

OUR GOD REIGNS!

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels from the temple of God. He carried them to the land of Shinar to the temple of his god, and he put the vessels in the treasure house of his god. (Dan. 1:1-2)

A note on the Scripture text that accompanies each individual message: The *American Standard Version* and the *New International Version*, along with the original Greek and Hebrew, have been used in an effort to achieve the greatest degree of accuracy and clarity. Where words or phrases have been added to the original text in an effort to better express its meaning, those words or phrases have usually been indicated by means of [brackets].

Introduction

Put yourself in Israel's place during the time of Daniel; your country is being besieged by the mighty Babylonian army. The Babylonians are a violent people; speaking of the them, the prophet Habakkuk writes: *"They all come bent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand. 10They deride kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; they build earthen ramps and capture them* [a reference to building mounds of dirt to scale fortified walls and thereby take enemy strongholds]. *11Then they sweep past like a wind and move on—they are guilty men whose own strength is their god* [the Babylonians are described as worshiping power and putting their trust in their own military might] (Hab. 1:9-11.)

Furthermore, the Babylonians are a blasphemous people. Describing the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem the Psalmist protests unto the LORD: *"Your foes roar in the place where you met with us; they set up their standards as signs. 5They behaved like men wielding axes to cut through a thicket of trees. 6They smashed all the carved paneling with their axes and hatchets."* The Psalmist is describing the Babylonian destruction of the temple as men chopping down trees in the forest. He then continues, *"They burned your sanctuary to the ground; they defiled the dwelling place of your Name. 8They said in their hearts, "We will crush them completely!" They burned every place where God was worshiped in the land"* (Psl. 74:4-8.)

Finally, the Babylonians are a cruel people. The Psalmist laments, *"By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. 2There on the poplars we hung our harps, 3for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, 'Sing for us one of the songs of Zion!'"* (Psl. 137:1-3.)

The Babylonians conquer Judah, destroy the LORD's temple, carry His people away into captivity—and the LORD has done nothing to stop them. There is no divine act of deliverance, unlike the days of Hezekiah when the LORD miraculously intervened to save Jerusalem from the Assyrian army. Back at that time Hezekiah prayed to the

LORD: *“Now therefore, O Jehovah our God, deliver us out of his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, O Jehovah, are [God]”* (Isa. 37:20.) In response to that prayer, through the prophet Isaiah, the LORD assured His people: *“Therefore, this is what Jehovah says about the king of Assyria, ‘He will not enter this city, nor will he shoot an arrow [at it]. He will not come against it with a shield, nor will he build a siege ramp against it’”* (Isa. 37:33.) In accordance with His promise, the LORD proceeded to deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrian army:

Then the angel of Jehovah went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the Assyrians got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! ³⁷So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew from Jerusalem. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. (Isa. 33:36-37)

But now there is no such deliverance from the Babylonian invasion. What are the people to think? Is the LORD unable to save them? Are the “gods” of Babylon stronger than the God of Israel? Can you feel something of the spiritual struggle that the people of God experienced in the time of Daniel? Rather than seeing the kingdom of God advancing, they witness the pagan empire of Babylon asserting itself. They find themselves being carried away, helpless to stand against this mighty foe, and they receive no deliverance from the LORD their God.

Why was the Book of Daniel given by the Holy Spirit? What is the overarching purpose of the book? It was given to remind and reassure God’s people that, despite the fact that they found themselves dominated by an alien and pagan empire (as the consequence of their own sin), our God reigns. Christian, despite the spiritual adversity we may encounter in this present world, let us always remember the blessed fact that Our God Reigns!

Our God Reigns! This is the overarching theme of the Book of Daniel. In this present lesson let us now consider how this theme is presented to us throughout the book.

I. We are Reminded that Our God Reigns by the Names and Titles of God that Occur throughout the Book of Daniel

The LORD is identified as *“the God of heaven.”*

*Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸so that they might request mercies from **the God of heaven** concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.* (Dan. 2:17-18)

The LORD is identified as *“the great God.”*

*This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of the mountain, but not by hands—the 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. (Dan. 2:45)*

The LORD is identified as *“the God of gods and the Lord of kings.”*

*The king said to Daniel, “Surely your God is **the God of gods and the Lord of kings** and a revealer of mysteries, for you were enabled to reveal this mystery.” (Dan. 2:47)*

The LORD is identified as *“the Most High God.”*

*Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the entrance of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, you servants of **the Most High God**, come out and come here!” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came out of the midst of the fire. (Dan. 3:26)*

The LORD is identified as *“the Most High.”*

*This sentence is by the decree of the watchmen and this verdict is a command of the holy ones, so that the living may know that **the Most High** rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he desires and sets up over it the lowliest of men. (Dan. 4:17)*

The LORD is identified as *“the King of heaven.”*

*Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and honor **the King of heaven**, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just, and he is able to humble those who walk in pride. (Dan. 4:37)*

The LORD is identified as *“the Lord of heaven.”*

*Yet you, his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this. ²³On the contrary, you have exalted yourself against **the Lord of heaven**. You had the goblets from his temple brought before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines, drank wine from them. (Dan. 5:22-23a)*

The LORD is identified as *“the God who holds your life in his hands and who governs all your ways;”* i.e., the king’s very life, as well as the course of his life, are under the sovereign control and direction of the LORD.

