

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 416

Paul's Use of the Old Testament Series: The Son of Man in Daniel 7

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Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MSH)

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Guest: Dr. Matt Halsted (MLH)

Episode Summary

In the previous episodes with Dr. Matt Halsted, we discussed how trying to articulate the Old Testament's messiah merely by appeal to passages that contain that word (Hebrew, *mashiach*) was fundamentally misguided. To this point, we've explored reading the Bible as story, understanding prophecy as "act, then re-enactment," and a series of motifs that provide us with elements of a messianic resume (Davidic dynasty language, sonship, the seed/offspring, "branch" language, and servanthood themes from Isaiah). In this episode we turn to Daniel 7 to introduce another resume element—the "son of man" language intimately associated with ruling the nations in the divine council scene of that chapter.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 416: Paul's Use of the Old Testament Series: The Son of Man and Daniel 7 with Dr. Matt Halsted. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! What are you doing?

MSH: You know, my brother actually sent me a text this week asking specific questions about the settings of my Naked Bible Fantasy league in baseball.

TS: Yeah?

MSH: I don't know that he was trying to take me out of the dead zone. I mean, we're in the dead zone here where there's no baseball, there's no football. Because I'm not a basketball guy. But my brother apparently is of the same ilk. So that's about it. I've had a little bit to chew on there. He's making sure that my mind is entertained somehow by thoughts of Fantasy baseball. But you know, just...

TS: What kind of settings are called into question? I mean, is he wanting to add some or change some?

MSH: Offensive categories... Of course the big one's always the date for the draft, because we do the draft live. But offensive categories that he and I disagree about. We bicker about a little bit the logic of certain things. [TS laughs] So you know, time to reconsider those again and say either yes or no [MSH laughs] to what he's complaining about.

TS: Yeah, well I guess he wins the Naked Bible football league and he's getting kind of a big head, kind of dominating the baseball league now, is what I think. Is that right?

MSH: Yeah, yeah. That could be.

TS: He's thinking he's a big shot, so he can boss you around a little bit.

MSH: Yeah, he wants to keep going with his streak here, I guess. [TS laughs] Taking advantage of it.

TS: Yeah. That makes sense. Brothers. I don't have one, but I assume that's what they do.

MSH: Yeah, it's part of what they're here for.

TS: Yeah, absolutely. Alright, Mike, we're going to get into Daniel 7 today. Can you give us a little heads up on what we're going to talk about?

MSH: Well, Daniel 7 is a passage that we've been in a lot on this podcast because of Divine Council stuff. It's a Divine Council meeting. But in this case, we're going to be looking specifically at the "son of man" term and how that becomes a messianic profile element. So that'll be our connection to Daniel 7.

MSH: Well, we're glad once again to have Matthew Halsted back with us. This is our sixth sit-down discussion on really a couple of things. I mean, we've broadly talked about the New Testament use of Old Testament texts to articulate who Jesus was and the gospel program. We've been sort of angling in on how we talk about messianic prophecy and messiahship—messianism generally. So we've done this six times. And recall that Matt's specialty is Paul's use of Old Testament in his writings. And so he gets into this whole issue of messiahship or messianism quite a bit in his research.

So to this point we've tracked through a number of psalms. We've tracked through the servant songs in Isaiah. We've tracked through a few passages in Jeremiah. We've been to Genesis. We've been to Ezekiel, trying to get listeners

to realize that the way we should talk about messianic prophecy or messiah in the Old Testament should not be restricted to the term itself. And this is where a lot of critical scholars want to focus the discussion. Because if you do that, the picture of the messiah that emerges is largely only a historical figure without much vision of a future deliverer, the way we would think of as messiah in a broader sense, especially in the New Testament. So we're objecting to that and saying there's a whole lot more to building the messianic profile or filling out the messianic résumé than just the term "messiah" in a handful of Old Testament passages.

5:00

There's a lot to reconsider, just a number of motifs. We've talked about sonship. We've talked about the seed (an offspring). We've talked about the servant aspect, the branch, the shoot. We've talked about star imagery, that it gets associated with certain kings and individuals. So there's a wide net to cast to talk about Old Testament messianism, and that informs New Testament messianism. And so what our argument has been and will continue to be is that the profile of the messiah that you get in the Gospels and that you get in the writings of Paul and other New Testament writers is quite consistent with the Old Testament understood in its own original context. It's just that you have to include this wider net of passages in that context to make that correlation.

And Matt has introduced us... Again, I don't think he would say he coined either of these or either of these are original to him, of course, but just as he has gone through his research, he's found taking a storied approach to the Old Testament is really helpful. And that's just another way of talking about focusing on the metanarrative: what is the story that's being told and how is it being told? And if we approach Scripture that way we're naturally going to pick up on vocabulary and themes and motifs and repetitive patterns that are going to inform our understanding of messianism.

