

READ Daniel 2:44

We are certainly living in very interesting times to say the least. From the continuing pandemic, to cultural wars, and to election unrest...there is plenty of current situations that are keeping us on our toes. In case none of this caught your attention, you might have seen the disgraceful events of this past week when protestors turned into rioters and violent trespassers within our nations Capitol Building. With everything going on, it is no doubt so many are legitimately worried about the future of our culture, society, and nation as a whole.

This is especially true for those who see their entire identity wrapped up in being a citizen of the United States of America. If this country were somehow to fall or if the very foundation of individual freedoms were broken down in some way, those who only have an earthly citizenship to define their identities would be left reeling. Who would those people be if they couldn't call themselves Americans? What would they do if they no longer possessed the freedoms they once did? However, such issues should not be issues for those of us who are disciples of Jesus because we belong to an Everlasting Kingdom that will never fall, never have its privileges of its citizens revoked, or have its foundations broken and destroyed by a more powerful enemy.

This morning, I would like to remind us of this all-important truth concerning the everlasting nature of the Kingdom of God, and I would like to do so through a consideration of the story that is found in Daniel 2. Daniel lived in a time quite similar to our own in many regards. He too was a foreigner in a strange land even as we are as Christians. He was a part of a wicked culture and society, even as we are as Christians. Yet, he had to continue to live and operate in such a society, even as we do as Christians. This story should serve as a reminder and an encouragement to us as we live in difficult days, and I hope we will leave this assembly today with a reaffirmed confidence in our heavenly citizenship by considering the glaring differences between a kingdom led by men and a kingdom led by God.

The Promise Of God's Kingdom In Daniel 2**A. Story Breakdown****1. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream & Decree (vv.1-13)**

- a) This story begins with the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar having dreams that were keeping him awake and greatly troubling him. In order to get to the absolute truth behind these dreams, he calls together all of the magicians, mediums, sorcerers, and Chaldean wise men who would hopefully have the ability to tell him the proper interpretation of his dreams. These men are gathered before Nebuchadnezzar, are told of his problem, and begin their hopeful work towards a solution by asking the king to tell them his dreams.
- b) As a test of sorts, Nebuchadnezzar requires that they first tell him his dreams in order to verify they were truly clued into what was going on. He seeks to motivate them a bit further by saying that their failure to help him will result in their painful death and even the destruction of their families. But if they are able to help him then he is ready to give them great gifts, rewards, and honor from him. Again, the men say they can't do what is asked, and after another go around with the king, they even go to the extent of saying what is being asked of them could only be accomplished by the gods who dwell apart from mortal man.
- c) This is obviously not what Nebuchadnezzar wants to hear, so he becomes violently angry, and gives orders for all of the wise men of Babylon to be killed. Oh by the way...that would include Daniel and his Hebrew friends, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah.

2. Daniel's Response (vv.14-30)

- a) When the executioners arrive at Daniel's residence to kill him, he responds "**with tact and discretion**" in dealing with Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, the executioners. He inquires why the king was so angry and harsh with this decree, and Arioch explains the situation to Daniel. This leads Daniel to beg the king for some time to find an interpretation himself in order to suffice the king and stave off this impending slaughter.
- b) I am so impressed by Daniel's next move. Instead of simply wringing his hands in hoping for a solution to fall out of the sky, he goes to his house and urges the three men most well known as Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego to immediately begin asking God to offer mercy and help them "**concerning this mystery**" since their lives were hanging in the balance. No doubt through their commitment and reliance upon Yahweh, the vision is revealed to Daniel, and he responds with a wonderful moment of praise to God.
- c) This praise centers entirely upon God for His incomparable wisdom and power. Daniel speaks to God's sovereignty in changing the times and season, removing kings, establishing kings, and giving wisdom and knowledge to those who are wise and understanding. On and on Daniel exalts God for everything He is and does, and we should be left thoroughly impressed by Daniel's faith and confidence in God. If we aren't yet, then we simply need to continue working our way through **v.30** because Daniel, in going before the king, clearly explains that the coming interpretation was only made known through the working of the God of heaven who is the true Revealer of mysteries. Daniel is extremely humble in giving all glory to God even though Arioch sought to gain credit for he claims he "**found a man among the Judean exiles who can let the king know the interpretation.**" (**v.25**)

