

“Lord, When Did We See You Hungry?”

Thomas Robinson, *Matthew—Conflict and Vision 7*, March 13, 2016

Matthew 25:31-46

³¹ “When **the Son of the Human** comes in **his glory**, and all the **angels** with him, then he will **sit on a throne of his glory**. ³² Before him will be gathered **all the Gentiles/nations**, and he will separate them from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

³⁴ Then **the King (Emperor)** will say to **those on his right**, ‘**Come**, you who are **blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you** from the **world’s foundation**. ³⁵ For **I was hungry** and you gave me food, **I was thirsty** and you gave me drink, **I was a stranger** and you welcomed me, ³⁶ **I was naked** and you clothed me, **I was sick** and you visited me, **I was in prison** and you came to me.’

³⁷ Then **the righteous** will answer him, saying, ‘**Lord, when did we see you hungry** and feed you, or **thirsty** and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you **a stranger** and welcome you, or **naked** and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, **as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.**’

⁴¹ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘**Depart** from me, you cursed, into the **fire** of the age to come, prepared for the **accuser** and his angels. ⁴² For I was **hungry** and you gave me no food, I was **thirsty** and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a **stranger** and you did not welcome me, **naked** and you did not clothe me, **sick** and **in prison** and you did not visit me.’

⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘**Lord, when did we see you hungry** or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’

⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as **you did not do it to one of the least of these**, you did not do it **to me.**’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into a **punishment of the age to come**, but the righteous into **life of the age to come.**”

Daniel 7:9-11; 13-14; 17-18 Greek [*In a dream vision Daniel sees four terrifying beasts (empires), and then...*]

⁹ I was watching when thrones were set up, and one ancient of days was seated, having a robe like snow and the hair of his head like pure white wool. The throne was like a flame of fire, ¹⁰ and there went out from before his face a river of fire. A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand ten thousands attended on him. And a law court took its seat and books were opened. ...

¹³ I was watching in a vision of the night, and behold, upon the clouds of the heaven one like a son of a human was coming, and like an ancient of days he was present and those standing by were present with him. ¹⁴ And to him was given authority and all the Gentiles of the earth according to tribe, and all glory was serving him. And his authority was an authority of the age to come, which shall certainly not be taken away, and his kingdom one which shall certainly not be destroyed. ...

[*In his dream Daniel asks an angel the meaning of these things. The angel tells him.*] ¹⁷ “These great beasts are four kingdoms which shall perish from the earth. ¹⁸ And saints of the most high shall receive the kingdom and shall possess the kingdom into the ages and into the ages of ages.”

Matthew 16:27-28

²⁷ “For the Son of the Human is going to come with his messengers/angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will give back to each according to his actions. ²⁸ Truly, I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of the Human coming in his kingdom.”

Matthew 24:30

³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of the Human, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of the Human coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Matthew 26:1-2

¹ When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, ² “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of the Human will be delivered up to be crucified.”

A Prophetic Vision Revisioned on the road to the Cross

This is the final block of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew. It ends the the last complex discourse of judgment and anticipation (23-25) before things rapidly unfold in Passover and crucifixion.

What is going to happen is so hard for Jesus’ disciples to grasp, so paradoxical, that Jesus wants to plant in them a new vision for the future. He uses an image that he’s often used: the Son of the Human (Son of Man). Often to speak of himself in third person. Always loaded language, drawn from Daniel, used several times in this discourse, with other Daniel refs.

Jesus proclaimed God’s Kingdom, a hope loaded with faith and political struggle. Was he Messiah or was he about to die – the end of dreams. An impass. The Son of Man image come from a powerful vision in Daniel 7: God’s people receive the kingdom while beastly kingdoms of the nations are destroyed. The Son of the Human embodies God’s Kingdom.

Jesus retells that vision to show how it is being fulfilled and transformed. Yes, a new age, God’s kingdom is breaking in, but such surprises! It begins now and extends through ‘judgment’ to resurrection. Jesus as King begins the conquest of death by dying (!) ... and resurrection. The King is Immanuel, God with us, but in unexpected ways, through a challenging future.

Blessed and Astonished in a New Kind of Kingdom

What happens when Daniel’s vision is fulfilled? The Son who becomes King gathers all Gentiles, but not to destroy them. He judges them. But how? Some are welcomed as *“Blessed by my Father.”* God’s Kingdom has been for them *“from the foundation of the world.”* Jesus’ good Jewish disciples must be astonished. Jesus says the nations are just as astonished!

The King says they cared for him in all kinds of real, not pretended, need. A strange king! In the power and structure of this world he has nothing, but he built the world as Son of God. He was there among all the nations, hungry, a stranger, imprisoned. They cared for him!

“Lord, When?!” He is the Son of the Human. In every human he has a brother or sister. When *“you did it to one of the least of these....”* The Kingdom is breaking in. It reveals who people are. They discover the deep reality of God that sweeps away the power/wealth of our world.

The other side in the vision: Like the *“one talent”* man, they are condemned, not for evil acts, but for not actively doing good to *“the least.”* They live in our ordinary world of self-focused values, not self-giving love (*agapé*). The world does not share in conquering death by dying. It just dies. That punishment of the age to come begins now and continues. So also Life! Everything about this kingdom, especially its King, is a judgment on the values of our world.

A Dying King, Alive Everywhere!

Jesus answers the disciples’ questions. The glorious kingdom is breaking in. Its Glory is God’s self-giving love. The King is enthroned. You will see him on a cross, with you always, in every person in need. This is what the world has always been about. Not our power, greed, our desires, our mammon. This is life that conquers death. Life that lasts because it is God’s life.

This kingdom is already here in the resurrected Messiah, the Spirit – life of the age to come. It begins now and never stops. You can live it in every moment in love and service and hope.