

Christ the King

TRULY HUMAN AND HUMANE

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

Christ the King

Analysis by Paul Jaster

*9As I watched,
thrones were set in place,
and an Ancient One took his throne,
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames,
and its wheels were burning fire.
10A stream of fire issued
and flowed out from his presence.
A thousand thousands served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.
The court sat in judgment,
and the books were opened.
13As I watched in the night visions,
I saw one like a human being
coming with the clouds of heaven.
And he came to the Ancient One
and was presented before him.
14To 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.

DIAGNOSIS: Beastly Enterprises

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Beastly Behavior*

What is truth? That apart from Christ the King and his *modus operandi*, the kings, kingdoms, empires, enterprises of this world have a way of becoming very “beastly.” They are physical embodiments of destructive power. No longer legitimate agents of God’s left-handed rule (fair and just civil order), they become predatory, rapacious, ravenous, insatiable, brutal, devouring, seductive, poisonous. Un-human (inhumane) monsters “from the sea” is precisely the way that many subjected people perceive abusive powers, especially foreign powers—be they military or commercial—with their navies and their merchant marines. However, this particular picture in Daniel 7:1-18 is presented to say that this is the way God sees it, too. No specific names are mentioned, although a whole host of “perps” quickly come to mind for those who can read between the lines. So, this diagnosis can be aptly applied at various points throughout all of history, including ours. We human critters are at it still.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Arrogant & Bankrupt*

Beastly empires/enterprises may start out with a bit of a human heart (Dan. 7:4; in Hebrew *leb* means “heart/mind”) but they end up as “little horns” tooting their own praise with haughty eyes and arrogant speech (7:8). To treat people inhumanely is not only brutal bullying, but it is also an arrogant offense against the “Ancient One,” the highest, most royal court of all. Not recognizing our true place and role in God’s creation is blasphemous! A brazen breaking of the first commandment. It usurps the place of God and exposes our hearts as hard and as

calloused as a rhino's horn. And in God's ledger, that is the same as being bankrupted—morally and spiritually.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Burned/Busted*

The books of judgment are opened and audited before the "Ancient One," a code word for "God," the highest court of all. Note: (1) God's throne is on wheels! God's judgment goes everywhere. There is no place to hide! (2) The beast is not slain by a warrior god in combat (as in Ancient Near Eastern myth), but rather is executed by God's court of law. Against God's verdict there is "no contest," even by the fiercest of opponents. (3) Yes, one last terrifying beast is burned. But for the rest, their "wings are plucked," that is, their power taken away. The emphasis here is not on burning oppressive empire-builders in hell but rather on the removal of their destructive power by one whose power cannot be destroyed. Which is already a bit of good news for these blasphemous oppressors. Even those deposed from power have their lives "prolonged."

PROGNOSIS: Truly Human and Humane—the Royal Priesthood of All Believers

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *The Divine Human One*

But the even greater and better news is the truth that the God who-is-and-who-was-and who-is-to-come came once already in human flesh and blood. Embedded in the crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ is a God who loves us and freed us from our sins and made us to be a people governed by God's good and gracious right-handed way of operating (Rev. 1:4-8). Pay close attention to the verbal tenses in the Second Reading! The "freeing" and the "making" is already done, mission accomplished, in one particular point of time—Christ's cross-event. God's "loving," however, is ongoing. It is present, continuing action, with plenty of future promise and

implications.

The phrase “son of man” in Daniel 7 is NOT a messianic title. Daniel shows no interest in Davidic kingship and knows nothing of the two natures of Christ. Rather, the finger of Daniel’s accent is on the “humaneness” of God’s heavenly rule that governs those who are simpatico on earth as opposed to the “beastly” gentile rule.

The big surprise to all, including Daniel, is that God’s own self becomes a human being in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and that the crucified Jesus is Daniel’s “son of man” (rather than Michael, the heavenly prince of Israel and the ruler of God’s holy ones). The “one like a son of man” is no angel. Nor, is Jesus. Jesus is that “heavenly” and yet very “human” son of man, a new Adam, who rules divinely (the way that all Adams and all Eves were meant to rule), that is, humanely.

Step 5: Advance Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Adoring and Attentive*

Those who come to see the crucified Jesus for who he truly is right now—the faithful witness (to God’s faithful love), the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings on earth—receive a grace and peace from God that will not end despite their trials and tribulations. With Jesus, gone is the terrifying ledger of God’s judgment. Open now are all those points of entry into God’s book of life.

This happens through gospel proclamation and the presence of Christ’s spirit within the midst of those who dare to believe that this is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So helps us God! And it results in worship and praise that is adoring and attentive, just like the heavenly host’s. The horn that Christians toot is Christ’s, which simultaneous gives praise to his God and Father.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : Benevolent Behavior

For those among whom Christ's spirit dwells, beastly behavior is replaced with priestly behavior. Or, as Luther would say, the royal priesthood of all believers. This is benevolent, blessed, God-mediating behavior which results in humane treatment for those who live within those areas of life, the estates, the fiefdoms, we control. The river of fire that flows from Christ's throne is a royal, priestly servant-people inflamed by Pentecost, who let justice flow like streams of living water. Christ's kingdom may not be "of" this world, but it is certainly "in" and "for" this world. It is in serving others, that Christians serve Jesus, who is indeed "Christ the King." To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Long live his majesty, the King!