And the other one was (I think he got into this last time, especially) the notion that there are a lot of things in the Old Testament that we need to look at as an event, but then we should expect a reenactment of the event to inform our understanding of what that passage originally was meaning, and what it *could* mean. And so we looked at a number of these things, especially with the servant aspect, where we have an act and then a reenactment—an event and then a repetition of some sort of the event but with new details, new understanding, that glom onto it but that are consistent with how this would have worked way, way back in the Old Testament.

So today, we're going to do more of this. But we're going to go into the book of Daniel. And Daniel is important because it is set in an apocalyptic time, a time when Israel is wondering, "What's going to happen to us? Is this the end of our destiny? Are we approaching the End of Days?" and all this sort of stuff. So we're going to be talking about act and reenactment a lot when we get into Daniel. And

we're going to be talking a lot about that second century. Regardless of what view you take in authorship, whether you think Daniel was written in the second century or whether you think it was written in the sixth century and is looking forward to some of these Intertestamental second century B.C. events, it's going to be important to pay attention to how things get acted and reenacted, for messianic prophecy. So Matt, I'm going to bring you in here. We didn't have you do this last time, but briefly again, tell the audience who you are, what you teach. And then we'll get into Daniel 7.

MLH: Yeah! Thanks for having me on again, Mike. It's been a lot of fun just chatting through some of these issues and working through the Bible. Again, thanks for having me on. It's so much fun. Just a little introduction with me again. I have a PhD in Hermeneutics, Biblical Studies, specifically on how Paul interpreted the Old Testament in Romans. So I'm finishing up an expanded and revised version of my PhD. It's going to be published probably in a couple of months—two or three months. And it's called *Paul and the Meaning of Scripture*. And I essentially go all the way through Romans and look at every instance where Paul either quotes or alludes to the Old Testament. And I try to make sense of what he's doing, offer a few proposals. And it sort of ended up being somewhat of a commentary of sorts. But anyway, so that's my research. That's my background. Like I said, I did a PhD. And currently I teach for a classical Christian school in Oklahoma City. I teach dialectic Bible and a couple of other courses. And I've been with Eternity Bible College for five or six years, something like that. And so I've taught a range of courses for Eternity, anywhere from Pentateuch to Prophets to Revelation, New Testament backgrounds. Just sort of all over the place. And I've been doing this for several moons. [laughs] It's been a lot of fun.

MSH: Yeah, good. So why are we bothering with Daniel? [laughter] Why Daniel?

MLH: Yeah. Well, he's everywhere.

MSH: Daniel 7 specifically. I think a lot of our audience are going to sniff this one out. Might as well raise the question. So what's up with that?

10:00

MLH: Yeah, Daniel is super important for establishing that messianic profile that we've been doing. Essentially, he's going to introduce a new motif. We've talked about several motifs (offspring, David, servant language, and all of that). But Daniel's going to contribute to that messianic profile with the language of "son of man." And of course, that famously occurs in Daniel 7. And this is a motif that is super important with respect to that metanarrative you mentioned and that story arc of the entire Bible. Because in the New Testament, Jesus will refer to himself as the Son of Man. And Jesus will actually quote and refer back to some of the Daniel prophecies in Daniel 7, and even Daniel 9, too.

So anyway, Daniel becomes super important for the New Testament view that Jesus is the messiah. And so you were mentioning earlier that we can't restrict messianic expectation down to just the word "messiah," which is something we've been talking about for several episodes now. And that's absolutely true, because the son of man language and the concept of son of man and the things that the son of man is doing in Daniel really goes a long way in giving us a more complete picture of who messiah really is. And it gives us categories for which to think about Jesus in the New Testament. So that's super important as we go into the New Testament, as we grapple with son of man language and all that that entails. So I would say that's why it's important. Look, here's the deal. If we want to read the Gospel of Matthew and we want to read the New Testament, you're going to have to take a road through Daniel at some point. And so that's why we're doing this one.

MSH: Yeah, you know, lately I've been doing a lot of reading in Targumic matters—Targumic literature. I'm actually prepping a course for the Awakening School that's going to be kind of unique. It's going to be sort of beyond *Unseen Realm*, or *Unseen Realm 2* level stuff. And it's amazing how much in this period... Especially with the proliferation of Aramaic to the level that it was—the lingua franca of the day. And then you get these Targumic concepts, even though the Targums themselves are first century or later. But you get a lot of these concepts in the Targum that you find in Second Temple literature, but they're clustered in the Targum. And this is one of them: a human figure who is at the level of deity, who rules with God. It's the old "Two Yahwehs" thing that I wrote about in *Unseen Realm*—the Two Powers in Heaven in Judaism. Son of man is part of that whole idea. And even before you get the vocabulary "son of man" or "human one," you have a number of beliefs circling in the period that involved exalted humans from the Old Testament ruling with God on his throne. Moses is sort of an obvious one. But you have Abraham, you have Adam, you have Jacob or Israel personified as a single figure. It's really startling how much of this kind of stuff there is. And you're right, Daniel is really important. Because circulating in Judaism, this concept of a human one sharing and receiving rulership authority (kingdom authority from God himself and ruling alongside God) is something that Judaism trafficked in. This is not a brand-new idea with the author of Daniel, even though he makes the specific contribution with this phrasing that becomes so well known. But yeah, you're right. It's pretty important.

