

DANIEL

Week 20, chapter 7 continued (2)

From my perspective we can only have a credible study of the Book of Daniel by focusing carefully on the “Son of Man” statement in Daniel 7:13. However, as we discussed last week, the preference among modern bible commentators is not to spend much time on that subject so we have few studies available on the Book of Daniel that goes much beyond focusing on the several strange beasts, the prophecy of the 70 weeks, Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, and Daniel in the Lion’s Den.

So to try to add to the dialogue and understanding of Daniel, we spent all of last week discussing 3 critical Old Testament terms that will in time form the foundation of the New Testament: Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God. Today, we’re going to spend some time in the New Testament, so keep those bibles handy. Once again I feel it necessary to acknowledge Daniel Boyarin, Taubman Professor of Talmudic Culture at Cal Berkley. His knowledge of the Holy Scriptures coupled with his near unmatched research into the Talmud, has produced many intriguing questions, and even a few answers, about the relationship between early Judaism and New Testament theological concepts. And it is at least partly due to his work that I have felt challenged to better understand the role of the Son of Man figure in ancient Jewish culture (before, during and after Yeshua’s day), and then how it relates to the New Testament and to the End Times.

A great deal of information was thrown at you at our last meeting; therefore we need to spend a short time to briefly summarize last week’s lesson, so that we can all start off on level ground. And that summary must begin with the premise that despite what we will hear from Orthodox, Traditional and Conservative Judaism today, in fact many of the concepts that they find so blasphemous and upsetting within the New Testament regarding both the nature and the identification of the Messiah, in fact those concepts existed front and center in mainstream Judaism for scores of years leading up to Yeshua’s birth; and they existed in parallel with the time Yeshua walked this earth; and those same ideas continued after His execution. So several of these important theological concepts that are typically labeled as “for gentile Christians only” were not at all foreign to Judaism at one time, nor were they introduced by gentiles.

On the other side of the wall of separation, Christians and Messianics have assumed (along with the Traditional Jewish religious establishment) that nowhere and at no time in Judaism did the idea of the Triune God exist; nor thoughts of the next Davidic King (the hoped for Messiah) as being divine; nor that he would be killed and then resurrected. Therefore the long held and unchallenged Judeo-Christian storyline is that these theological concepts were a combination

of brand new inventions and progressive revelation that only came about with the New Testament's Hebrew authors. However in point of historical fact these thoughts and concepts were already widespread in Jewish culture, and most of it existed because of the appeal and faith placed in the Book of Daniel by not only the well educated Jewish elite but by common every-day Jewish farmers, fisherman and craftsmen.

One of the questions that any Believer in Christ ought to have, whether we would label ourselves Christian or Messianic, is WHY so many thousands of Jews found it relatively easy to accept Yeshua as a divine Messiah/Redeemer/Davidic King?

Acts 21:17-20 CJB

¹⁷ In Yerushalayim, the brothers received us warmly.

¹⁸ The next day Sha'ul and the rest of us went in to Ya'akov, and all the elders were present.

¹⁹ After greeting them, Sha'ul described in detail each of the things God had done among the Gentiles through his efforts.

²⁰ On hearing it, they praised God; but they also said to him, "You see, brother, how many tens of thousands of believers there are among the Judeans, and they are all zealots for the Torah.

Although most English bible translations don't make the distinction, there is a difference between Judeans and Jews. Judeans were Jewish folks who lived in the Roman Province of Judea (as opposed to Galilee for instance), where Jerusalem and the Jewish religious leadership resided. Jews is a generic term for any person living anywhere of Jewish heritage. And Judeans in Paul's era were the hard-core Jews of that era, much the equivalent of today's Orthodox Jews. And the Judean Jews clung tightly to the Traditions and to their Rabbis. And this passage in Acts says throngs and throngs of hard-core Judean Jews believed that Yeshua was the Messiah.

We tend to focus on and speak about the many more Jews who did not accept Him, but that's not where the real story lies. Was this acceptance of Yeshua by so many Jews because they were awed and swayed by His many miracles? In that case Houdini might have been even more easily accepted than Yeshua. No, it's because Yeshua embodied the flesh and blood fulfillment of a rather common expectation that a large segment of the Jewish population held (but certainly at least an equal amount disagreed). And that common expectation was almost entirely bound up in Daniel's vision of this mysterious Son of Man being.

