**ONLY OUR GOD**

**(Daniel 2:31-49)**

 I announced that this is my first time to preach through the Book of Daniel. Other than preaching two or three sermons from the book on various occasions, I have never gone verse by verse or passage by passage through the book.

 Just yesterday, I received in the mail a commentary on Daniel that I had ordered. It is written by one of my favorite preachers. His name was James Montgomery Boice. In the preface to his book, Boice noted that Daniel is the only book of the Bible that he preached twice all the way through to the same church. He was the pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia for 32 years until his death from cancer at the age of 62.

 Boice claimed that Daniel is a book of extraordinary relevance. He claimed:

 Daniel was a godly man sent to live in ungodly Babylon at a time when God’s blessing upon the Jewish nation seemed to have been withdrawn or postponed. This means that his position was much like that of believers trying to live in a secular society today.

 You and I have far more in common with Daniel than we realize. If I could boil that message of Daniel down to one simple sentence, it would be this: God is in charge. It is not King Nebuchadnezzar nor any of the other kings mentioned in the book. God alone sits upon a throne uncontested. We saw this last Sunday night. Look again at 2:20-21.

 I have entitled tonight’s message, “Only Our God.” We are going to consider three things from our passage that only our God can accomplish. Our text is Daniel 2:31-49. We are going to pick up where we left off last Sunday. Last week we observed how King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. The dream disturbed him and robbed him of sleep. He gathered his seers and magicians. He demanded them to do two things. First, they had to tell him what it was that he dreamed. Then, he expected them to tell him what his dream meant. He warned them that if they failed, they would be torn limb to limb and their houses leveled. They complained that the task he gave them was impossible. Thus, he ordered that they all be rounded up and killed.

 The captain of the King’s guard went to arrest Daniel and his three Hebrew friends. None of those four were present when the King made his demand. Daniel quizzed the captain as to what was going on. Daniel asked for an audience with the King. He promised if the King would give him some time, he would receive what he requested. Apparently, the King had calmed down. Clearly, he respected Daniel. He approved Daniel’s request.

 Daniel went home, told his friends to pray, he prayed, and then he went to bed. In the night, God gave Daniel a dream in which he revealed what the King had dreamed and what it all meant. Upon waking, Daniel praised God and went to the King. Look at what he told the King in vv. 28-30. We will pick up in v. 31 and read through the end of the chapter (v. 49).

1. **ONLY OUR GOD CONTROLS THE COURSE OF HISTORY.**

Daniel related exactly what the King has seen in his dream. He had seen a statue that shone brilliantly and was frightening. There were four sections, and each was different from the others. The first was a head made of gold. The next was the chest and arms made of silver. The third was the belly and thighs made of bronze, and then the legs made of iron. He added an interesting detail, the feet and toes were made of a mixture of iron and clay.

 Daniel proceeded to interpret what each represented. They were successive kingdoms. The head of gold was the very Kingdom that Nebuchadnezzar ruled—the Babylonian Kingdom. Daniel told the King that his Kingdom would not last. Historians and Bible interpreters say the next Kingdom was that of the Medes and Persians. They were followed by the Kingdom founded by the Greek warrior Alexander which eventually gave way to the Kingdom of Rome.

 Who gave King Nebuchadnezzar the right to rule? Look at vv. 37-39. The same God of heaven would set up the other Kingdoms that were to follow.

 Daniel lived to an old age. Before he died, the Kingdom of the Medes and the Persians overthrew the Kingdom of Babylon. But how would he know about the Greek Kingdom of the Kingdom of Rome? Some of those who seek to interpret the Bible say that Daniel must have been written much later by someone other than Daniel because they discount the possibility of prophecy. They don’t know the God that Daniel, you, and I know. Look back at vv. 22-23. If God can reveal what the King dreamed, He can reveal what the future holds.

 Our God doesn’t just observe history, He guides history. Look at the end of v. 45.

 Boice noted, “. . . each kingdom is ‘inferior’ to the one before it in terms of glory.” Gold is more valuable than silver and silver more than bronze and bronze more than iron. At the same time, each kingdom is stronger than the one that comes before. Silver is stronger than gold and bronze stronger than silver and iron stronger than bronze. Boice explained, “The kingdoms of the world seem to be trading magnificence for strength.”