MLH: Yeah. You're exactly right. He does bring in this whole new concept of son of man. But there is still some continuity in what Daniel's going to discuss with these other texts that we've looked at. I mean, this whole... I mean, dominion over the nations, which is important for Daniel 7.

MSH: Yeah, you get that of David in Psalm 89. Yep.

MLH: Yeah. I immediately think of even Abraham's calling in Genesis 12 that he'll be a blessing to the nations.

MSH: And a father of many nations, plural.

MLH: Yeah, that's exactly right.

MSH: The whole concept of fatherhood for the king in the ancient world. There you go. I mean, that was part of the profile, this father language.

15:00

MLH: Mm hmm. Yeah, that's a really good way to settle this discussion, is to bring in that father language. Because sometimes we can get hung up on the part in Daniel 7 where it says that the son of man will have *dominion*. You know, we think of dominion in very negative type terms, almost totalitarian type language. But that's not the point. It's dominion in the sense of caring for the nations and restoring health to the nations and taking care of them and taking them back from their bondage to the false gods. And then bringing them back under the care of the one true God—the Most High God, Yahweh. And so that's the idea.

MSH: Yep.

MLH: And so when you have the nations language and the kingdom language, this really reminds us of what you said—David, Abraham, kingship stuff. And you know, I forgot to mention, too, that the word “messiah” does occur in Daniel as well. So this obviously makes it a very important stop that we make as we try to discern what Daniel's doing with this messiah language in chapter 9. But yeah, there's continuity but there's new stuff, too.

MSH: Let's jump into context here, a quick overview of where Daniel 7 sort of situates what the book is telling us.

MLH: Yeah. So most scholars recognize that Daniel is... Again, if you take the early date or the late date, either way, most scholars are going to say that he's talking about second century B.C. issues and crises, specifically with the Greek kingdom, the Antiochene—Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who had this whole program of Hellenization. He wanted to make all of the Jews conform to his program and to become good Greeks, essentially. And there's lots of political controversies. There's lots of killing [laughs] and some assassinations and things like that at that time. And the Jews are really wondering, “My goodness. What's going on?” And it really comes to a head when the temple is desecrated in 167 B.C., when according to some texts there was an abomination of desolation. There's the putting of swine or pigs on the altar and all of that.

MSH: Yep.

MLH: He completely desecrates it, right? And this is the start of the famous Maccabean Revolt and the fight for independence and to come out from underneath the pagan rule. And so most scholars recognize just due to the similarities and the language that Daniel uses about the characters that he's talking about, most people are just very convinced that, okay, yeah, we're talking about this second century B.C. crisis.

MSH: Yeah, it aligns very well.

MLH: Yeah, so easily. Absolutely.

MSH: Someone who would take the early date would say, "Well, look at... Daniel foresaw—was given foreknowledge of—these events." And the person who says it's a second century date it's, "No, Daniel's writing in close proximity to these events." But either way you've got those events. It's the Antiochene crisis.

MLH: Yeah, exactly. And the issue, it really is about what do we think about prophecy. So whether he's forecasting or predicting, okay, that would fall under the category of prophecy and prophesying. Or if he's living around that time, a prophet ministered to his own time all the time. You know? You look at these prophets, even such as Elijah. He's ministering and saying and giving words from God to the current political powers of the day. So either way...

MSH: He's still going to make that connection. He's still going to identify what's going on with the sovereignty of God. "Here's what God's up to."

MLH: Exactly. Exactly. So Daniel's definitely talking about the second century B.C. I think that's pretty well established among scholars. And part of it is, as we get into maybe some New Testament stuff later on, just to help the audience kind of keep their eyesight into the distance here is, this becomes very important as prophecy because even Jesus will re-appropriate, repurpose, reenact these prophecies that Daniel talks about. So that's going to be important for later, but it's just good to keep our gaze down the road. But yeah, essentially Daniel 7 starts off with this vision. It's an interesting vision in many respects. He sees the monsters come up from the sea. And this later becomes repurposed even later on in Revelation, which I know your audience is familiar with (the beasts and so forth). But really, I think the best place to dive in is just chapter 7, verse 1. So do you want to read it?

MSH: Sure, I'll read it. So I'm going to read from ESV.

15:00

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. ² Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. ³ And four

great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. ⁴The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. ⁵And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' ⁶After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. ⁷After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. ⁸I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

And that takes us to the scene that I know you're going to want to focus on.

MLH: Yeah. Just real quick, it's super helpful whenever we read these prophetic texts that seem so difficult to understand... Because oftentimes if you keep reading on, the author will actually give us the interpretation of these texts. And you see this in Revelation from time to time, and you also see this here, later on in verse 17. He's given an interpretation of this. These four beasts represent four different kingdoms, which scholars are pretty... There's a pretty big consensus that these four kingdoms represent Babylon, Media, Persia, and then the Greek empire—those four. That's kind of a consensus really.

