

Talk by Daniel Odhiambo at HT Eindhoven

Daniel 7:9-10, 13,14; John 18:33-37; Rev. 1:3-7

I wonder what encouragement you will give Grace.

Grace is 13 years old. She has two older brothers and they live with their mother in rural Uganda. The father died a few years ago.

When the father died, the only property they remained with was their land which is located in a very good place.

A rich businessman in the area visited them one day and asked to buy this land, but he was offering very little money for it. He literally was taking advantage of them.

And so the mother wisely rejected the offer. He tried a few times to coerce the mother to give away the land and even made threats that there would be consequences if she can't cooperate.

It so happened that Grace always returned home earlier than the rest of her family from school and one day this man came into the home when Grace was alone and made good of her threats by sexually molesting her.

The brothers and mother returned later to find out what had happened to young Grace. They reported it to the police and hoped there would be justice.

Day after day they went to the police to check, and every time they were met with hostility.

You see, the rich businessman had paid off the police.

One time the elder brother, feeling very frustrated, became very aggressive with the police, and for that, he was locked in for six months.

They have tried all they can to get justice, nothing!

And so poor Grace would live the rest of her life without justice because powerful, untouchable people exist in this world.

Now each of you probably knows a story that like that. They exist around the world. And if you don't, just sign up to newsletters of organization like Tearfund and you will hear the stories.

Countless numbers of Christians being persecuted by powerful people and powerful govts

The passages today give us hope that Grace, and many others like her, will get justice, because Jesus is the ultimate judge

Chapter 7 of Daniel is a decent summary of the book of Daniel. The book of Daniel was written to encourage us to persevere in faith, because YHWH, God is the only true God

Most of you are probably familiar with the stories of Daniel in the lion's den and how God comes in to rescue him; or the story

of Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego who were thrown into the furnace by a king, and God rescues them from it.

God consistently proves to human rulers, the kings of this world, that he is the ultimate king.

Rather than explicitly use names of Kings and Kingdoms, chapter 7 uses coded language to describe these kings and kingdoms.

So Daniel sees a vision of 4 beastly and terrifying figures. A lion with the wings of an eagle. A fierce bear with ribs in its mouth, a leopard with four heads and four bird wings, and lastly a fourth beast with large iron teeth, and 10 horns.

They are powerful, terrifying; and they represent a line of successive empires and kings.

And as Daniel is mesmerized by what he's just seen, he sees something else

Two thrones are set up in what looks like a court scene, and the ancient of Days takes his place on a throne

In the biblical worldview, this ancient of Days can only be God Himself.

See how he is described:

His clothing was as white as snow;

the hair of his head was white like wool.

*His throne was flaming with fire,
and its wheels were all ablaze.*

*10 A river of fire was flowing,
coming out from before him.*

*Thousands upon thousands attended him;
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.*

*The court was seated,
and the books were opened.*

So God then sits in judgement over these seemingly powerful and frightening beasts. They all answer to God, as it were

But then you might just be wondering, what about that other throne? v.9 speaks of thrones in plural

And so Daniel sees in the vision

and in it there is another person, who looks like a son of man- a human being,

v.13 In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.

Now in other places in the Bible, the only person described to travel like this, on the clouds, is God.

So Psalm 104, Ezekiel 1, or Isaiah 19, YHWH is said to be riding the clouds, and other idols are trembling at his presence. Same language here

This second person therefore looks like a human being, like a son of man, but he is also God.

And Daniel says he comes to the Ancient of Days, and

v.14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

This God man has supreme authority over all the other kings, however powerful and terrifying they might look, and his kingdom is forever

These other kingdoms will be destroyed, and Daniel sees a vision of the destruction of the fourth beast which was most terrifying. But the kingdom of this God-man lasts forever

And when we come to the NT, we find Jesus calling himself the son of man.

He is this God-man.

And in our Gospel reading today, Jesus is before Pilate and other human authorities.

He has just been before the religious leaders, and they have asked him: Are you the Christ? An event that is recorded in both Mark and Matthew

Jesus answers them: *"I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven"*

Jesus has this Daniel passage in mind, as these human authorities unfairly judge him and convict him to death.

These authorities are representative of the beastly figures of Daniel 7, and they are trying to destroy Jesus. They have a knife on Jesus' throat, so to speak.

In our passage he is taken to the governor's residence who is meant to confirm this death verdict. They want to do away with him

Are you the King of the Jews, Pilate also asks him.

Jesus' response,

v.36 My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

You see, Jesus kingdom is not of this world. That does not mean that Jesus does not rule this world, as if it's just spiritual and that's all.

What Jesus means here is that the authority, the power of his kingdom is not derived from this world.

He does not need an election to be king. He does not need majority approval in parliament to reign.

That's why his followers do not crusade as it were. We don't need a jihad. It's not necessary

Jesus' power and authority is far greater than this world can give.

The reading from Revelations brings all this to a climax

It describes Jesus as the ruler of the kings of the earth

Again Daniel 7 is in view,

v.7 Look, he is coming with the clouds,"

*and "every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him";*

You see, no one can escape his rule and judgement

v.8 I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty

Alpha and Omega is like saying A to Z. His rule is all encompassing

Or as that dutch leader, Abraham Kuyper famously said

"There's not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is Lord over all, does not exclaim, 'Mine!'"

Jesus is King, and he rules, and he will judge. Every injustice. Every unfairness. Every wrong. One day, Grace will know true justice. One day all Christians who get persecuted will know justice.

Now of course that includes you and me. And sometimes we might focus on the extremes like Grace's case and forget that even us we have done wrong.

Many times we have been unfair to those around us.

But if we trust in Jesus, we do not need to fear his judgement

I wonder if you noticed the end of v.5

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

You see, if we trust in Jesus, then by his blood he has born the justice that we deserve.

You see at the cross of Jesus, Jesus paid for even the worst crime that any of us who trusts in him has ever committed.

And there's no bigger justice than a death sentence. It doesn't matter what you do, the highest conviction you can ever get is a death sentence.

And Jesus took even that conviction for us. So we are free. We can now serve him

and so the encouragement for us is to persevere. Things will not always be like this. Injustice will not always prevail. The king of all the earth will establish his reign visibly here on earth.