3. Daniel's Interpretation (vv.31-45)

- a) Daniel begins by doing as the king requested by simply telling him what it was that the king had seen in his dreams that had caused him so much trouble. His dream consisted of a colossal statue that was tall, extremely dazzling, and even terrifying in appearance. It had a head made of pure gold. Its chest and arms were silver, stomach and thighs were bronze, and its legs were iron with feet made of iron and clay combined. It surely was so impressive to see until a rock came into the picture without having been prompted by a hand. It crushed the the feet which caused the rest of the statue to fall and shatter. After crushing the statue, the rock became a great mountain and filled the entire earth.
- b) Daniel then transitioned to the interpretation which began with Daniel informing Nebuchadnezzar that he was the king of all the kings upon the earth, but that was only made possible by the God of the heavens. It was Yahweh who had given Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty power, strength, and glory. He brought the Babylonian king up to the position of being represented by the impressive head of gold. A second and third kingdom are then briefly mentioned as the silver and bronze portions, but more attention is given to legs of iron and feet of iron and clay. Daniel speaks of this kingdom being partly strong and partly weak, and it was during "**the days of those kings**" that God would establish His own kingdom that would never be destroyed. It was represented by the great stone that crushed the statue and grew into the mountain that filled the entire earth. Again, Daniel affirms Yahweh as being the true One who was able to tell the king what would come in the future, and he affirms the reliability of of this interpretation.

4. Nebuchadnezzar's New Decree (vv.46-49)

- a) We might think this interpretation of Babylon's future fall might anger Nebuchadnezzar, but he actually responds very positively by even falling down, worshipping Daniel, and ordering an offering and incense to be presented to him. He freely admits and confesses Yahweh as truly being the *"God of gods, Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries."* He came to this conclusion based upon the evidence of Daniel being able to reveal his dreams by the power given to him by Yahweh.
- b) Based upon Daniel's service to the king, Nebuchadnezzar ends up promoting him and giving him a very generous number of gifts. Daniel is raised to be the ruler over the entire province of Babylon as well as the top spot among the wise men. Daniel also remembers his friends for the prayer they had offered on his behalf, and they are also appointed to management positions within Babylon. Though he had faced death, Daniel's trust in God led to great encouragement through the revelation of God's coming Kingdom that would endure and last forever.

B. Observations From The Text

1. The king had an issue that no man had the ability to solve.

- a) The trouble from within this text all stemmed from the fact that no man alone had the power to bring a solution to the king's problem. First, the king himself could not figure out what his dreams meant, and this brought him much angst. Then the magicians, mediums, sorcerers, and Chaldean wise men were brought in, but they too were unable to give the king an interpretation for his dreams. For their inability to give the king what he wanted, we might give credit to the wise men who rightfully judged the situation when they told the king, *"No one on earth can make known what the king requests. Consequently, no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked anything like this of any magician, medium, or Chaldean. What the king is asking is so difficult that no one can make it known to him except the gods, whose dwelling is not with mortals."* (vv.10,11)
- b) While the captain of the king's guard might have wanted to take credit for "finding" Daniel, Daniel was honest when he admitted that his ability to give the king what he wanted wasn't something that was a product of his own mind. He echoes similar thoughts to the earlier wise men, but rightfully identifies who made this interpretation happen, *"No wise man, medium, magician, or diviner is able to make known to the king the mystery he asked about. But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has let King Nebuchadnezzar know what will happen in the last days."* (vv.27,28)