MSH: Or some will combine Media-Persia. And then move Rome in there.

MLH: Right, yeah. Into the fourth position, yeah, that's right. And we even have that in other literature outside of the Scripture too, that some were doing that very thing—bringing Rome in as number four. So yeah, but these are definitely four kingdoms. And if we place this for other reasons inside the second century B.C. era, then it would make sense why the concern would be the Greek empire as the fourth position. Because that's the one that's tormenting them and beating them up and giving them lots of trial and tribulation. But that's not to say it can't be repurposed later by the New Testament or others, because that's just how prophecy works. But if we just get into the context of it, I think we're talking about Greece, essentially that empire.

But yeah, like you said, so we jump into verse 9, where right after seeing these ferocious-looking kingdoms—these scary, frightening kingdoms—something

happens in verse 9. There's another part of the vision that the prophet sees. And this is really where it's at. So I'll read verse 9:

**⁹ "As I looked,
thrones were placed,
and the Ancient of Days took his seat;
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames;
its wheels were burning fire.
¹⁰ A stream of fire issued
and came out from before him;
a thousand thousands served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;
the court sat in judgment,
and the books were opened.**

And I'm sure you have a lot to say about those two verses. [laughs]

MSH: Yeah. We've said a lot about those.

MLH: Right. Yeah, this is a court scene. Judgment's about to happen. And then he goes on. He says:

¹¹ "I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

So the idea here is that the court has settled judgment. The kingdoms of the earth represented by these beasts have been judged and their kingdoms are taken away. But it's not a vacuum. It's not that everything's just wiped clean and there's nothing left. No, the nations are regathered and put under the authority of another, which is where the second part of the vision comes in, in verse 13.

Thirteen and 14 is the key. It says:

**¹³ "I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days**

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and was presented before him.
¹⁴ 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.

So the one like the son of man (verse 13), he's *coming* to the Ancient of Days and he's presented before him. This is where we see this figure—someone that we haven't quite defined yet (son of man)—who inherits everything that was left over from these four beasts that were killed. And *he* was given the dominion over everything. This is clearly some sort of eschatological vision. He's talking about someone special, someone important—dare I say, some sort of messianic figure. Now there are a range of views here on who the son of man exactly is. I mean, it depends on what scholar you ask. I was just looking at Robert Alter's Old Testament translation and some of his comments. And he was saying... Let me see here. I can just read the little quote. He says... In his translation, he doesn't use "son of man." He uses the phrase "one like a human being." And he said, "This translation avoids 'like the son of man' because of its strong and debatable tilt toward a messianic interpretation." [MSH laughs] Isn't that interesting?

MSH: We wouldn't want to do that. [laughter]

MLH: Exactly. But then he goes on. He says, "If traditional Christian interpreters have understood this as a reference to Christ, some Jewish interpreters have seen it as a collective representation of the Jewish people, which," he says, "is equally unlikely as well." So just stopping there for a moment, he picks up on the two views. One is that this is talking about Jesus, which is the Christian position. Then some Jewish people would say, "Well, no, this is Israel collectively." Son of man is like this representation of the entire nation or something, and so Israel will inherit the world. Israel will inherit the nations. He dismisses that one, too. But then he goes on. He says, "Collins, after a thorough and scrupulous survey of all the possible readings, plausibly concludes that the term refers to an angelic being, most like Michael, descending onto the scene with the clouds. This would explain the force of 'like.' This figure looks *like* a human being but is not more than that." So you have those three views, that A) it's messiah, or B), it's Israel (the collective nation), or C), it's Michael, some sort of spiritual being. So those are the three major scholarly opinions here. I am okay with certainly number one. I think this is talking about messiah, for many reasons that we can get into later. But I'm even okay with this corporate model—this idea that son of man

represents the people of God as a whole. I'm okay with that in many respects. I just don't see this as representing Michael. [laughs]

MSH: Yeah, I don't either. I think three is really hard to defend.

MLH: Yeah.

MSH: Two gets a little gnarly when you get down to verses 26, 27, and 28. Because it seems to be redundant.

MLH: Yeah, good point. Yeah.

MSH: So yeah, I'm much more comfortable with number one. But I view this through the lens (I can't help myself anymore) of the Two Powers in Heaven thing. Because Daniel 7 was such a big deal in articulating that theology.

MLH: Right, yeah. And the point of going down to... What did you say? Verse 27, where it says that "the people of the saints of the Most High," everything will be given over to them, too. So there is this idea here that... There is a corporate aspect. And I think just for me personally, I think it would be okay to understand son of man (this being) as somehow tied intimately to his own people, almost as a representative figure. And maybe that's just the way... I'm reading this through the lens of Paul, who sees the Church as temple, the Church as body of Christ. And so maybe my Pauline prejudices are coming out here. [laughs] But either way, this is definitely an eschatological singular figure who is going to inherit all the nations for all time.

MSH: Yeah. At the end of verse 27, we have, "all dominions shall serve and obey him."

