

The Forever King

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[0 : 00] Father in heaven, we praise you and we thank you for the wisdom that you give to us. Thank you for your gracious rule. And we pray, Father, that you will teach us by your Holy Spirit, strengthen us that we might trust you and know your wisdom in our lives.

In Jesus' name, amen. Well, as you could hear from me talking to the kids, this is a very, very vivid chapter.

And I wonder if you'd turn in Daniel, Daniel 2, and take a look at it. I'm going to try to go through this in 12 minutes, the whole chapter. But I'm not going to go through every verse, of course.

And it's a great picture because it's full of tension. There is danger that's here. And there is this marvelous figure of Daniel in the midst of it.

You know, he's in this city as a refugee, but has become a leader, one of the wise men. And he has a real trust in God in this very pagan city, in the midst of all of it.

[1 : 07] And he blesses literally everybody in this chapter. And as I told the children, there is a time of great danger for him because Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that has troubled him deeply.

And he has asked the people, the only people in his land, who have any kind of spiritual insight or understanding to help him. They were his advisors.

Dreams were often the way in the ancient world that kings received messages. And so they were very, very important that these wise men could explain what the dreams meant.

They were supposed to have the insight and wisdom into the gods. And so Nebuchadnezzar brings them to him and he says, I need you to explain this to me.

But there's a catch. Nebuchadnezzar says, you tell me what the dream was. And of course, the wise men can only answer. They can only give this answer in verse 10.

[2 : 09] There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand. And then in verse 11, no one can show it to the king except the gods.

And that's point number one out of two points that I want to tell you. That is that everyone, King Nebuchadnezzar to everybody in 2018, Vancouver, desperately needs wisdom.

We need God's wisdom. And this answer to this question can only come from God. That king feels absolutely helpless.

And that's why there's such fury in his answer. And he commands all these advisors to be killed. He still doesn't understand the dream.

And the thing that he is showing, and the reason why this is in this chapter, is because there is a deep need in every single person to understand God's wisdom in their life, in our relationships, in our important decisions that we make throughout our life, in our families, in the things that we are going to decide about our future, you and I need wisdom.

[3 : 29] The people outside of our church need wisdom. And there is a profound, really fundamental wisdom that the world simply cannot give.

And that's what we see in this chapter. The world can look for it amongst the most important and influential people, the most successful people in the world.

We can look to them, but we will not find it. It can only come from God. And thankfully, the second point, the big point of this chapter, is that God gives this wisdom that we so desperately need in our lives.

He gives it to us freely and openly. Daniel has that wisdom. And he offers to interpret the dream, as long as the king saves all these wise men.

And when he meets the king in verse 27, he said exactly what the advisor said to him. No wise men, no enchanters or magicians or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked.

[4 : 37] But, there is a God in heaven. There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. And he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.

And that is the characteristic, central characteristic of our God. There is a God in heaven, a living God who speaks to us, who reveals to us what is true and important, who is for us and for our salvation.

And the central thing that he reveals to us and to the world is what I told those children. He rules absolutely everything in this world.

Even those things, which are very difficult, which look as though they set up a rule that is over God. And we see this in the dream that Daniel describes in verse 31 through 35.

It's a frightening vision that I was talking to with the children as well. And at the end of this vision, there is a stone, and I didn't talk about this yet, that no human hand had cut, it says.

[5 : 44] It's much smaller than the figure, and it strikes the feet of the image and smashes them, and the rest of the image is broken into pieces so small that the wind carries it away, and there's not a trace of it left anywhere.

But the stone that struck that image becomes a great mountain, and it fills all of the earth. And it's quite a nightmare. You know, it's no wonder Nebuchadnezzar couldn't sleep.

Daniel interprets it. He said, you king are the gold head, and God has given you the kingdom, the glory to you, and he has authority over you.

The silver, bronze, and iron are kingdoms that will come after you. God gives those as well. He has set them up. But the stone is the kingdom of God, and that's what, in the end, undermines and destroys all other kingdoms.

And that kingdom shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to other people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms. They will come to an end, but that kingdom shall stand forever.