*You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, gods that cannot see or hear and do not have intelligence. But **the God who holds***

your life in his hands and who governs all your ways, you have not glorified. (Dan. 5:23b)

The LORD is identified as *“the living God.”*

*When he approached the den, he cried out to Daniel in an anguished voice. The king called out to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of **the living God ...**”* (Dan. 6:20a)

II. We are Reminded that Our God Reigns by the Great Acts of God that are Recorded in the Book of Daniel

It was the LORD who gave Daniel the revelation and interpretation of the mysterious dream that baffled Nebuchadnezzar and all the royal court of Babylon:

In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams. His spirit was troubled and he could not sleep. ²So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and the Chaldean [astrologers] to tell him what he had dreamed. So they came in and stood before the king ... ¹⁰The Chaldean [astrologers] answered the king, “There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks. No king, lord, or ruler has [ever] made such a request of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean [astrologer]. ¹¹It is an extraordinary thing that the king requests, and no one can fulfill it for the king except the gods, but they do not dwell with men” ... ¹⁹Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel during the night in a vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. ²⁰Daniel said, “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, because wisdom and might belong to him ... ²³I thank you and praise you, O God of my fathers, you have given me wisdom and might. Indeed, you have now made known to me what we requested of you; you have made known to us the king’s dream and its interpretation” ... ²⁷Daniel answered the king, “Neither wise men, enchanters, magicians, nor soothsayers are able to explain to the king the mystery the king has demanded [be made known to him]; ²⁸but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the days to come.” (Dan. 2:1-2, 10-11,19-20,23,27-28a)

The LORD answered Nebuchadnezzar’s challenge:

Then Nebuchadnezzar, with rage and fury, summoned Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you neither serve my god nor worship the golden statue that I have erected? ¹⁵Now if, when you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, you bow down and worship the statue that I have made, [it will be well with you]. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace. And who is the God who will deliver you out of my hands?” ... ¹⁷If [you] do [throw us into the furnace], our God whom we serve is able to

deliver us from the blazing furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.” ... ²⁰Then he commanded valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego and throw them into the blazing furnace ... ²⁴Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished and leaped to his feet. He said to his advisors, “Did we not tie up three men and throw them into the fire?” They replied to the king, “[That is] true, O king.” ²⁵He responded, “Look! I see four men untied and walking around in the fire, and they are not harmed! And the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!” ²⁶Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the entrance of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, you servants of the Most High God, come out and come here!” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came out of the midst of the fire. ²⁷The satraps, prefects, governors, and royal advisors crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was the hair of their head singed; their trousers were not scorched and there was no smell of fire on them. (Dan. 3:13-15,17,20,24-27)

The LORD humbled Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty king of Babylon, so that he might come to know and acknowledge that it is the LORD who reigns supreme over all:

The king said, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” ³¹While was the word was [still] on the king’s lips, there came a voice from heaven, [saying], “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: The kingdom has been taken away from you. ³²Furthermore, you shall be driven away from men and you shall live with the beasts of the field; you shall be forced to eat grass like the cattle. Seven [years] shall pass over you, until you acknowledge that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he desires.” ³³In that very hour what had been declared to Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from men and he ate grass like the cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like [the feathers] of an eagle and his nails like [the claws] of a bird. (Dan. 4:30-33)

The LORD took the kingdom away from Belshazzar and gave it instead to the Medes and Persians:

“O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father the kingdom and the greatness and the glory and the majesty ... ²⁰But when his heart became arrogant and his spirit was hardened, so that he behaved in a proud manner, he was deposed from his royal throne and they took his glory from him. ²¹He was driven away from men and his mind became like that of the beasts. He lived with the wild donkeys, he was given grass to eat like the cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men and that he sets over it whomever he desires. ²²Yet you, his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this. ²³On the contrary, you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought before 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, [gods] that cannot see or hear and do not have intelligence. But the God who holds your life in his hands and who governs all your ways, you have not glorified. ²⁴Therefore the fingers of the hand were sent from his presence and this inscription was written. ²⁵And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. ²⁶This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE, God has numbered [the days of] your kingdom and has brought it to an end. ²⁷TEKEL, you have been weighed on the scales, and you are found to be deficient. ²⁸PERES, your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians." ... ³⁰That [very] night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. ³¹And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom; he was approximately sixty-two years old. (Dan. 5:18,20-28,30-31)

