

## #265 “An Everlasting Kingdom”

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As a young man, Daniel’s world was turned upside down. Many of his countrymen were slaughtered, and he and several of his friends were carried off as captives into Babylon. Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were chosen because of their intellect and appearance to receive three years of Babylonian education and training, after which they would serve as personal servants of the king. They were given new Babylonian names which reflected Babylonian deities, but they stayed true to who they were. They were told to eat of the king’s food and drink, but they didn’t violate their conscience and chose instead to eat foods which were healthy and pleasing to God. Despite constant cultural reprogramming and reeducation, they still worshipped their God. While we get our fair share of propaganda in our home country, we can only imagine what it would be like to see our homeland burned to the ground, many people we know killed, and be cut off from family only to have to learn a new language and serve a pagan king and nation. But the theme that emerges in the Book of Daniel is that God is the God of times, epochs, kings, nations, and the past, present, and future. He is bigger than nations that rise and fall and kings that exalt themselves with great pride in their power and rule. He has a plan for the future, and it will not be thwarted. He already knows the future, and it will come to pass. This is great news for believers because their end is good. God will rule and reign, and Satan and those who serve him will be defeated. Christians are part of God’s everlasting dominion, and even in the present God rules and is able to strengthen His own to walk faithfully even when the entirety of life means fighting against a pagan tide.

In Daniel 2, the king moved to kill all of his wise men, including Daniel and his friends, but Daniel trusted God to reveal the king’s dream and its interpretation, which He did, thus sparing the lives of the wise men. After this miraculous deliverance from the Lord, Daniel prayed and said in 2:20-23:

“Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him. To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, For You have made known to us the king’s matter.”

Daniel got to see in a very real way that God is sovereign over all people, all kings, and all nations, regardless of the superpower of the day. He gives wisdom to His people, and He knows even what every person dreams at night. Nothing is beyond His purview, and nothing escapes His notice. He is indeed Lord of All, the Most High God, the Ancient of Days, and the Rock of Ages. Those names are not accidents, but they are revelatory of His eternal nature, His ultimate power, and His undeniable and unchallengeable authority.

Something really interesting happened next. When Daniel explained the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, he referenced that, in the dream, the king was like the golden top of a statue, and its bottom segments were made of different materials which represented other nations which would come to be the most powerful nations in the world later. In defiance of God's revelation according to the dream, Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 3 ordered the construction of a giant golden statue to which all of Babylon had to bow. His pride was so great that he even wanted to revise the dream, so to speak, by making the entire statue gold as if to suggest the eternal dominion of his rule and kingdom. Daniel's friends refused to bow and worship and were cast into the fiery furnace of the king. But even a furnace turned up seven times its usual temperature was not strong enough to even singe the clothes of God's servants, and Christ was present there with them to make a point to Nebuchadnezzar that He is more powerful than the most powerful man on earth. But Nebuchadnezzar, though he acknowledged the Hebrew God, still did not repent and humble himself before Him.

The king had yet another dream, and Daniel explained it to him, saying in 4:25, God has decreed

“that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.”

The theme of the Book of Daniel continues unabated that God wants the world to know that He is ruler over the realm of mankind because He is the Most High God, not the almost highest God or the higher than most God. He is Supreme. When Nebuchadnezzar came back to his senses after his period of God-ordained insanity, He worshipped God. He says in Daniel 4:34-35,

“But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’”

Indeed, God's kingdom is everlasting because He is everlasting, and man must recognize his small subservient position to this benevolent yet all-powerful and mighty God. The king continues in verse 37 saying, “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.” He learned to respect and revere God, even calling Him King, because he recognized that God is true, just, and sovereign. God deserves worship because He is both all-powerful and perfectly good and just. Nebuchadnezzar realized that striving against God is an eternally losing proposition, but submitting to Him as King is a reward that endures throughout eternity.

As the Book of Daniel continues, we get an inside look at Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar on the night that Babylon would fall to the Medes and Persians. Daniel is called to read the handwriting on the wall from a very visible detached hand. The writing predicts Belshazzar's

imminent fall because of his pride and how he failed to learn from his father's experience with God. Daniel confronted the king in 5:23b saying, "But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified." Belshazzar thought he was the big boss man and that he held his life in his own hand. Thus, God very pertinently and purposefully revealed Himself to him by way of a hand which wrote a message of judgment on the wall, for God holds all life and breath in His hand. He is the One before Whom all must bow, and it is His righteous right hand that is the most powerful of all (Isaiah 41:10).

King Darius of the Medes and Persians, the next world power, also got to see Daniel's God in action saving him from the lion's den. He, too, acknowledged in Daniel 6:26 that God "is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion *will be* forever." The theme of the book of God's everlasting dominion continues even as a new world military power takes over, for God is sovereign over the affairs of men. Only He can shut the mouths of lions, something no man can do.

The book closes with several visions given to Daniel concerning future events and the coming kingdoms which would rise and fall including the antichrist. All of this was overwhelming to Daniel, and it made him physically sick for days (Daniel 8:27). He saw a glimpse into several millennia of world history, and he even got a glimpse of the spiritual warfare going on between good angels and bad angels behind the scenes. Satan indeed uses world powers to try to persecute the people of God and to turn hearts away to idols (Daniel 10:13, 21). But even he must live in constant fear given that he has an up close view of God's sovereignty over even the most pagan of nations and prideful of men. He also knows that God has revealed his ultimate defeat, for even the most powerful of the forces of darkness is no match for the Most High God (Revelation 12:12, 20:11).

God knows beforehand which nations will rise and fall and when, but He is most concerned about people coming to join His everlasting kingdom by faith. Christ, by virtue of His Sonship and death and resurrection (Philippians 2:8-10), has been given all authority to rule in the coming kingdom. Daniel found great comfort and hope in this truth, and so should we. Daniel 7:13-14 says,

"I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed."

There will be people in heaven worshipping Christ from every tribe, tongue, and nation from kingdoms throughout history. Only Christ's kingdom will endure because only He is God and Lord of all. Daniel 7:18 says, "But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come." The Ancient of Days, the Alpha and the Omega, the one Who defines the beginning and the end by His everlasting nature, says that we who trust Christ by faith will be part of Christ's everlasting kingdom for all ages to come.

When we see this overview of world history in Daniel given before it even happens, it is as if God sees all of human history in the blink of an eye as if it is nothing compared to the eternal kingdom which is to come. The process, journey, and travails of this life on earth, which Daniel and his friends certainly knew and understood, can sometimes make us take our eyes off the prize as we focus too much on what is passing and too little on what is eternal. We can end up overestimating the permanency of earthly kingdoms and neglect the eternal kingdom to come. Daniel and his friends had numerous chances to shine Light brightly into darkness by faith and showcase the power of their eternal God. They didn't get sucked into the aura of powerful people and the popular pagan trends of the day, and they knew that a relationship with the Most High God was more valuable than anything this world could offer. Gospel proclamation is critical because of the permanency of Christ's kingdom, and being citizens of His kingdom is the ultimate prize. This world is passing away (1 John 2:17), but heaven is our home (Philippians 3:20). Daniel 12:13 says, "But as for you, go *your way* to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise *again* for your allotted portion at the end of the age." Yes, Lord, may it be, and come quickly!