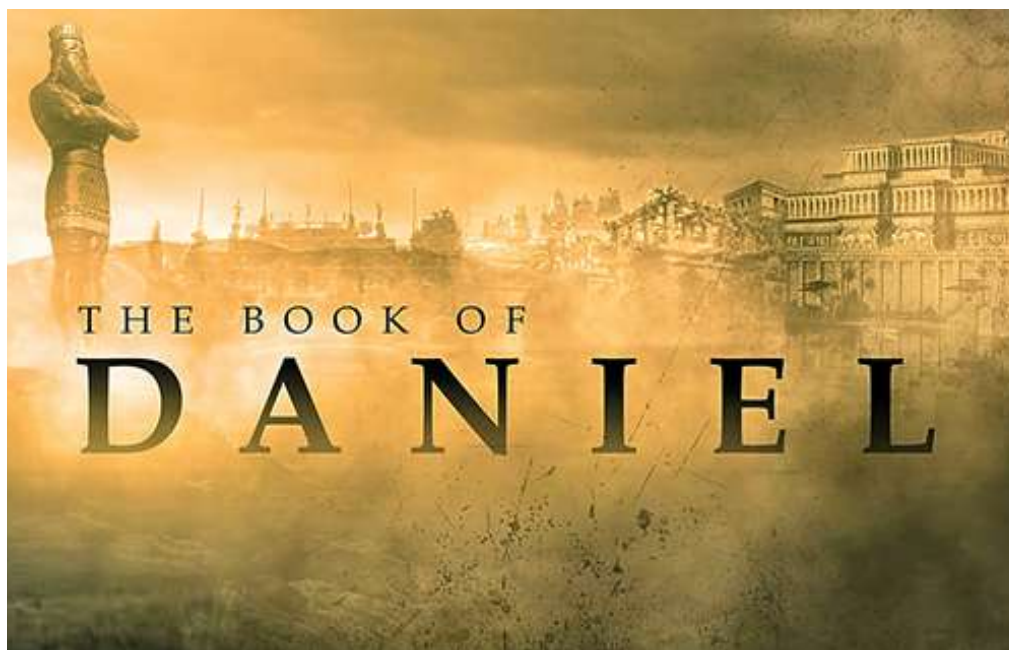


Let's Worship God

1st-6th November 2021

Daniel



THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Monday - Daniel 2:31-43 - The Statue

What a dream! As Nebuchadnezzar lay on his bed, God gave him a whirlwind tour of hundreds of years of world history. Today we're going to try and get the key details of this dream into our heads.

The key feature of the dream was a statue made up of four distinct parts (v32-33). Each part of the statue represents a kingdom that will rise to become the most prominent superpower on the planet. So who are these kingdoms?

I think it's helpful to imagine watching this statue on a TV screen - the camera starts at the top of the statue and works its way down. The first kingdom (the head of gold) is easy. We're told that it is Babylon itself (v37-38). Yet, as glorious as it may have been, Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would not last forever.

As the camera pans down the head of gold is replaced by a chest of silver; there's a new kid on the block. Who could this possibly be? We know from chapter 5 that this is the Medo-Persian Empire.

Yet, the camera doesn't linger. Soon the chest of silver fades out of view and our attention is focused on the middle and thighs of bronze. This is the Greek Empire (which we will see in greater detail in chapter 8).

The camera keeps on going and our TV screen shows us the final part of the statue: the feet of iron and clay. By putting the pieces together from this chapter, chapter 7, and from our knowledge of world history, it is clear that this final kingdom is the famous Roman Empire.

So, there you have it! Hundreds of years of world history crammed into a handful of verses. Each of these kingdoms was immensely glorious and yet each is rushed over in a hurry. Surely there's a lesson in that fact? The kingdoms of this world (whether literal nations or the achievements of our lifetimes) come and go like puffs of smoke. This dream urges us to focus on what truly lasts.

Questions

1. In this dream the kingdoms disappear at an astonishing speed. What should that say about how we view work or school or sport or hobbies?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God would help you to focus on what really lasts and rid yourself of things that distract you from it.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;" Daniel 2:21

Praise: Psalm 22 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Tuesday - Daniel 2:31-45 - The Stone That Became a Mountain

Yesterday we saw a statue that was made up of four parts, with each part representing a kingdom that would come to dominate the world. Yet, in spite of their splendour, we were reminded that none of them would last forever. Today we see the other key element in Nebuchadnezzar's dream: a stone.

