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Sermon Notes

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Daniel: God's Sovereign Control Over Human Governments



*Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.
Daniel 7:3*

Daniel: God's Sovereign Control Over Human Governments

I. The Context of Daniel

A. The Exile to Babylon (606 B.C.)

Daniel 1:1-2 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

B. Seventy Year Babylonian Reign

1. Predicted through Jeremiah

Jeremiah 25:11-12 This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 "But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the LORD, "and will make it desolate forever.

2. Prayed for by Daniel

Daniel 9:1-3 In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom-- 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. 3 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

3. Fulfilled Under Cyrus

Daniel 1:21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

2 Chronicles 36:22-23 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: 23 "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you- - may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.'"

II. The Central Message(s) of Daniel

The central message of Daniel is the absolute sovereignty of God over the rise and fall of the nations for the glory of His name, the establishment of His own Kingdom, and the benefit of His people. The main secondary message is a call to the personal holiness, piety, and courage exemplified by Daniel and by His friends. A third theme is the ability of God to predict the future in great detail. A fourth theme is the judgment of pagan Kings who dominate the people of God, but who refuse to repent. A fifth theme is a rare glimpse into the invisible spiritual world of angels and demons. A sixth theme is the relationship between the people of God and temporal governments: temptation, suffering, influence now... final triumph in the end.

III. An Outline of the Book of Daniel

A. A Godly Man Serving an Ungodly Government: Daniel 1-6

1. Daniel 1: Daniel Exiled with Other Jews to Babylon
 - a. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah refuse to be defiled by Babylonian food
 - b. God blesses their commitment to personal holiness with exceptional qualities which enable them to rise in the Babylonian government
2. Daniel 2: Nebuchadnezzar's First Dream; Daniel's Miraculous Interpretation
3. Daniel 3: Nebuchadnezzar's Gold Statue; the Trial by Fire of Daniel's Friends
4. Daniel 4: Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream; His Judgment through Humiliation
5. Daniel 5: Belshazzar's Feast and the Fall of Babylon
6. Daniel 6: Daniel and the Lion's Den

B. The Visions of Daniel: God's Sovereign Control Over the Future: Daniel 7-12

1. Daniel 7: The Four Great Beasts from the Sea
2. Daniel 8: The Ram and the Goat
3. Daniel 9: Daniel's Prayer of Confession and Restoration; the Angel's Clear Prophecy of the Christ
4. Daniel 10: Daniel's Vision of an Angel
5. Daniel 11: The Battle Between the Kings
6. Daniel 12: Daniel's Scroll and Daniel's Future

IV. Themes Developed

A. The Absolute Sovereignty of God Over the Nations

1. Clear statements

Daniel 2:20-21 "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. ²¹ He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them.

Daniel 4:17 'The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.'

Daniel 4:34-37 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. ³⁵ All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" ³⁶ At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

Daniel 5:25-28 "This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN ²⁶ "This is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. ²⁷ Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. ²⁸ Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

Daniel 6:26-27 he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. ²⁷ He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth.

Daniel 7:9-12 As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. ¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. ¹¹ "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. ¹² (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

Daniel 7:24-27 The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. 25 He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. 26 "'But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. 27 Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'

Daniel 11:4 After he has appeared, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others.

Daniel 11:27 The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time.

Daniel 11:36 'The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.

2. The “Rise and Fall of the World” Displayed

- a. Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream: a golden statue with the rise and fall of the world depicted
 - i) The gold head = the Babylonian Empire
 - ii) The chest and arms of silver = the Medo-Persian Empire
 - iii) The belly and thighs of bronze = the Greek Empire
 - iv) The legs of iron = the Roman Empire
- b. Daniel 4: Nebuchadnezzar’s throne is given him by God, retained by God while he’s insane
- c. Daniel 5: the Fall of Babylon—Darius the Mede takes over the Kingdom
- d. Daniel 7: the Four Beasts from the Sea—one nation after another
- e. Daniel 8: the Greek conquest of the Medo-Persian empire with subsequent developments among the Greeks
- f. Daniel 11: The Kings of the North vs. the Kings of the South

3. God's Detailed Control of Kings, Even Over their Minds

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.

