

In seminary, we are taught to pay attention to the language of scripture. Nothing in scripture, especially when Jesus speaks, is said unnecessarily. When everything is necessary, we say “there is no filler” in the music business. So, when we look at the teachings and parables of Jesus, there is no filler. With that in mind, I want us to look at the term, Son of Man.

Son of Man: Greek translation of Aramaic (*bar Nasha*), a transliteration of the Hebrew (*ben Adam*). A modern literal translation could be ***Son of Humanity***. God refers to the prophet Ezekiel by this name, and it is used in a couple of other places in the OT to refer to Israel compared to the beasts, who are the gentiles. However, this term is used exclusively in the NT to refer to Jesus. When you hear Jesus refer to the Son of Man, you could substitute Jesus saying “I” or “me” to make it more understandable.

**Matt 24:36-44** “But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>37</sup> For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>40</sup> Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left. <sup>42</sup> Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup> Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

Jesus gives this lesson on the heels of telling the disciples about the coming destruction of the Temple (in v.24:1-2). The disciples want to know when this will happen (in v.24:3). Jesus then goes into a long diatribe telling them about the suffering that will accompany the passing of this world. He also points out the coming of the Son-of-Man (or himself). More importantly, he is speaking of his second coming. The one thing he doesn’t do is give a timetable as to when any of this will happen. He compares the second coming to the “days of Noah” (24:39-41). Today Jesus gives us a teaching about Advent. Advent can have two different contexts. In a chronological sense, it is the four weeks before Christmas. The time we prepare for the celebration of the birth of Christ Jesus. For some, it is a time of celebration, a time of fellowship with friends and family. For others, it is a time of reflection on lost loved ones. No matter which way you lean, it is a time of mindfulness and alertness. **HOWEVER...**

The picture Jesus is painting is one of “the Rapture” or “the Apocalypse.” Now, those terms may conjure different images. Our modern literature and movies paint this in a particular light. *The Left Behind* books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins and the subsequent movies based on those books have warped the average Christian’s understanding of what the rapture will be. But today, I am going to set the record

straight. **Those books are not theological textbooks or scripture commentaries, and the movies are not documentaries.** They are dispensationalist fiction of outdated Christian theories concerning the second coming of Jesus. {Dispensationalism is a system that John Nelson Darby formalized. Dispensationalism maintains that history is divided into multiple ages or "dispensations" in which God acts with humanity differently. Dispensationalists generally maintain a belief in premillennialism, a future restoration of Israel, and a rapture that will happen before the second coming, generally seen as happening before the tribulation.}

I want you to listen to v.40-41 again, (v. 40-41), "Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left." did anyone notice that when Jesus tells us that people will be separated, He makes no distinctions between those who are taken and those who are left. He only states that there will be separation, sudden and surprising division. We do not know the righteousness of those taken or left.

Such scripture passages have made for good fictional readings, but they have also made for many people, both scholars, and laypeople, trying to find clues inside Jesus' teaching to place a date on the second coming. **HOWEVER...**

While giving these ambiguous teachings about the end, Jesus disavows any chronological knowledge of such an apocalyptic timetable. He tells his disciples to be ready, to keep a posture of wakefulness and readiness. Understandably, because if we seek to find clues or codes for the end times, we miss the point of this lesson altogether.

In looking for such a chronological moment when the Son of Man (ben Adam) will come, we risk locating another Advent somewhere in the future. And with such knowledge, we give ourselves time to live by a human timeline. Think about it. Today we enter the season of Advent. Historically, the rush has begun; we move frantically to prepare for an event we know is coming. We schedule our social calendars around Christmas parties and church events. We desperately search for presents for our spouses, children, grandchildren, friends, and coworkers. We are so busy preparing for Christmas that we lose track of the reason. Advent exists so we can be ready for the birth of Christ Jesus. For some reason, we remember this on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, and by January 2<sup>nd</sup>, we fall right back into our normal lives because we got 11 months to get ready.

God works in a different time, Kyrios time. The disciples are asking about Chrono's time. There is no direct conversion chart. We Jesus compares the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming to the days of Noah, he is referring to a Kyrios event. This is the second thing to keep in mind. Chronos time is measured in quantity as in a clock or calendar. It's the time of day or day, month, or season. Kyrios time is God's time. A distinct event dictated by God, measured in quality, not quantity. A Kyrios event is the last time you held your grandparent's hand or the birth of your first child, The first time you said, "I love you" to a significant other, or the birth of the Messiah in a little town called Bethlehem. **AND...** it can be a time of significant change, like what happens in the story of Noah and the flood, or the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ.

Another way to think of it is like this. If we know the chronological time of this Kyrios event, we will instinctively calculate how much lazy time we have before we do the necessary deeds to gain salvation. Even though we know, there is nothing we can do to gain salvation. It's the same reason that Sebastian doesn't go out on Sunday night to the club when he has class on Monday. He knows he must prepare for class. If he goes out and parties, he risks getting bad grades and being killed by his mother. Bad theology is a slippery slope.

Jesus is teaching the disciples the most important lesson of his ministry. **Leave your watch at home.** He is teaching them that it is, and should always be, the nature of Christian Disciples to be those who "stay awake" constantly looking for the Lord's coming. It's not the time, it's the event.

[If Jesus came back today, would we even notice?]

The teaching Jesus is giving to his disciples, and by proxy to us, is a discipline of mindfulness.

This discipline requires active resistance to the world's distractions and worries and keeping our senses sharply **tuned to the cross**. It requires us to seek the places where the risen Christ is present in our world. But the process may seem a little counterintuitive because it will not happen in this building. It will not happen on the 6 O'clock news. It will not be obvious until its too late.

Finding the risen Christ in our world is done by looking for the dark places of suffering where God's power is not yet named. During Advent, this time of year, we become acutely aware of those dark places. This is why volunteering and charitable giving increase. Because when we look for the coming of Jesus, even in the story of his first coming, we are reminded of a cross where we are given the grace of forgiveness.

As we enter the season of Advent, we have the instinct to react. Be it as true disciples, taking care of our neighbors, seeking the best for the orphan, the widow, and the poor. Being mindful that for some, this is a dark season indeed. For some, we react with guilt because of the realization that for the rest of the year, we live in Chronos time, and we think we have enough time to prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

Today I ask are you ready? Are you living as if the Lord is near? The stories we tell during advent cause us to look. They cause us to react. And that's wonderful. **HOWEVER...** this Advent season, I ask you to remain aware, looking for the Son of Man, and remember that feeling. So that after this season of Advent, you take this Kyrios moment into the new year as Christian Disciples. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.