2. Daniel immediately goes to God when he finds himself in a serious situation.

- a) While there were numerous men who recognized their powerless position in this situation, it was only Daniel who immediately went to God in prayer and asked for his closest friends to do the same. They were facing down the real possibility of death, and instead of wringing their hands in terror and fear, they got down on their knees and petitioned the only One who they had full confidence in. *"Then Daniel went to his house and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah about the matter, urging them to ask the God of the heavens for mercy concerning this mystery, so Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of Babylon's wise men."* (vv.17,18)
- b) For their very obvious confidence in God, He responds favorably by revealing the vision and interpretation to Daniel at night. Just as he had done at the first sign of trouble, Daniel immediately takes the time to give praise to the one who had made it all possible. (vv.20-23)

3. There is coming a kingdom that will outlast and even overcome all of the kingdoms of men.
- a) While this text gives us this wonderful promise of God's coming Kingdom in this insightful narrative form, it is hardly the only text where this same Kingdom is promised as coming in power. It might be purely coincidental, but many of the text that contain similar prophecies of great promise are also found in the second chapter of other Biblical writings.
- (1) **Psalm 2** first speaks of the day when God would instal His King on Zion, His holy mountain. Note the consistency of the mountain imagery.
 - (2) **Isaiah 2:1-4** also speaks of "*the mountain of the Lord's house will be established at the top of the mountains...*"
 - (3) **Joel 2:28-32** details the day of the Lord coming with great signs of judgment and salvation, and Mount Zion is once again mentioned.
- b) Each of these predictions seem to find their foretold details fulfilled in **Acts 2** when the Apostles stand up on Pentecost and proclaim the great message of salvation through faith in Jesus as the Christ and Messiah of God. It might be good at this moment to recognize that mountain language was often used in the Old Testament to signify closeness with spiritual beings who lived in the heavens. For each of these prophecies, including **Daniel 2**, to have mountain imagery leads us to the understanding that this kingdom would bring mankind into a closer proximity and relationship with God. This was surely fulfilled in the man Jesus, but how exactly did Jesus bring about the crushing of the kingdoms of the world? How did the kingdom of Jesus conquer the kingdoms of men?
- c) This is an important question to consider given what we can see within and without the Bible. Within the Bible we see Jesus's disciples ready to physically fight for Jesus at His arrest, but He strongly states that His kingdom was not of that sort. His followers were not to resort to violence and fighting to promote this kingdom (**Matthew 26:47-54**) It seems not everyone got this message of Jesus since Josephus speaks of the Jewish zealots actually using the **Daniel 2:44** text to support their physical struggle against Rome. But this still doesn't detail how it is that Jesus crushes the kingdoms of mankind.
- d) In one of the most stunning paradoxes of the Bible, we must understand that Jesus, the Cornerstone who was rejected by men (**Psalm 118:19-24; Ephesians 2:14-22**), would be that which crushes the rebels through His exaltation to the place of King and Messiah (**Matthew 21:42-46**). We see Jesus's exaltation in the most unlikely way possible...through His betrayal and death on the cross. As King he is given a crown (**Matthew 27:28**), a robe (**Matthew 27:29**), a scepter (**Matthew 27:29**), and even hailed (**Matthew 27:29**) and publicly proclaimed as the King of the Jews (**Matthew 27:37**) by being lifted up on the cross. Though those carrying out this heinous act thought they were winning, they were actually insuring their demise by bringing about the exaltation of God's Messiah to the seat of power as King of His Kingdom that would endure forever. The kingdoms of earth thought they would rule forever through pure strength and power, but God shows the enduring kingdom will last through humility towards, trust in, and reliance upon Yahweh.

Concluding Thoughts

1. I should not put confidence in men who are limited and fallible.

- a) I know many, if not all of us, are struggling to come to grips with the direction in which our society and culture is heading. I know it is easy to get all caught up in what is going on and to allow worry and fear to overtake our thinking and hearts. However, I am convinced this is only the work of the evil one being made evident in our lives. He wants us to fear for our futures and allow that fear to cause us to put confidence in our own wisdom or the wisdom of men and women who have greater influence on our society and culture as a whole.
- b) Yet, I beg you to please remember that putting confidence in men will only lead us to further difficulties and struggles because men are simply limited in ability and longevity. No one person or group of people are going to fix the ills of our country on their own by their own wisdom. Each of us when left to our own devices are selfish, greedy, and self-serving by nature through the influence of this world. Truly did the Jeremiah speak of his day and even our own when he wrote, *"The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)* When we continually look inward into that which is already deceitful, self-serving, and greedy...why would we expect to find cures for our ills?