So, while I'll repeat it again during our lesson, I will say it now: the New Testament, the identity of Christ, what the Jewish people expected and what Yeshua did, was based perhaps more on Daniel than any other single source in the Old Testament. If Daniel is false, then Yeshua was

not only completely taken in by it, He was little more than another in a long list of Jews with a Messiah complex; but He was no Messiah.

Let me also state so that some may not get the wrong idea and think I'm telling you something I'm not: Yeshua certainly IS divine, God's only begotten Son, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is our Savior; He is God. I'm taking you on this long journey to achieve a number of goals, one of which is to familiarize you with other Christian theologies that you might have never heard of. But in fact those theologies and doctrines about God and Christ are just as mainstream as whatever it is that you might believe. Another goal is to look at the Jewish side of the equation and to explain the modern Jewish viewpoint of the Messiah and why Yeshua is so nearly unanimously rejected as that Messiah. But also to show you that this modern view, and the typical spin put on it by Judaism, is simply not intellectually honest nor accurate, nor does it reflect what a large segment of Jewish scholars, Rabbis, religious leaders and laypeople believed, wrote down, and taught in the years leading up to, and after, Christ's advent.

So with that, let's quickly go over the biblical terms Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God and establish what they meant to the Jewish culture in which they were conceived and debated. Messiah is NOT a translation of the Hebrew Mashiach, but rather it is just an English-ized way of saying Mashiach. The direct Greek translation of Mashiach is Christos; and the English word Christ comes from Christos. So Messiah, Mashiach, Christos and Christ are identical terms. And they mean anointed one. Anointed one was a term applied to all kings of Israel and Judah, and the term Christ or Messiah, standing alone, had NO divine quality or intended meaning to it whatsoever.

The term Son of God, up until the time of the New Testament Gospels, did NOT mean a person who had a divine quality to them (Son of God did NOT indicate deity) anymore than did the term Messiah. Rather it reflected a Scriptural principle that all kings of Israel and Judah had an adoptive father/son relationship with the God of Israel in the spiritual sense. I delved into this extensively last week with Scripture references, so you can review it on your own. Further, since God made the decision to have all Kings of Israel and Judah beginning with King David to come from David's royal blood line, then the term Son of God naturally evolved to indicate ONLY a Davidic King since from David forward that's the only legitimate source of kings that was even possible for Israel. Thus up until the time of the Gospels, the term Son of God was referring to a human, mortal descendant of King David who was eligible to become a king over the Jews. Nothing more and nothing less.

The term the "son of man" was a rather common one used in the bible beginning in the Torah. In Hebrew the words are **ben adam** (**ben** means son or child, and **adam** means man), and so a good dynamic English translation for our 21st century time is "human being". Let me be clear: there is NO direct Hebrew word or phrase that literally translates to human being. But the INTENT of the Hebrew **ben adam** is to communicate a regular, generic human person.

However beginning with the Psalms a veiled implication of a specific person, a unique **ben adam**, who was MORE than a human being was conceived. And then with Daniel 7:13, the term Son of Man became, for the first time, the source for Son of Man to be used as an official

title for this implied person who was more than human. And with Daniel 7 also came some additional information about this being's attributes and characteristics. The Son of Man comes in the heavenly clouds; he is seated next to the Ancient of Days; he is given all power, glory, honor and dominion over the earth and its inhabitants by the Ancient One; he is eternal, and will rule over a kingdom that will never be destroyed (as happened to those 4 gentile kingdoms symbolized by Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue and Daniel's vision of the 4 beasts).

I mentioned last week that this term the Son of Man is used over 80 times in the New Testament by Yeshua to refer to Himself, and by some of His followers to refer to Him. And so I can tell you without hesitation that Yeshua adopted Daniel's term "the Son of Man" for Himself, because Daniel's Son of Man title was (as it turned out) prophetic of Yeshua. Let me say that a different way: Jesus did not coin the term Son of Man. Son of Man was a 500 year-old existing term within Judaism that was widely known and that its source was the popular Book of Daniel. And as I have demonstrated in previous lessons, many sayings of Christ even came from terminology used by the Essenes of Qumran (the people of the Dead Sea Scrolls). This shouldn't bother us at all: why wouldn't Yeshua use the terms of His day to explain who He was and why He came and what He was teaching? It would be folly to do otherwise, because who would have understood Him if He was daily inventing new concepts, theology, terms and phrases or giving them entirely new meanings? No. For the most part He was merely saying that He was the One whom the Torah and the Prophets had been pointing to, and that Daniel had spoken of as "the one like the Son of Man".