[6 : 57] Now, what's revealed to us is absolutely critical here, because God reveals to Nebuchadnezzar the heart of wisdom, that God rules all things.

He gave Nebuchadnezzar the power and the glory, and he will take it away someday as well. That is true of every ruler and power in this world, even the evil powers that oppose God and destroy his people.

And Nebuchadnezzar saw this was true, and he praised Daniel and his God. Truly, your God is the God of gods, he says. This is a pagan. He is the Lord of kings. He's the revealer of mysteries.

And this is what Jesus Christ perfectly reveals to us. Jesus brings that stone. He brings God's kingdom and his gracious saving rule in all of our world.

And he uses his power as God and man to destroy the ultimate powers of sin and death forever.

And he rules them by his sacrifice on a cross for the forgiveness of sins.

[8 : 06] And in that way, he takes people who rebel against God's rule and he reconciles them to God as they believe in him. And he brings them into his eternal kingdom.

And so there's no greater gift in knowing Jesus as your Lord, your ruler, your king. That is our wisdom. This is the basis of all our wisdom. One day we will see him in all his glory.

And it will fill the earth as that great mountain in verse 38 fills the earth. And I want to close by saying, and children, we have about two minutes to finish up here.

I want to close by saying that the wisdom we need is at heart a heart that believes that the kingdom alone will endure forever.

That God's kingdom, Jesus' kingdom, will endure. that God rules everything around you and he rules everything that happens to you. At the heart of everything there is a king and there is a kingdom.

[9 : 09] When you take that wisdom on, you can take on anything. You can take on disappointment, sorrow, death, poverty, and despair.

Anything that comes to you that seeks to rule, you take that on if you have the wisdom of God. And so the question for us is, how do we receive that wisdom from God?

How do we receive it? Well, first of all, God's word taught Daniel wisdom. We know Daniel was steeped in God's word. He loved it. And throughout his life, he was formed by it.

That's how he knew God ruled and that he spoke to his people and that he belonged to this living God. And that call to us is to continue to read God's word and be formed by it because they teach us wisdom.

They are more to be desired than gold or silver. Secondly, in Daniel's life, prayer was absolutely central. We know that he took time in his incredible responsibilities three times a day to pray to God very intentionally.

[10:20] and we know that part of his prayer was to ask God for his wisdom. And not only that, but I want you to notice in this chapter, Daniel, on the night that he received this dream, he didn't know what it was going to be.

He didn't know the interpretation, yet he set this appointment up with the king. He asked his three friends, pray for me. Pray for wisdom for me. And that is the night that Daniel received the interpretation of the dream.

He asked his friends to pray. And there's a call here for us to bring our need for wisdom to God, but also to ask others to pray for you in the decisions in your life for wisdom that God alone can give. And then finally, Daniel worshipped God. And I think that this was a real key to his wisdom and to receiving God's wisdom. His mind was filled with the glory of God, his rule, his gracious goodness and love for him.

He worshipped God in the midst of a city where everyone thought Israel's God was weak, it was irrelevant, and defeated because Babylonians sacked Jerusalem. But the beginning of all wisdom is that even in that situation, God rules.

[11:42] The night when God gave Daniel the dream and interpretation, there was this wonderful gift of praise. If you look at verse 21 and 22, this is something to think about this week, I think.

Just look at that for a second. When God gave him that interpretation, Daniel praises God. And he says this, he says, blessed be God forever. He changes times and season.

He removes kings and sets up kings. And he rules. And secondly, he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and hidden things.

He knows what is in the darkness and that the light, the light dwells with him. It's a glorious song of praise, really, that Daniel sings and prays.

There's a confidence in God. And there's a confidence in his lordship in this. And I believe that that confidence in Jesus and his lordship comes to us as we worship God, as we give our lives to him, as we speak of his glory and praise him in our hearts.

[12:49] There was an influence in the city that Daniel had because of that confidence. And that's an influence that we can have in our city as we have confidence in who God is and praise him for who he is.

So each day, praise God for his goodness, his character, and his salvation. Fill your mind with the glorious things of God. Glory be to his wise and powerful name.

Amen.