MLH: Yeah, singular.

MSH: So you know, you can't squeeze out the singular individual here, which I think view number two tries to do. It tries a little too hard.

MLH: Sure, yeah.

MSH: It ends up overstating its own case.

25:00 **MLH:** Hmm. Yeah. So, okay, even when we go with this singular individual, which I think we have to do... I mean, this is clearly an individual, like you said. I think the important piece here is to understand what he's actually doing. This is a political text, right? This is a text that is intended to give hope to people in crisis—that there's an end to the reign of terror, essentially. Which is why this is actually going to become very important for later on in the New Testament. Because

Christians will find themselves in crisis and so they're going to need to hope in this eschatological figure. You know, it's interesting here because when we do read the New Testament, if we don't have this background in place and if we don't understand the vision properly, then I think we'll actually really mess up for later in the New Testament. There's a lot of confusion about this son of man coming to the Ancient of Days. "Coming on the clouds" is a piece that reoccurs in the New Testament as well. And there's so much confusion about that. And I think the confusion just comes from not understanding this text, personally.

MSH: It also comes from not reading the Targums. [laughs]

MLH: Oh, okay, yeah. The other...

MSH: The clouds are a big deal. This second power, whether it's the *Memra* or the Glory (the *Shekinah*), or the Son of Man or some other deified figure, they're always in the clouds. [laughs]

MLH: Yeah. Right. And the whole cloud-riding motif is something that's really big. Your audience knows this very well. If it's okay, I think maybe if we did just jump briefly to the New Testament, we can kind of see some of this confusion come to the fore.

MSH: Sure.

MLH: So Matthew 24, which at first glance can be a pretty difficult text to understand, but once you get into the actual context of what Jesus is talking about, I don't think it's that difficult to understand. But suffice it to say, just briefly, Jesus is answering the disciples' question about, "Hey, when is the temple going to be destroyed?" Because Jesus makes this statement that after looking at the temple and hearing his disciples just fawn over how beautiful the temple was, he says, "Hey, look, there's going to be a day when this temple's going to be knocked down. Not one stone's going to be left on the other." And then they're like, "Well, when will these things be?" And then Jesus goes on to his famous Olivet Discourse, which oftentimes gets taken to be *all* about the future. And I do think that there are elements later in the discourse that are about the future, but primarily, at least up to verse 36 or verse...

MSH: You're talking about distant future.

MLH: Far distant future. I mean, like eschaton, the second coming kind of stuff. Yeah. And that's a good point to make, too, because it's *all* future from the perspective of the disciples.

MSH: Yeah, even 70 A.D. would be future. So... [laughs]

MLH: Yeah, future for them, past for us. As we're reading we need to constantly be asking, "Okay, whose future are we talking about?" Because that's sort of the problem we have when we read Jesus or these texts, when Jesus says, "This will happen," we immediately think, "Oh! This will happen, from my perspective," when in fact it's only "this will happen" from the disciples' first century perspective. So that's a good point to make. But Jesus, down into verse 29 (Matthew 24:29)... He says something that's really interesting in this. This is the piece that's always taken to refer to his second coming. And I don't agree with that interpretation. But anyway, he says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days..." Pause for just a second. I think that's a reference to the destruction of the temple of A.D. 70 that he had been predicting. But he says:

29 "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 heavens will be shaken. **30** Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man [MLH: there's our phrase, 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.

35:00 So there's the quote. There's the reference back to Daniel 7: "coming on the clouds of heaven." And a lot of Christians will interpret this as his second coming. "When Jesus comes back, he'll be riding the clouds," and so forth. And I think that's a misunderstanding. And it's partly due to not knowing what Jesus says elsewhere about his coming on the clouds of heaven. I'll get to that in a moment. But it's also due to not knowing and understanding Daniel 7. So if we recall that in Daniel 7, we have the son of man coming *to* the Ancient of Days, that seems a movement from earth to heaven, or at the very least it's a movement that *ends* in the heavenly realm. It ends at the throne room of God. It's an enthronement text. The son of man is enthroned. And a lot of times people will come to Jesus' Matthew 24 quotation (coming on the clouds of heaven) and interpret that as his coming from heaven to earth, when in fact I think the movement his going from earth to heaven. I think that's a very important piece here. He's talking about his enthronement. He's not really talking about his second coming. I do believe that Jesus is going to come back, physically, bodily one day. But I just don't think this is the text that points to that reality.

MSH: It would have to be... Well, it would have to be filed under reenactment anyway.

MLH: I think that's right. I absolutely think that's right. Mm hmm. For sure. And it's important, too, that typically in the New Testament the word that refers to the second coming is *parousia*, which literally means, like, "his presencing." That's not always the case. Sometimes another word is used. But here he doesn't use the word...

MSH: Like in 1 Thessalonians 4.

MLH: Yeah, that's right. Mm hmm. Here it's *erchomai*, which can mean "coming" or "going," actually. So I think you can interpret this as the son of man *going* on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And the implication is "going to the Ancient of Days—to Yahweh—to be enthroned." Now I...