We see this stone in v34. It appears out of nowhere, smashes into the statue and blows it to smithereens. The stone doesn't stop there though; it grows and becomes a mighty mountain that fills the whole earth. The obvious question: "what is this stone?"

The first thing to notice is that this stone was not cut out by human hands (v34). That's in direct contrast to the statue which would have required hours of painstaking craftsmanship to build. This stone on the other hand seems to appear out of nowhere in mysterious circumstances.

The second thing to notice is that this stone is utterly unremarkable looking. It doesn't gleam and glisten like the colossal statue; it looks like something you might find at the side of any country road.

The third thing to notice is where on the statue the stone strikes. Not the head or the chest or the middle, but on the legs of iron and clay. As we saw yesterday, the legs represent the Roman Empire, so we should expect this stone to make its presence felt around that time.

So, what does this stone represent? Well, think about it: who came proclaiming a kingdom (Mark 1:15) during the time of the Romans (Luke 2:1) and had mysterious origins that were not of human design (Luke 1:34-35)? Who had no form or majesty that we should admire him (Isaiah 53:2) and looked utterly insignificant in the world's eyes? Yet who established a kingdom that grows and grows and now reaches into every single corner of the earth? (Acts 1:8)

This chapter gives us a clear view of our Saviour Jesus. We should marvel at him and his kingdom.

Questions

1. How does this passage encourage you as you think about the church?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for how this stone has been growing in the 2000 years since Christ came to Earth.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;" Daniel 2:21

Praise: Psalm 23 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Wednesday - Daniel 2:44-49 - History is His Story

I don't know if there will be history text books in heaven. Perhaps for some of you, that sounds far from heavenly! But I do know this: the greatest empires and kingdoms this world has ever seen will be footnotes at best. All of history will be "his story"; the story of Jesus Christ and his kingdom.

Verse 44 sums up Daniel 2 in a nutshell. Over the next two days we will see two glorious ways in which Christ's kingdom is greater than every other kingdom that has ever been or will ever be.

The first thing to notice in this verse is this: Christ's kingdom is everlasting. We see four magnificent kingdoms in this dream - Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome - yet none of them last forever. In the thousands of years since, other nations have reached the top then shuffled off the other side. The British Empire, Napoleonic France and the USSR have been and gone.

Understanding the message of Daniel means understanding something that is both obvious and also hard to believe: today's kingdoms will go the same way. One day, the United States of America will be no more. Great Britain will be a memory at most. Yet hundreds, even thousands of years from now, Christ's kingdom will still be standing firm.

We are not first and foremost American patriots, Irish citizens, Ozzies, Brits or Canucks. We are citizens of Christ's kingdom. Some Christians seem to think that if the wrong man is in the Oval Office, the world will come crashing down. Some preachers seem to think their calling is to foot-soldiers in the culture wars. There's nothing wrong with being politically engaged, but this verse provides us with some much needed perspective.

It also shines the spotlight on our own little "kingdoms": our families, our careers, our hobbies. They won't last forever, but Christ's kingdom will. A life devoted to any of them is a life that could have been so much more. As a citizen of Christ's kingdom, give yourself to what really matters.

Questions

1. Can you think of times in the past when you have become far too wound up over things you have seen on the news?
2. How could this passage have changed your view of those events?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God would help you to live with a balanced view of current affairs - not ignoring them completely but also not tossed about by what you see on the news.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;" Daniel 2:21

Praise: Psalm 24 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Thursday - Daniel 3:1-7 - Standing Firm

How unbelievably wicked! God has given Nebuchadnezzar a warning and pointed him to the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ. Nebuchadnezzar has responded with staggering blasphemy. Creating a statue of gold (an attempted rebuttal of 2:38) is the equivalent of giving God the middle finger.

Yet, the main focus here is not on Nebuchadnezzar, it is on these three Hebrew friends. Along with the other royal officials, they are expected to bow down and worship this monstrosity.

We'll spend the next few days thinking about the ferocity of the temptation they faced, but for today, let's focus on one thing. Notice how often the word "king" is used in this chapter. 21 times!

These three followers of God aren't just facing the challenge of peer pressure; they are taking a stand against the very apparatus of the Babylonian state. The intensity of the pressure is also seen in the long list of officials who were willingly complying (v3) - anyone who's anyone was on their knees in obedience to this blasphemous king. If Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego were to stand firm they wouldn't just have to swim against the tide; they'd have to swim against a raging torrent.

