 and 28 provide a succinct summary of the entire story of the Bible, and beautifully capture God's end vision.

"Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the **holy people of the Most High**. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him. This is the end of the matter."

The climax of human history will be 'all kingdoms of the world coming under the rulership of God and his holy people, with all rulers worshipping and obeying him. This is the end of the matter—the culmination of the Story of the Bible.

This is not some Plan B as a result of the 'fall'. The Kingdoms of the world, under the governance of God **and of his holy people**, have always been God's Plan A from before the world began. Paul says in Ephesians 1:4-6, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. ... he predestined us for adoption to sonship (that's rulership) ...in accordance with his pleasure and will..."

The Story of the Bible is the story of God giving birth to and completing his creation project. At the heart of God's creation project is God qualifying a people to reign with him to enter his rest and govern with him over his glorious creation and the reconciliation of all things. (Col 1:19) This 'holy people' that Daniel refers to in chapter 7 is also referenced throughout scripture.

As Paul Billheimer says in his excellent book, *Destined for the Throne*, we are 'destined for the throne.' We are destined to rule and to reign with Christ over God's new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1), and over the reconciliation of all things, not the doing away of all things. God makes all things new (Rev 21:5), not all new things.

There will be a new earth wherein dwells righteousness, where the meek shall inherit the earth (Mt 5:5), where God's kingdom does come, where his will does get done on earth as it is in heaven (Mt 6:10), where the kingdom of this world does become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev 11:15), and where we do become a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and we will reign on the earth." (Rev 5:10)

So, what Daniel is saying makes perfect, New Testament, sense: "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the **holy people of the Most High**. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him. This is the end of the matter"—the end of the Story of the Bible, and it will be so for all eternity! Amen!

This is what God has promised throughout scripture. This is the true Story of the Bible. There is a happy ever-after ending to God's story, for the world that he so loved that he gave his only begotten son!

So, you might say, "Max this is so very exciting I just can't wait!" Well, it is exciting, and I can't wait either, but wait we must. It is this waiting that we must get our head around. We must understand the importance of this waiting season, as waiting isn't passive but incredibly active!

Active waiting is "working out our salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil 2:12) This is not working out our salvation for heaven. In Session 9, we discussed what salvation was all about, and we did this through the image of the nation of Israel. Salvation for Israel was not just getting out of Egypt; it was getting into the Promised Land! It wasn't just what they were saved from, but what they were saved for! Working out our salvation with fear and trembling is not an Egypt issue, it's a Promised Land issue! It's not a sins forgiven issue, it's an inheritance issue!

In Christ, we have been born-again—we have become a child of God. In the Greek the word for child is often the word *teknon*, a small child. But God has destined us for adoption to sonship (Eph 1:4). The Greek word used for son here is *huios*, which commonly refers to a mature son.

Remember that the 'adoption to sonship' image that Paul uses in Ephesians 1:4 is a Roman image, and means being 'placed in a position of authority for rulership' over a family business or legacy. Octavian, as we have seen in Session 9, was adopted by Julius Caesar to be his heir, and Octavian became Caesar Augustus, the first Emperor of Rome!

Waiting is all about qualifying for rulership! It's about working out our salvation (which, by the way, is an accounting image: 2+2-3 equals 1). It means bringing it to its logical conclusion! The logical conclusion of our salvation is inheritance, adoption to sonship.

The writer to the Hebrews likens this 'waiting' period, this 'working out our salvation' period, this 'growth from a child into a mature son' period, to 'running a race' and encourages us to 'run with perseverance the race marked out for us.' (Heb12:1)

Sadly, many Christians think that once we've been born again we've finished the race. In fact, being born again means Jesus has qualified us to enter the race, to begin running!

Paul seems to like this illustration of 'running a race' and uses it a lot. For example, in 1 Corinthians 9:24, Paul says, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners

run," and he says, "Run in such a way so as to get the prize." In this, 'running the race' context, Paul goes on to talk about discipline, perseverance, commitment, and single-minded devotion to this all important race!

In fact Paul led by example. He said, "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward," or to the heavenly prize, as the NLT translation puts it.

When does this race end? Well, the answer is, when we go to be with Jesus. Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians in his old age. He was around 57 years of age at the time, and people's average life expectancy in the first century was in the late 50s, so he really was an old man!

So Paul, as a really old man writes, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward (or to the heavenly prize) in Christ Jesus." (Phil 3: 12-14)

So, in conclusion, let's ask and answer a few questions for clarity:

Firstly, what is the heavenly prize?

It is 'adoption to sonship', to be confirmed as God's heir and co-heir with Christ, to obtain the inheritance, to enter into his REST and to rule and to reign, to govern with him for all eternity over God's new creation of heaven and earth! We are destined for the throne!

Secondly, what is this life all about for a follower of Jesus?

It is all about running the race. We are running a race to attain the prize, that crown of rulership! Paul refers to this also as working out our salvation with fear and trembling, of bringing our salvation to its ultimate conclusion, not just deliverance from Egypt (sins forgiven) but possessing the promised land—the inheritance of the first-born, in Christ! Waiting is not passive it is incredibly active and demands our full attention! So, by now, are some of the parables of Jesus starting to come to mind, such as the ten virgins, the faithful servant, the parable of the talents, for example?

Thirdly, will every born-again believer receive this prize?

Well, the answer has to be no, right? Not every believer matures. Not every believer runs the race. Not every believer crosses the finish line. Not every believer receives the prize, the inheritance, and is crowned, confirming sonship adoption. And we have so many Biblical illustrations for this, such as Esau who sold his birthright for some temporal gain, and the prodigal son who wasted his inheritance on fleshly pursuits.

This prize is promised to those who set their affections on things above, not on earth beneath (Col 3:2). It is promised to the 'overcomers', in the book of Revelation – it is

not automatic for every believer! Paul says that at the judgement seat of Christ, some builders (or believers) will receive a reward. But for others their work is burned up, the builder (believer) will suffer loss (loss of the prize) but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames. (1 Co 3:14-15)

What we now want to turn our attention to, in future sessions, is this 'all important race'—how we can run, and run well and finish well, in order to get the prize! How we can 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling' and, by the grace of God, bring our salvation to its ultimate conclusion!

Now, if this is not where your heart is, if you are screaming for your inheritance now, in this life, wanting to live the luxurious life of a king's kid, then these next sessions are not for you!

But if deep in your heart there is the cry for something better, a yearning for the promised land, for a city with foundations whose builder and maker is God (Heb 11:10), a deep desire to be that bride who has made herself ready for that marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:7) then these next sessions are for you!