MSH: And that's the "kingdom already" as opposed to the "kingdom not yet." So the act and reenactment idea goes very well with the "already, but not yet" approach to prophecy that's very familiar to this audience, anyway.

MLH: Exactly. Yeah. And the other clue here, by the way, is this is not the only time Jesus quotes Daniel. So if you jump a couple of chapters ahead to Matthew 26, around the verse 64 mark where Jesus has been arrested and he's standing before Caiaphas, Jesus is actually accused of saying that he's going to tear down the temple and then three days later he's going to raise it up again. And that's a real problem for some of his listeners. And so he's accused of saying that. And so Caiaphas is really upset. Matthew 26:61 says that a witness says to Caiaphas:

⁶¹ and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'" ⁶² And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" ⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." ⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.

So why in the world would Caiaphas do that? Why would he accuse him of blasphemy? Well, it's because Caiaphas was a Jew who understood Jewish texts way better than some of us Christians do. Right? [laughs] He knew that this was an enthronement text. This was a Yahweh text, right?

MSH: Yep.

MLH: This was about who is sovereign. And Jesus has made himself to be Daniel's son of man here.

MSH: Yeah, he is the second Power. So that would be offensive.

MLH: Highly offensive. Highly offensive. And this is just a point to make, is that if you read this text where Jesus says, "I'm coming on the clouds of heaven and sitting at the right hand of Power," if that doesn't strike you as a claim to deity, then you're not thinking Jewishly really, right? I think Caiaphas understands the text, like I said, better than we do sometimes.

MSH: Well, the tearing of the robes and the blasphemy accusation are pretty clear indicators.

MLH: Oh, for sure. The reason I point to this text is just because Jesus has told Caiaphas, "From now on, *you* will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds." And I think what Jesus is referring to here is his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. He's telling Caiaphas, "The events that are about to follow, like right now, you are seeing... You should interpret that as the Son of Man coming on the clouds."

MSH: Yeah, you're going to be a witness to it.

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MLH: You will be a witness. So rewinding back to Matthew 24, when Jesus says that he will be coming on the clouds, I think what Jesus is referring to is his own vindication. He is referring to his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, of course. But part of what vindicates Jesus as a prophet and as *the* prophet—the Son of God... What vindicates his identity is the fulfillment of his prophecies, and one of them being the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. So if you have a person going around claiming to be the son of man and son of God and forgiving sins and doing all the things that Jesus is doing, and he also predicts the temple's going to be destroyed, well, whenever he is resurrected, that proves his claims all along. And when the temple is destroyed, that also validates his identity and vocation as a prophet. Right? So I think what's happening here when Jesus says, "You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds," he's saying, "You will see me vindicated. You will see me enthroned. You're going to see me for who I am." I think once we go back to the Daniel text (Daniel 7), all of this really begins to make sense. Because it was *through* his crucifixion that he is enthroned. And that he does conquer the powers. And remember in Matthew 24, remember what he said. He uses the cosmic language of the stars and all of that. Right? Why is that important? Is he an astronomer all of a sudden? [laughs]

MSH: His victory over the gods, yeah.

MLH: Victory over the gods. Yeah. That's exactly right. This is cosmic language.

MSH: It's important, too, for Caiaphas. Because Caiaphas isn't going to be privy necessarily to some of the other things that Jesus said would happen that would be vindicated prophecy. But this one (the thing about the temple) he is certainly aware of, and we as readers are aware of the whole grocery list, because Jesus

did predict that he would rise again. You know? The whole Lazarus incident. And all this stuff that's preceded. Caiaphas doesn't necessarily... He wasn't... There was an audience to all of that. He's probably heard little bits and pieces. But this thing about the temple, you know he's fixated on that.

MLH: Yeah, this is an assault on the very essence of the Judaism of the day. Right?

MSH: Yeah. It's about his office.

MLH: [laughs] Yeah, he's got money involved, right? [laughs] He's got a lot at stake.

MSH: He has skin in the game, yeah.

MLH: Exactly. So when Jesus is vindicated and when he... crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. You know, you just take those: Crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. That's where the powers of the world are destroyed, right? He disarms the principalities, he destroys the powers, through his crucifixion and resurrection. And for those who are familiar even with Revelation 12, when the Son ascends, what happens in heaven at that point, when the Son takes his throne and sits at the right hand of Power?

MSH: There's a war in heaven.

MLH: Yeah, there's a war in heaven. And so this idea that... Oh, and at the end of the war, right, what happens? Satan gets kicked out. [laughs] Right? And he falls to the ground and begins his torment of the people of God and all of that. But yeah, you have this idea of Jesus ascending to the Father and assuming his role—that's his enthronement. Now I think what's important is we understand the whole concept of cloud-riding in the ancient world and even in the Old Testament as well. You know, it's not about Jesus coming back on the clouds, literally. At least here. That's not what's being talked about, even though as I said earlier, I do believe in a second coming of Jesus when he shows up again at his *parousia*, his presencing. I do believe that's going to happen. But here I don't think that's what's going on. Because the hiccup among a lot of people, particularly evangelicals, is that, look, don't think that cloud-riding here (coming on the clouds) needs to be interpreted literally. There's something else going on here. And I know your audience, as they've read *Unseen Realm*, you have a nice little section on what it meant to be a cloud rider.