 This is the opposite of what is said by those who think the human race is progressing, who think the world is getting better and better. Think about our own country. We are stronger militarily today than we were 100 years ago, but spiritually and morally, we have backslidden, and the speed at which we are retreating is getting faster and faster

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 There’s a book in the Bible where the name of God is never mentioned. It’s the book of Esther. But even though God’s name is mentioned nowhere in the book, you sense His presence everywhere, controlling what happens. It’s like a dollhouse where the top has been removed and some big father can lean in, move the people around, rearrange the furniture, and do anything he wants. That huge father nowhere appears in the dollhouse, yet he controls everything that happens.

 A few weeks ago, we talked about the difference between being front of house and back of house. We are front of house, but God is back of house. You may not see Him on stage, and He may not show up at your table, but He is crucial to everything that happens.

 A few, extraordinary people can contribute to history, but only our God controls and directs it.

1. **ONLY OUR GOD HAS THE ONE KINGDOM THAT WILL LAST.**

 The fourth Kingdom, the Kingdom of Rome, was at center stage when Jesus entered our world as a baby born to poor parents. This Kingdom was made of iron, and its emperor ruled with an iron fist. As the years progressed it began to wane and become weaker. Its feet were made of iron mixed with clay.

 Look at what Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar was going to happen. Look at vv. 42-45. What is the identity of this uncut stone that grows into a mountain? Look at vv. 34-35. Clearly, it is Jesus and His Kingdom.

 The same Empire that initially persecuted the Church eventually made Christianity its official religion. In time, Rome and the Kingdom of Rome fell, but God’s Kingdom remains, and it continues to grow.

 There have been numerous empires that have arisen throughout world history. There is one trait that is common to every empire—it didn’t last. It eventually came to an end. One of the most recent empire to have ended was the British Empire. It was correctly said that the sun never set on the British Empire. It was the largest empire geographically. It occupied one-fourth of the land mass of the world. It was the largest empire in terms of population. One-fourth of the people in the world belonged to the British Empire. One by one, the nations that belonged to the British Empire demanded their independence. I believe the total is 63 countries. The first was the 13 colonies of the New World.

 The United States is not and never has been an empire, but we are the strongest country militarily and economically to ever exist. We exert a world-wide influence.

 Imagine 1000 years into the future, if the Lord tarries. A child is sitting in a classroom. The teacher announces there will a history test the next day. Little Johnny raises his hand. He asks, “Teacher, will the Americans be on the test? Were they really that important?”

 For centuries, in countries that have a monarch, there is a phrase that is customarily used when the king dies and the kingship is transferred to another. It is the phrase, “The King is dead, long the life the King.” It sounds like a contradictory thing to see. If the King is dead, why would you wish him long life. The fact is that two different Kings are in mind. The death of the prior King is acknowledged, and ling life is wished for the new King. The point is that the Kingdom endures despite the death of the King.

 Christians have a better phrase to use. Only we can say, “The King is alive. Always will our King live.”

 No one will wrest the Kingdom from our King. It is the one Kingdom that will last.

1. **ONLY OUR GOD CAN CONTROL WHAT THE KINGS SAY AND DO.**

 Some interesting things happen in Daniel 2. When King Nebuchadnezzar spoke with his seers and magicians, he became irate and ordered their deaths. In v. 8 he accused them of trying to gain time because they could tell he was serious. Yet, when Daniel went to see the King and didn’t have an answer for him, rather he asked for time, the King granted it. Why did Daniel get a far better and gracious reaction from the King? Daniel belongs to a conquered people. What’s so special about Daniel?

 Think back to Daniel 1. We noted there were three things that God, who was working back of house, gave. He gave Judah into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar along with articles from the temple. Next, He gave Daniel favor with the Chief of the Eunuchs who oversaw Daniel’s education. Then, finally, God gave Daniel and his three Hebrew buddies learning and skill.

 Daniel 2 doesn’t tell us explicitly, but reading between the lines, it appears that God gave Daniel favor with the King. At the very least, the King could see there was something special about Daniel; thus, he gave Daniel some latitude.