Let's set that thought on the back burner for just a few minutes. What I want to show you is that there were many Jews who fully expected the Son of Man as a divine being to come as the Messiah, but who did not know of, or did not accept that Yeshua of Nazareth was that One. And in the non-biblical books of 1st Enoch and 4th Ezra we find astounding proof that the concept of a divine but human Redeemer who bears the title of Son of Man was widespread in Jewish culture, even outside that segment of Judaism that had already accepted Yeshua as the Christ.

Written sometime in the 2nd century B.C., a Jewish religious leader who lived in Alexandria, Egypt wrote this:

I had a vision of a great throne on the top of Mt. Sinai and it reached till the fold of heaven. A noble man was sitting on it, with a crown and a large scepter in his left hand. He beckoned me to come with his right hand, and so I approached and stood before the throne. He gave me the scepter and instructed me to sit on the great throne. Then he gave me the royal crown and got up from the throne.

The person being spoken of is Moses, and essentially the idea is of him going atop Mt. Sinai where he meets God and is essentially then turned into deity. Now we can debate about how fanciful this is; but the point is that here is a widely circulated, and accepted, piece of authoritative Jewish literature from at least 150 years before Jesus was born, which envisions a human being (in this case, Moses) meeting with God on high and being anointed as divine and then being given God's power and even sitting on God's throne. So the concept of a god/man operating alongside the Ancient of Days was well established within the Jewish

religion and it was certainly nothing new when Yeshua of Nazareth arrived and eventually claimed the title.

However there is yet another ancient Jewish document that addresses the Son of Man as a divine human even more head-on. In another widely circulated and trusted book called the Similitudes of Enoch, a Jewish writer who was writing perhaps a decade or so before the time of the NT Gospels say this in Chapter 46:

There I saw one who had a head of days, and his head was like white wool. And with him was another, whose face was like the appearance of a man; and his face was full of graciousness like one of the holy angels. And I asked the angel of peace, who went with me and showed me all the hidden things about that Son of Man; who he was and when he was and why he went with the head of days. And he answered me and said to me, "This is the Son of Man who has righteousness....."

So here is an obvious reference to Daniel 7; we have two divine figures, one is the head of days (Ancient of Days), and the other is the Son of Man. So the idea and speculation was widespread in Jewish culture during and well before Christ's day about a Son of Man coming who was both human and divine. And this god/man was also wrapped up in the expected Messiah/Redeemer of Israel. So any thought of modern Judaism that the Messiah must be fully human, and that the Christian doctrine that Yeshua was a god/man is based on idolatry and is blasphemous, and that Jews never thought of this dual-god concept (or really a tri-god, because the Jews also fully embraced the Holy Spirit, the Ruach HaKodesh as a manifestation of the God of Israel), simply defies Jewish religious history and writings of Rabbis in antiquity. Essentially modern Judaism has repudiated the older and one-time mainstream Jewish expectation of a divine/human Messiah, that was typical of Judaism at least a century before Yeshua was born, and continued to exist all during and after His lifetime.

And because the Jews of Christ's day were hoping for a divine Son of Man to come (a king, Redeemer and deliverer from Roman oppression), they were as much into End Times prophecy and expectations and especially speculations as is the modern institutional Church in our day. Apocalyptic literature was all the rage, and Daniel was the most studied and debated. Those ancient Jews firmly believed that they were living during the End Times in the same way that Believers do in the 21st century. And just as the Book of Revelation is the modern Christian's primary source for End times expectations, so was the Book of Daniel the primary source for Judaism's End Times expectations in the years leading up to, and during, and after the advent of Christ.