MSH: Yeah, Daniel 7 follows the Baal Cycle, which is about kingship. Who is going to be installed as the vice regent? In Ugaritic literature it ultimately is Baal. Baal wins the status of vice regent. Which for them, that was... He was called the Most High, even though he has to get El's approval to do different things. But he

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is king of the gods. He's also lord of the nations, which a lot of people who aren't familiar with the Ugaritic literature miss. Baal is actually referred to in these ways. And so when you have Daniel 7 mimicking... And it does. It mimics this quest for kingship scene in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle. That's ultimately what it's about. Who is king? Who is enthroned? And of course, it turns out to be the Son of Man.

MLH: Right, yeah, the Son of Man. And even in those depictions of Yahweh riding the clouds, there are several of those texts. And I like the way you put it in your book, and I can't remember the exact reference. I quote it in my book, though, because it's so good. But there's... How do you put it? You say, "This is the Old Testament's way of dethroning Baal," or something like that, "by depicting Yahweh as the cloud rider."

MSH: Yeah.

MLH: But that's the important point, that Yahweh is the cloud rider. And here Jesus is depicted as the cloud rider. Of course, he's drawing from the Daniel text. But I think that there's this idea of just shared sovereignty.

MSH: Yeah, and he comes and he's given kingship from heavenly authority. So you're naturally going to be using terms like heaven and stars and clouds. "It's up there. This is where the authority comes from up there. Take a look, dude." You know? [laughs]

MLH: Yeah!

MSH: So the metaphors are obvious, at least they should be obvious.

MLH: They should be when we put on the right glasses and we read the text with those right assumptions. And when you go back to the Daniel 7 text, it's a divine court scene. Right?

MSH: Yep, Divine Council scene.

MLH: So this isn't just Yahweh all by himself, sitting on a throne in heavenly loneliness. Right? [laughs] No, this event has a lot of witnesses.

MSH: Yep, the court and now all those gathered around. Yep.

MLH: Yeah. And so judgment is taking place essentially. And again, I keep thinking of Revelation 12, the war in heaven, when the Son has ascended. This is a big event. And it's a turning event. And when you go... Going back to Daniel 7, that piece that you mentioned earlier at the end of the chapter, where it talks about the... Verse 27:

**27 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 idea of the kingdoms being given to the people of the saints of the Most High, I think it's very important even as we think about it with respect to the Church. Because once the temple is...

MSH: Yeah. It's the Great Commission. [laughs]

MLH: It *is* the Great Commission. Yeah! It's exactly right. It's the Great Commission.

MSH: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth."

MLH: Absolutely.

MSH: "So go therefore."

MLH: Yeah. And I think Jesus is inviting his people to participate with him in the shared dominion, as well. And so maybe that's where a corporate idea could into play.

MSH: And you see this toward the end of Revelation 2 and the end of Revelation 3, like 2:26, 3:24 I think it is. But yeah, this audience having gone through Revelation a lot, you get this shared rulership—the shared dominion thing—pop up here and there.

MLH: And that makes sense of the larger categories that you constructed over the years with the Divine Council stuff, reorganization of the Council and the Sons of God motif, with Christians being called sons and daughters of God.

MSH: Or holy ones. Yep.

MLH: Yep, that's exactly right. You know. And this is congruent with Matthew 24 and all that Jesus has been saying. Because once the second temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, there's still a temple around. It's called the Church. And the Church is united with Christ and they are the Church by virtue of being united with Christ. And so it does make sense, taking a larger perspective on all this, how the saints *are* taking back the kingdoms. Because we are united with Christ and we're sharing his gospel. And essentially, when you think about the word

“gospel,” we really need to think about it perhaps more like a first century person would. You know, gospel is not about how a person can just...

MSH: Yeah, what's the good news?

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MLH: Yeah, what *is* the good news? Right? Well, most of us, at least in the tradition I've been raised in, have turned the gospel into just saving my soul so I can go to heaven when I die. Right? There's really nothing more than that. Just the forgiveness of my individual sins. And while all of that is important (forgiveness of sins and a relationship with Jesus), if you just reduce gospel down to that, then you've missed so much. The fact of the matter is, a word like gospel (*euangelion*)... Well, let's just put it this way. It was stock vocabulary of the Roman Caesars in the imperial cult. So one example of this, just thinking off the top of my head... I'm thinking I get the date right here, but in 9 B.C., there was an inscription found at Priene. And this inscription describes the birth of Augustus Caesar as “gospel.” And the word is *euangelion*. And his birthday is described as good news for the world because he brings peace to the world. And what's really fascinating about all that is when you compare the claim about Caesar's rule and reign as gospel and you compare it just a few years later with Jesus' announcement of his birth as gospel who brings peace to the world... Look, the word gospel in the first century was essentially used by the pagan Romans as political propaganda.