We'll consider one final aspect of the temptation tomorrow, but for now let me give you a spoiler. In spite of the crushing pressure, these three faithful followers of God stood firm. How did they manage it? The same way we do.

Jesus Christ has conquered sin on the cross, not just so we can be spared from its penalty, but so we can be victorious over its power (Romans 6:6). He has given us promises to cling to in the heat of the battle - promises that he will provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13), promises that the devil will turn on his tail and flee (James 4:7), promises that he can keep us from stumbling (Jude 1:24).

Are you facing the heat of battle? Take heart from these men and from their and your great Saviour.

Questions

1. When is your battle against temptation at its fiercest?
2. How can God help you in those times?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for persecuted Christians who are bravely taking a stand against those in power who hate Jesus Christ.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;" Daniel 2:21

Praise: Psalm 25 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Friday - Daniel 3:8-15 - When Your Hairs Stand on End

One of my great loves is post-rock music - bands like Sigur Rós, Mogwai and Balmorhea create spellbinding music that always puts a smile on my face. One of the frequent techniques employed by bands like these is to build the tension with slowly developing movements before eventually unleashing it all in a cathartic crescendo as the various instruments kick in. It doesn't matter how many times I've heard some of their albums - they still make my hair stand on end. Seeing these bands perform in a concert is an even more incredible experience; the dazzling lights and the buzz of a crowd only serve to intensify the feelings of visceral emotion the music produces.

What's this got to do with the book of Daniel? Well, perhaps you mentally zoned out as you read the long lists of officials who were present at this idolatrous worship service (v2-3) and the repeated lists of the instruments employed (v5, 6, 10, 15). That's understandable, yet did it cross your mind to ask why the writer has included them at all?

Surely it's to emphasise how utterly sensual this temptation would have been. These three men would have endured the buzz of the chattering crowd. They would have seen vibrant sights of immaculately dressed nobles and the dazzling glint of the statue from many miles away. As the horns, pipes, lyres, trigons, harps, and bagpipes exploded into action, the hairs on the back of their necks would have stood to attention just like anybody else.

That's a dangerous place to be. It is easy to be swept away by passions in the heat of the moment and fall into grave sin. Anger is one example. Sexual immorality is surely the most obvious of all.

The application for today's study is just the same as yesterday's. It IS possible to stand firm even as temptation thunders like a tsunami. You CAN put to worldly passions to death - there is one who redeems us from all lawlessness (Titus 2:12-14).

Questions

1. Does this passage warn us in any way about the dangers of worshipping God in the wrong way?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit would equip you to stand firm against the sensual temptations of the world.
2. Pray especially for your congregation's young people as they face particular pressures in this area.
3. Use prayer points from your congregation.
4. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;" Daniel 2:21

Praise: Psalm 26 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Saturday - Daniel 3:15-18 - Bow or Burn

Bow or burn. Those were the only two options. If Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego refused to compromise they would die an excruciating death in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. So how did they stand firm? It all hinges on their answer to Nebuchadnezzar's question in v15, "Who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"

These three faithful believers lifted their eyes from the flames and fixed them on the God of glory instead. Specifically, they trusted in two things which we will look at today. We may never have to stand before the fuming tyrant's fuming furnace, but we can be sure that one day we will have to stare trial squarely in the face. We need to learn from these three men who have gone before us.

Firstly, see how they trusted in God's strength. No matter how strong the ropes, no matter how burly the soldiers, no matter how blazing the fire...God is stronger by far. Humanly speaking, their situation is hopeless. They can't run and they can't hide. They can't talk their way out of danger. Yet they know perfectly well that God is able to deliver them from the furnace (v17). God could send an earthquake to set them free or an icy storm to extinguish the flames. He can accomplish what human strength never could.

Yet notice secondly that they also trusted in God's plan. They had no doubt that God COULD save them (v17) but were unable to say with certainty that God WOULD save them (v18). They recognised that the infinitely wise God may choose to use even their painful deaths in order to accomplish his perfect purposes.

As we face trials, let us keep our eyes fixed on the same God of heaven. He is strong enough to cure that cancer, save that job or transform that family member. Yet, he is also wise enough for us to know that even if we must endure the furnace in all its heat, that's part of his perfect plan.

Questions

1. Would you have been more impressed or less impressed by these men's faith if they had known with 100% certainty that God would save their lives?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God would help you to trust in the wisdom of his perfect plan—especially when it might not go in the direction you would like it to.
2. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
3. Use prayer points from your congregation.
4. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;" Daniel 2:21

Praise: Psalm 27 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

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