Perhaps this is impacting you the way I hope it is. For Christians, we need to understand that (as we'll soon see) the Son of Man did NOT speak of Jesus's human quality, but rather of His divine quality. And the various terms we read of in the NT that are used regarding Yeshua such as Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God, and others had very specific cultural meaning within Jewish society and that is precisely how we need to understand them (not any way that suits our purpose) so that we can more fully understand the New Testament as it was intended. For our Jewish brothers and sisters, especially those who are Messianic, when you have faith in your Messiah Yeshua in fact you are NOT embracing idolatrous, non-Jewish, gentile created

doctrines that first came about after Christ's death on the cross (as is commonly supposed). Rather you are embracing mainstream Jewish concepts that were fully expected of the Messiah a long time before Jesus was born. So as I quoted to you as the first words of last weeks lesson: all that Messianic Jews and Christians are doing when we choose to embrace and rediscover our Hebrew Roots is to return to a well entrenched conservative Scriptural, Hebrew theology of a divine Redeemer, who is fully man and fully God, that was widespread throughout Jewish society well over 2000 years ago. Did all Jews embrace it? Of course not. But there is probably not a single theological concept that is universally embraced within Judaism or within Christianity.

Let's look now at how this new (perhaps for some of you merely more in-depth) understanding of the concept of the Son of Man impacts our understanding of Yeshua HaMashiach and the New Testament.

Turn to the Book of Mark chapter 2.

READ MARK 2:5 – 12

Here is Yeshua speaking of Himself as the Son of Man. Let me say again for emphasis: Son of Man was a title first given in Daniel 7, and let's look one more time at the introduction and attributes of this Son of Man as described by Daniel:

Daniel 7:13-14 CJB

¹³ "I kept watching the night visions, when I saw, coming with the clouds of heaven, someone like a son of man. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence.

¹⁴ To him was given rulership, glory and a kingdom, so that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His rulership is an eternal rulership that will not pass away; and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Yeshua claims in Mark 2 that he is Daniel's Son of Man and as such he has the authority to forgive sins. Who gave him that authority? The Ancient of Days. God. And, just as Daniel 7 makes it clear, the Son of Man is a divine person: deity. So everyone surrounding Jesus totally understood that he was saying: look, I can forgive sins because I'm divine and the Father has given me the authority to forgive sins. The Torah Teachers who accused Yeshua of blasphemy could only accuse Him of that BECAUSE by using the term Son of Man he declared Himself divine. Had he merely said that he was the Messiah, they may have contested him on that point, but saying he is Messiah is not blasphemy because it merely means that he is declaring himself as the new anointed king of Israel, which would have been more a political and less a

religious matter.

Now look a bit further down the page of Mark 2, to verse 23, and let's read another story about Yeshua.

READ MARK 2:23 – 27

While there are several theological and doctrinal implications in these few verses, the main thing I want to focus on is whereby Yeshua says that “the Son of Man is Lord even of the Shabbat”. So without going into details of the arguments about Sabbath, what Christ is saying is that as the divine Son of Man on earth he is the One who decides what is and what isn't appropriate on the Sabbath. In no way does this mean that He is saying essentially: “Now that I've come I've abolished the Scriptural commandments about Sabbath so now people can do anything they want to.” Rather he is teaching what He meant when He was still in heaven operating as the Word, before He was incarnate as Yeshua of Nazareth, the Son of Man. And that Word was first given to Moses on Mt.Sinai concerning among other things, Shabbat.

So here I want to take another opportunity to prove to you that what Christ was teaching and preaching was not some new radical thought that was foreign to the Jewish religion. Rather, He was merely in disagreement with a certain group (or groups) of religious Jews who had created their own traditions about the Sabbath and were attempting to impose them on others. That group is identified as the Pharisees, who were some of the Torah teachers, and in this instance they specifically objected to Yeshua's disciples plucking heads of grain and eating them on Shabbat. For in fact the idea that Shabbat had a long list of restrictions and prohibitions is not Scriptural, but rather merely manmade tradition. The biblical restrictions were (and are) few and further they weren't as rigid as some might think. There were circumstances where strictest observance of the Sabbath rules was trumped by overriding circumstance. And that reality was well entrenched in Jewish culture, and among Jewish religious leadership. So I'm going to give you a fascinating, although rather typical, Jewish Rabbinical debate over the Sabbath. This debate is found in the Talmud: Mekhilta, Tractate Shabbat 1. Please listen carefully and don't get caught up in the names, which are unimportant to my point.

Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi El'azar the son of Azariah, and Rabbi Akiva were walking on the way and Levi Hassaddar and Rabbi Ishmael son of Rabbi El'azar son of Azariah were walking behind them. And the question arose among them: “From whence do we know that the saving of a life supersedes Shabbat?”

Rabbi Ishmael answered: Behold it says: “If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; but if it happens after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed. And this is true even if we are not sure whether he came to kill or only to steal. Now the reasoning is from the light to the heavy (Kal V'homer). Just as the killing of a person pollutes the Land and pushes the divine presence away supersedes the Sabbath (in such a case as one caught at night breaking and entering),

even more so the saving of a life!”

Rabbi El'azar spoke up with a different answer. “Just as circumcision which saves only one member of a person supersedes the Sabbath, the entire body even more so!”

Rabbi Akiva says: “If a murder supersedes the Temple worship, which supersedes the Sabbath, saving a life even more so!”

Rabbi Yose Hagelili says: “When it says, ‘BUT keep my Shabbats’, the word BUT makes a distinction. There are Sabbaths that you push aside and those that you keep (such as when human life is at stake, this supersedes Shabbat)”.

Rabbi Shim'on the son of Menasya says: “Behold it says: ‘Keep the Shabbat because is it holy to YOU; to YOU the Shabbat is delivered and NOT you to the Shabbat”.

Rabbi Natan says: “It says: ‘And the Children of Israel kept the Sabbath to keep the Sabbath for their generations. Profane one Shabbat for the sick person in order that he may keep many Shabbats!”

Now this debate about the Sabbath among these revered Rabbis couldn't be more Jewish. Yet, the typical Jewish accusation against Jesus in Mark 2 is that he is making the most un-Jewish of argument about what is lawful and what is not on Shabbat! And in turn we have so much of Christianity saying that here Yeshua is laying aside the Jewishness of the Shabbat, if not the ordinance of Shabbat itself. In fact what we see in the Talmud is that Rabbi Shim'on is advocating almost identically what Christ advocates about the Sabbath being made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So are we to say that Rabbi Shim'on is suggesting by this that the Sabbath has been abolished? Of course not. The issue, like with Yeshua, is simply what can and cannot be done ON Shabbat, not whether it still exists. But just as importantly, we have just heard several other viewpoints and nuances from these Rabbis about just how far one should go regarding saving life if the circumstance occurs on a Sabbath. And of course none of this involves changing, let alone doing away with, Shabbat.

Rabbi Natan speaks of it being OK to heal a sick person on the Sabbath, even if technically it might actually be profaning (committing a violation) of the Shabbat. And he says that this is because it is better to heal that person against the Shabbat Law, than it is to let them die, because if they remain alive then they can keep (properly observe) many MORE Sabbaths.

So one aspect of Christ's argument in Mark 2 is that due to unspoken circumstances, His disciples must not have pre-prepared food for Sabbath. And it is (I believe) a reasonable assumption that they were not prepared because they were following their Master doing something He wanted done. So now it's Shabbat, they have no prepared food, and they were hungry. The theological principle in question: should they go hungry in order not to break Sabbath law, especially when they are doing God's work? They weren't cooking, they were only plucking and eating the grain as is. Yeshua says no they shouldn't go hungry. And this is because the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. However even more importantly, as the Son of Man, the divine human, who it turns out is actually the Lord of the Sabbath (he was given all authority over it, and he is the Word of God who created ALL the Law of Moses), then who better to say what the original intent and underlying principles of the Shabbat Laws as given to Moses were than Yeshua?

Naturally these particular Pharisees weren't buying what Jesus was selling. But nonetheless, this is what Yeshua's message and intention amounted to. And further, these same sorts of debates over Shabbat, Kosher eating, the Messiah, and more were common among the Jewish religious leadership, and they are recorded for us in ancient Jewish documents like the one we just read in the Talmud.

What I have shown you today is that certain fundamental theological concepts and themes and controversies that we find in the New Testament Gospels are the same ones that are found in ancient Jewish Rabbinical writings. They are organically connected. And especially as it concerns the revelation of the divine Messiah/Redeemer, it was the Book of Daniel and his vision of the one like a Son of Man that, for the Jews of bible times, provided the clues for identifying him.

We have more New Testament Scriptures to look at that will gain us additional insight, but we'll save that for next time when we close out our study of Daniel Chapter 7.