MSH: It was politically charged.

MLH: Yeah. And so when early Christians come around and say, “Jesus is Lord. His birth is gospel and his ministry is gospel,” what they're saying is that Caesar's gospel is no gospel at all.

MSH: This is the ministry that brings peace to the world, not Caesar.

MLH: Right. Of course, the Caesars claim to have brought peace (*Pax Romana*—the peace of Rome), but it turns out that the way they achieved peace was by the sword.

MSH: Peace unless you were a dissenter!

MLH: [laughs] Exactly right. Yeah. It's terrible, but that's the idea of gospel. And another aspect of gospel is it was a military term to announce victory over a defeated foe. So you would go announce gospel and good news in that respect as well. So once you bring in that... And there's so much more evidence to this that we can talk about. But just that shows that the word gospel is not about just going to heaven when you die or forgiveness of sins. This is a political statement. It's a statement about a kingdom and the invasion of a kingdom—the kingdom of God. And in all of...

MSH: Yeah, it's a statement about you, the individual, who's been reconciled to God and had your sins forgiven. You are now part of the divine family—the divine court, the reconstituted Council. And they're all about dominion. [laughs]

MLH: Yeah, right. [laughs] Right. That's exactly... But we never get to *that* part.

MSH: It's... Going back to imaging and having dominion over the earth—stewarding the earth... Everything comes full circle, that God gets what he wants. He shares it with you. You know? There's so much packed into it.

MLH: Yeah, that's exactly right. You know, if we are the Jesus people, and if Jesus is the exact imprint of God—he is the image of God, and we are being made into the image of God... And of course, we already are the image of God in that sense, too. But going back to the Genesis motif of image, image bearing... And I know you say this a lot. It has nothing really to do with certainly the way we look, right? [laughs] It's a call to vocation. And it's a call to carry out a purpose on the earth, and that is to have dominion—loving dominion of course, but dominion nonetheless in the sense that we participate with God in caring for and loving the creation and all that is in creation. The second aspect of that is that showing forth the image of a king, especially in the ancient world, was to show who is sovereign, right? Images in the ancient world were often used to carry out the functions of deity. And so I think this whole motif of image-bearing is very important as we think about this as well. As a gospel people who participate in the loving dominion of the messiah, we are doing that by virtue of carrying out our vocation of bearing the image of God.

MSH: So we should talk about... Let's bring this around full circle. How would you summarize the importance of Daniel 7, especially as we're going to take a look at Daniel 9? We'll do that in our next episode—our next conversation. How would you tie this up—put a bow on it?

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MLH: Yeah, I think I would tie this up to say, remember the story that we've been crafting all along with Abraham. We haven't really mentioned Abraham at this point. But his whole calling—his election—was for the purpose of being a blessing to the nations, precisely because the nations have been divided. They've been cursed in Genesis 11. But in Genesis 12, God promised to be the rescue plan, and that rescue plan comes through Israel. And here we see this Israelite—the son of man—who is finally (as we've been waiting for a long time) being crowned and he's being enthroned. And he's tasked his holy ones with having dominion over all that he has inherited. That's how we tie it up, I think. Go back to the Abraham story.

MSH: Mm hmm. Well, in Daniel 9, can you give us a little bit of a teaser here as to where this is going to go?

MLH: Yeah, Daniel 9 is fun. It's fraught with lots of debates, of course. But it's fun nonetheless. I think the teaser here is that... Well, look, Daniel uses the word "anoint" (the verb *mashach*), but he's also using *mashiach*, too. And so we have to deal with that. What does he mean by "the messiah" there? And I think that we'll discover that, yeah, there are second century B.C. references to those words. But there's a lot there that's going to be repurposed and repackaged during the first century and the ministry of Jesus. And so Daniel 9 is super important in that regard.

MSH: Well, Matt, this is a good place to wrap it up. And I want to thank you again for being with us. And we look forward to our chat about Daniel 9.

TS: Alright, Mike. I know you've covered Daniel 7 quite a bit, like you said. It's Divine Council stuff. So it was interesting to hear what Dr. Halsted had to say about it.

MSH: Yeah, I mean, and he recognizes the Divine Council elements as well, not just because he's read *Unseen Realm*, but because he's read a lot of the material that led me to articulate, eventually, what would become *Unseen Realm*— this whole area. I mean, once you study Daniel, serious commentaries on Daniel are going to take you into things like the fact that Daniel 7 follows the Baal scene in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle and what that might mean. It'll take you into the Two Powers in Heaven discussion in Judaism. So he got there through different means, and I think *Unseen Realm* helped a little bit for him. But you can't help getting into it. But in our case, specifically how this helps build out the messianic profile is what we're shooting for.

TS: Well, we're going to stay in Daniel next week, in Daniel 9, that is. And looking forward to that. And alright, with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.