

The Sovereign King and His Faithful Children

Daniel 6:25-28

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This Mother's Day I think of how my mother is such a great example of what it means to be a Christian woman. And when she was pregnant with my elder brother, she chose to name him Daniel, after the exemplary man of God whose story is recorded in the book of Daniel. The events in Daniel take place during the Babylonian exile. Chapters 2-7 have a chiastic structure and are written in Aramaic, whereas the rest of the book is in Hebrew. Chapter 1 begins with King Nebuchadnezzar capturing Jerusalem and taking the Israelites into exile in Babylon. There Daniel and his friends refuse to eat the meat sacrificed to idols, yet were still healthier than all the others who ate the royal food. Chapters 2 and 7 are about Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's vision, which foretold how the kingdom of God would conquer the kingdoms of the world. Chapters 3 and 6 are about worshipping God alone, even against the wishes of the kings of the world, and how God rescues His people. In chapter 3, God rescued Daniel's three friends from the fiery furnace after they refused to bow down to the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, and in chapter 6 God rescued Daniel from the lion's den after he defied Darius' decree by continuing to pray to God. Chapters 4 and 5 are about the pride of the kings of the world and the consequences of such pride. Nebuchadnezzar was humbled to the point of insanity until he acknowledged God's authority, and Belshazzar was slain by the Persians. The book ends with Daniel praying for the end of the exile, and other visions about events that would lead up to the arrival of God's kingdom.

The major theme of the book of Daniel is the sovereignty of God, which means that God is King. All authority comes from God, and no earthly ruler has any power that does not originate from God. One day God's kingdom will take over those of the world, and He will reign forever. Yet we also see in the book of Daniel that this King also desires to save His people, and to give them courage and strength. This lesson is one that the Israelites struggled with throughout their history. From Daniel 1:1-2 we see that God let the Israelites be taken into captivity. He used Babylon to punish Israel for their disobedience (see Deuteronomy 28). After giving them so many chances, Israel still refused to acknowledge God's sovereignty and worship Him alone. This was partly because Israel's wicked kings would not submit to God's rule and led the people astray. But the book of Daniel is also largely about how Gentile kings must also submit to God's

sovereignty. And thus we have the story of Nebuchadnezzar. In chapter 1, he destroys God's temple and puts its treasures into the temple of his god. He has no regard for the one true God. But through the dream, the rescue of Daniel's friends from the fiery furnace, and lastly through the punishment of insanity, God finally gets Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge His sovereignty (4:34-35). God has to bring Nebuchadnezzar from being ruler of an empire to being subhuman to remove his pride.

Even after the fall of Babylon, God still works in the hearts of the Medo-Persian kings so they would acknowledge Him. King Darius favors Daniel and gives him a high position. But the other officials are jealous and conspire to make Daniel choose between his king and his God, knowing that Daniel couldn't betray God. So they trick Darius into making a decree against praying to anyone except himself. When Daniel inevitably disobeys, Darius is forced to throw him in the lion's den. But through God's miraculous rescue of Daniel from the mouths of the lions, Darius acknowledges God's sovereignty in 6:25-28. God is the King who reigns forever. He is the King who rescues and saves because He loves His people.

Living in a democratic republic, it's hard for us to understand the concept of kingship. But we must always acknowledge that God, the invisible Creator and King of the universe, is in total control. This King who reigns over all also loves us so much that He was willing to sacrifice His only Son in order to save us and bring us close to Him (John 3:16). Through Jesus the Son, we may also become sons and daughters of God the Father, and heirs to His kingdom. But His kingdom, though it has been established during Jesus' first coming, will not completely take over until He returns. So what is our response as we wait? Like the Israelites in Babylon, we who are God's people are in exile in this world, waiting for deliverance. So like Daniel we should serve our rulers to the best of our ability, yet always put obedience to God first, for He outranks any earthly ruler. So let us work together as one family to teach our children what it means to be citizens of God's kingdom. Let's teach them that church is a place where they have the privilege to worship the King. Let us continue to obey the King and be focused on the work of His kingdom.