- a. He reads the king's mind

Daniel 2:28 Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these

- b. He changes the king's mind

Daniel 4:16 Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.

- c. He controls the king's mind

Daniel 4:34 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High

2 Chronicles 36:22-23 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: ²³ "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you - may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up."

4. The Purposes of God

- a. The glory of His name

Daniel 4:34 I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

Daniel 5:22-23 But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. ²³ Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.

- b. The establishment of His own Kingdom

Daniel 2:44-45 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵

This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands-- a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

Daniel 6:26 For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end.

Daniel 7:13-14 In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Daniel 7:27 ... the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'

c. The benefit of His people

Daniel 7:27 Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High.

B. Personal Holiness, Piety and Courage Exemplified by Daniel and His Friends

Daniel's commendation from heaven

Daniel 9:23 As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed.

Daniel 10:11 He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed

Daniel 10:19 "Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed,"

WHY???

1. Daniel's resolution of holiness

Daniel 1:8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

2. Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego's resolution not to worship the idol

Daniel 3:17-18 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

3. Daniel's courage in confronting Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar

Daniel 4:27 Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."

Daniel 5:22-23 "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. 23 Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.

4. Daniel's open disdain for the rewards of Belshazzar

Daniel 5:17 Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.

5. Daniel's righteousness obvious to his enemies

Daniel 6:4-5 At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. 5 Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

6. Daniel's prayer life: something he was willing to die for

Daniel 6:10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

7. Daniel's personal study of the word of God

Daniel 9:2 I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.

8. Daniel's fasting and humility

Daniel 9:3-5 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. 4 I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, 5 we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.

C. God's Ability to Predict the Future

1. Daniel is filled with the evidence of God's ability to predict details of the future
2. He claims to do have this power

Daniel 2:45 "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

Daniel 8:19 He said: "I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end."

Daniel 8:26 "The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future."

Daniel 10:14 Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."

3. Many prophecies already fulfilled... some not yet

D. The Judgment of Unrepentant Kings

1. Kings held to His standards of holiness and righteousness, whether they acknowledge Him or not
2. Judgment comes eventually, whether they are ready or not
 - a. God gave Nebuchadnezzar twelve months to repent... then the judgment came immediately on his pride and arrogance

Daniel 4:31 The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you."

- b. God gave Belshazzar no additional time... the "Writing on the Wall" spelled doom, and

Daniel 5:30-31 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, ³¹ and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two

E. The Invisible, Spiritual World of Angels and Demons

1. Angels appear in Daniel 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12

Daniel 10:4-8 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, ⁵ I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. ⁶ His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a

multitude. 7 I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. 8 So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless.

Daniel 12:5-7 Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. 6 One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?" 7 The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."

2. The Prince of Persia mentioned in Daniel 10

Daniel 10:12-13 Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. 13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia."

V. The Coming Kingdom of Christ

Daniel 2:34-35 While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

Daniel 2:44-45 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. 45 This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands-- a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

VI. The Terrifying Future of Human Government; the Glorious Future of Christ's Reign

A. The Abomination of Desolation: The Future of Government (Daniel 9)

B. The Antichrist: Final Human Ruler... Filled with Blasphemy (Daniel 11)

- C. The 1290 Days-1335 Days... but don't worry about it—knowledge given to the “Wise”

Daniel 12:8-12 I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" 9 He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. 10 Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand. 11 "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. 12 Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.

- D. The Resurrection

Daniel 12:2-3 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

- E. Daniel's Inheritance and Ours

Daniel 12:13 "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

VII. Lessons from Daniel on Politics in 2019

- A. Make the Kingdom of Christ Your Top Priority

1. Know the Real Story in all of this: The Glory of God in the Salvation of the Elect

- B. Rest in the Absolute Sovereignty of God over Governments

- C. Understand the Corrupting Lust for Power in Governmental Leaders

- D. Delight In and Pray For the “Daniels” God Raises Up in Government

- E. Get Involved in Government as a “Daniel” As the Lord Leads

- F. Don't Be Surprised When Government Crushes the Godly

- G. Pray for Leaders to Be Converted and Rule Justly

- H. Don't Think Too Highly or Too Lowly of Human Government