The LORD miraculously spared Daniel from the lions:

Very early in the morning the king arose and hurried to the lions' den. ²⁰When he approached the den, he cried out to Daniel in an anguished voice. The king called out to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to save you from the lions?" ²¹Then Daniel answered the king, "O king, live forever! ²²My God has sent his angel and he has shut the lions' mouths. They have not harmed me." (Dan. 6:19-22a)

Note: These mighty acts of God do not occur on a daily basis. On the contrary, they occur at those moments of history when God sees fit to act—at those moments the heavens are opened and the glorious light and power of God pierce through the clouds of darkness in a mighty way.

III. We are Reminded that Our God Reigns by The Testimonials that Appear throughout the Book of Daniel

First, there is Daniel's prayer of thanksgiving for granting him the revelation and interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream:

Daniel said, "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, because wisdom and might belong to him. ²¹He changes the [astrological] times and the seasons; he deposes kings and establishes kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to men of understanding; ²²he reveals the deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. ²³I thank you and praise you, O God of my fathers, you have given me wisdom and might. Indeed, you have now made known to me what we requested of you; you have made known to us the king's dream and its interpretation." (Dan. 2:20-23)

Second, there is Daniel's testimonial before Nebuchadnezzar on the occasion of revealing to the king his dream and its meaning:

Daniel answered the king, "Neither wise men, enchanters, magicians, nor soothsayers are able to explain to the king the mystery the king has demanded [be made known to him]; ²⁸but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the days to come. This is your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay upon your bed." (Dan. 2:27-28)

Third, there is Nebuchadnezzar's first testimonial upon receiving the interpretation of his dream:

Then the [great] king Nebuchadnezzar prostrated himself before Daniel and paid him homage, and he ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. ⁴⁷The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were enabled to reveal this mystery." (Dan. 2:46-47)

Fourth, there is Nebuchadnezzar's second testimonial upon witnessing the LORD's deliverance of the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace:

Nebuchadnezzar declared, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him! They have defied the king's command and have yielded their bodies, so that they might not serve or worship any god except their own God. ²⁹Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation, or [men of any] language who say anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces and their houses shall be reduced to a pile of rubbish; because there is no other god who can save like this!" (Dan. 3:28-29)

Fifth, there is Nebuchadnezzar's third testimonial introducing his account of how he was humbled before the Lord of heaven:

Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all the peoples, nations, and [men of every] language who live in the whole world: May you have an abundance of peace. ²It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. ³How great are his signs and how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation. (Dan. 4:1-3)

Sixth, there is Nebuchadnezzar's fourth testimonial following his restoration to the throne of Babylon:

At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven, and my sanity was restored to me. Then I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom continues from generation to generation. ³⁵All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the army of heaven

and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can push away his hand, or demand of him, What are you doing? ³⁶At the same time that my sanity was restored to me, my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisors and my nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne, and I became even greater than before. ³⁷Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and honor the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just, and he is able to humble those who walk in pride. (Dan. 4:34-37)

Seventh, there is Darius' testimonial upon witnessing the LORD's deliverance of Daniel from the lions' den:

Then King Darius wrote [this proclamation] to all the peoples, nations, [and men of every] language who dwell in the whole world: May you have an abundance of peace. ²⁶I issue a decree [commanding] that in every part of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God and he endures forever. His kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed and his dominion shall continue to the end [of time.] (Dan. 6:25-27)

Note how these pagan monarchs proclaim the sovereign lordship of the God of Israel and cause that proclamation to be published throughout the world.

Conclusion

In the fourth (4:17), the fifth (5:21), and the sixth (6:26) chapters of the Book of Daniel we find the re-occurring declaration: *"the Most High rules in the kingdom of men."* Christian, take God at His Word and always remember that Our God Reigns. Entrust yourself and your cause into His hands and wait upon Him, remembering the testimony of the prophet Isaiah: *"From ancient times no one has known about—no ear has heard of, no eye has seen—any God besides you, [a God] who acts on behalf of those who wait for him"* (Isa. 64:4.) Join with Isaiah in praying that He would rend the heavens and do a mighty work of grace in our day: *"Oh, [Jehovah, I pray] that you would tear open the heavens; that you would come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence"* (Isa. 64:1.) Above all, pray for the fulfillment of the great petition our Lord Jesus instructs us to make of God His Father: *"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth"* (Matt. 6:10.)