2. I should trust in God who has continually worked within this world to accomplish His will.

- a) Therefore, we need to look past men for help and reach out for the help that God provides. Daniel makes it abundantly clear to us that God continues to be active in the affairs of men, and we must be willing to recognize this as being a continued truth even in our times. I know we cringe at the thought of God causing such evil and wickedness to run rampant, but I believe that is the wrong approach to our current situation. God is never the cause of evil for He is totally good. Instead, He simply allows for the wicked hearts of men to continue to grow worse and worse as they continue to reject Him and His will.
- b) When we see a country, even our own, fall deeper and deeper into the bottomless dark pit of immorality, ungodliness, and evil...we should recognize that God is simply allowing it to bear the fruit it has sought to cultivate and grow. However, this does not mean that God is not actively seek to change things. We might not be able to point to specific instances where God has directly intervened for good, but might I suggest that we ought to be constantly working to be influencing for good on God's behalf?
- c) We might wonder the role we ought to play as people who are first and foremost focused on being strong citizens of the enduring kingdom of heaven, but let's recognize that Daniel, while seeking to do the same in a sense from his place in history, was also seeking the best way to work within his circumstances as a captive in Babylon. He didn't simply assimilate full scale into Babylonian society (**Daniel 1:5:21**), but he was also involved in helping to make things go as smoothly as possible. He represented the will of God in his actions and played a strong role in helping God's will be accomplished in his pagan land of residence. That's certainly something we would all do well to emulate. Let's first and foremost serve God, but let's also be a catalyst and influence for godliness and good in these evil days.

3. God's Kingdom alone is worthy of my unwavering focus & devotion.

- a) Finally, we as Christians simply want to endure and make it to the end of our race of faith. Yes, we are more than likely finding that more and more difficult to do at the moment, but we are still just as capable of doing so today as we were when the culture didn't seem to be so dead-set against us. We can endure and live lives of confidence with peace of mind by being committed to putting our full trust in God and not men.

b) As we look around us, we see people constantly looking towards other men or women, this or that organization, or the government for all of our problems to be solved. Yet, as we just noted...men are limited in their ability and longevity. No one will fix all of our problems on their own. Only God offers the solutions to our ills, and the man who stands upon those solutions is only doing so by God's wisdom. But even if they did such a thing...they would only last so long before passing on. Therefore, we must look towards God as our constant focus and source of operation. He will never fail or leave us wanting if we will simply trust in Him and live lives dedicated to His causes. In doing this we will stand. We will endure.

Main Point/Conclusion: The Kingdom of God will endure forever. The only thing to be determined is whether we will stand within it or if we will fall outside of it.

At the end of the day, none of us truly know what the future holds for our nation or the nations of the world on any sort of definite timeline. History tells us that each legit nation has an average prosperous lifespan of about 250 years, and that date is quickly coming up for our dear country. Does this mean we are doomed to fail in five years? I simply cannot tell you. I don't know what our country will or won't. I can't tell you what freedoms we will or will not have. However, I can tell you with certainty that I have every opportunity before me to stake my hope, confidence, and loyalty in the Kingdom that I know will be standing five, ten, fifteen, or 20,000 years from now...the kingdom of God.

Come what may for these United States of America, I am pledging myself to give all of my efforts in promoting and upholding the standard of God's kingdom. If this brings about persecution for such then so be it. Christ first suffered for His commitment to His Father, and I am no more worthy to be spared of such than were our brothers and sisters 2,000 years ago. God was faithful to them as they even gave their lives for their faiths, and He continues to be faithful to us as we stand at the doorstep of persecution even within our own lives. May He strengthen us to stand firm ourselves and prepare those around us to keep the faith and trust in our King as He leads His Kingdom that will last forever. Let's resist the temporary and cling tightly to that which is eternal!