 Look with me at Proverbs 21:1. God can turn the heart of a King whichever way He wishes. This was written by a King—King Solomon.

 Very often, countries are controlled by powerful people, and powerful people are not easily controlled by other. If a country does not have the checks and balances that are found in a constitution like ours, the leader made by emboldened to do what he wants as long as he has the military behind him. The United Nations can pass resolutions condemning the behavior of a leader, but the lack the power to do anything to change the situation or the mind of the leader.

 Sometimes, our country imposes economic sanctions, but they don’t seem to work well. It seems there is always some country who will step in and do business when we step out.

 Who can change the heart of a leader or the heart of anyone else, for that matter?

 The Bible says, “God can.”

 Not only did Nebuchadnezzar give Daniel time, but when Daniel was enabled by God to tell the King what he had dreamed and what his dream meant, the King blessed Daniel with great gifts and honors. Look at 2:46-49.

 Daniel gave God the honor, and God used the King to give great honor to Daniel. It has been said, “You can’t out give God.” Just keep giving to God. Give Him your time. Give Him your attention. Give Him your heart. Give Him your obedience. And watch what God does on your behalf.

 Consider the story of a King whose life was turned by the King of King:

 Olaf Trygvesson of Norway was the Viking’s Viking. He was unmatched in climbing and swimming and leaping, and it was said he could juggle five daggers in the air, always catching them by the handle. He was a favorite of his warriors, and early in life he conducted successful raids on Holland and France.

Then he turned his sights to England, the greatest prize. At the mouth of the Thames, after winning the battle of Maldon, he extorted tribute of 10,000 pounds of silver from the weak Anglo-Saxon king, Ethelred.

 From there, he moved north, plundering Northumberland, Scotland, and Ireland before returning to raid France and England. With Danish king Svein Forkbeard as a partner, he raided England, as one ancient account put it, “burning villages, laying waste the lands, putting numbers of people to death by fire and sword, without regard to sex, and sweeping off an immense booty.” They rode wildly through provinces, slaughtering the whole population with savage cruelty, “sparing neither the women nor children of tender age.” This time Ethelred offered Olaf 22,000 pounds of silver to cease.

 It took weeks to consummate this deal and to refurbish Olaf’s fleet. While the fatigued and fretful Olaf lay off the Cornish coast, he heard of a local fortuneteller who was said to possess the gift of prophecy. Olaf wondered if the prophet could foresee his future, so he rowed to the hermit’s rocky retreat and asked, “Would the king be successful in battle? Would he regain power in the north?”

 “Thou wilt become a renowned king and do celebrated deeds,” the hermit replied. “And that thou not doubt the truth of this answer, listen to this.” Then he predicted that Olaf’s men would mutiny, and in the ensuing fight, Olaf would be wounded and carried to his ship on his shield. After seven days, he would recover and would allow himself to be baptized a Christian. “Many men wilt thou bring to faith and baptism,” the prophet said, “and both to thy own and others’ good.” Shortly afterward, the mutiny took place precisely as the hermit had predicted. After his recovery in seven days, Olaf hastened back to the seer and asked him how he had gained such wisdom. “The God of the Christians has blessed me,” the hermit replied, “so that I can know all that I desire.” At that, Olaf submitted to baptism.

 Olaf vowed never again to visit war upon England, and he returned to Norway to begin converting his people. We can’t exactly say everyone lived happily ever after. In fact, Olaf, and other Viking converts who followed him, often used violent behavior, using threats, extortion, and the sword to force others to convert. There was also confusion among many Vikings as to the relationship between Thor and Jesus. Some worshiped Jesus on Sundays and the Norse gods the rest of the week. But slowly over the next two centuries, Norway not only became an increasingly unified country, but a Christian nation, and it remained such for nearly 1,000 years.

*James Reston, The Last Apocalypse: Europe in the Year 1000 A.D. (Doubleday, 1998); submitted by Mark Galli* (<https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2000/>

february/12265.html)

 Ask the Lord to change your life and to use you as He changes the lives of others for His glory and their good.