

Knowing Our True King



Daniel 6:10; 16

One of the things I've been thinking a lot about is what it is like to know the future and what it's like to not know the future. Any way you go, it can be stressful. There can be fear and anxiety. I think that's one of the things we're experiencing right now, the fear and anxiety of not knowing what is going to happen in an election, the fear and anxiety of not knowing what is going to happen with Covid, the fear and anxiety of the unknown. In one sense, we want to know what is going to happen, but in another sense, even if we know what's going to happen in the future, it still creates fear and anxiety. If on November 1st, 2019 and someone was able to tell you exactly what would happen in the near future, it would probably not be too comforting. Rewind a hundred years to 1920 and think about if you had been able to see the future. Maybe you would see some cool things. You would see some pretty neat advancements in technology and healthcare, some advancements in civilization. You would also see some things that would be very difficult. The world was just coming out of WW1 and the Spanish Flu, which both killed millions of people. You blink, and you would be in the Great Depression. As soon as it winds down, we would be in

WW2, which killed sixty-five to eighty million people. After WW2, there would still come conflicts, genocide, and diseases that pop up. There will be a Cold War that occurs between the United States and the Soviet Union, and any second the whole world could be obliterated by a nuclear bomb. Then, we go to terrorism and many other events until we get to 2020 where we are almost in a similar situation as we were in 1920, but instead of the Spanish Flu, we have the corona virus going all over the world. There is tension and craziness. I don't think that in 1920 if I saw everything that would happen in 2020 it would make me feel very good either. Here again, I would have a lot of fear and anxiety. I think in the midst of whether we know the future or don't know the future the world right now is wanting help. The world right now is wanting answers. The world right now is desperately wanting a Savior. One of the things that is so interesting when we think about this is I think the world looks everywhere except to Christ to find that Savior.

I remember being in New York City a few years ago. I was working with a church plant on one of our mission trips up there. We did some work in with a man in Manhattan in New York City, and you have to remember there are only about two or three percent evangelical Christians in that city. There may be a little bit more, but it's very, very low. I remember asking him why so many secular people who don't believe in God even care. Why would they even care about the government? Why are they so passionate? I remember his answer. He said, "If they don't have a church that points them to the Savior, the government becomes their church as they look and long for a Savior." I thought that was pretty profound. If we're not careful as a church, we can fall in the same trap and look towards the government or other places to find our hope. I'm not saying the government isn't important. What I am saying is we can't forget our true King. We've got to remember who He is. That's what we want to talk about this morning, to remember who our true King is, remembering what He has done, and what He will do, remembering He is with us, He has saved us, and He will save us.

We're going to cover the whole chapter of Daniel 6, but for the sake of time, we're just going to hit on two verses.

Scripture

V. 10 "When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously."

V. 16 "Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!"

As we think through this text, I think it's important to give context of what is going on. When we look at the Old Testament, we see that God formed a nation. That nation was enslaved to Egypt for many years, but then, God miraculously saves the slaves and sets them free. He gives them the Promised Land, but these people continue to rebel again, and again, and again. It leads into their captivity at which the Prophet Jeremiah prophesied. That's where we pick up in Daniel. Daniel is about fifteen years old when he enters into the exile in the Babylonian Empire, and that's where Daniel 1 starts. We continue to learn about the life of Daniel all the way up to chapter 6. In Daniel 6, this man has gone through ups and downs. He has been in positions of leadership to the other extreme where he doesn't know if he's going to live another day, but he proved faithful. He went from being a fifteen year old man to now possibly in his late seventies or early eighties. There is a new king who has come in, King Darius. King Darius has three high officials and one hundred and twenty satraps, and they are to do the king's business. The king appoints Daniel to be one of the three high officials to oversee the kingdom. Daniel is set apart. Verse 3 talks about how Daniel is dignified. He has an excellent spirit. Even in verse 4, it says they can find no fault in him. The king is so impressed with Daniel that he puts him over the high officials. Daniel is basically running the whole kingdom. He's basically the king's prime minister. He's excellent, without fault, blameless, dignified. Why is that? If

you read the book of Daniel, have no doubt that Daniel is a man of prayer and a man that wants to know who God is.

In the midst of a chaotic world, we have to get back to meditating and knowing who God is. It is amazing to think about how our minds work. It's amazing to think about how our activity changes with whatever we put our minds on. I think about my two oldest kids. They really love sports. They watch basketball, and they look up to these basketball players. They think about these basketball players. Do you know what they want to do after they watch a game? They want to go imitate them. Then, we watch a baseball game. They look up to these baseball players. They think about these basketball players. Do you know what they want to do after that? They want to play a baseball game. It's the same with football. It's the same with American Ninja Warrior, and they climb all over our house. Why? They look up to them, and it leads to imitation.

The same principle applies to us. What are we setting our minds and hearts on? I heard a pastor say that Christians right now are spending three hours on social media and news and fifteen minutes in the Word. What would happen if we flipped it or started spending three hours in the Word and fifteen minutes in the news and social media? I think we would have a mind shift. We would start realizing and understanding who our God is and we could be overcomers. We would start displaying an excellent spirit, not just an excellent spirit, but the Holy Spirit working in our lives. We would be like Christ, and who is Christ? He is sinless. He suffered on our behalf, died on the cross, and rose from the dead, so we experience His love and the love of the Father. The more we set the eyes of our hearts upon Him, the more we become like Him. I don't think we would become sinless, but we will sin less by knowing who Christ is.

Yet even as we meditate, remember, and think about who Christ is, hard times still come. There are still evil people in the world, and we see that in Daniel's life. People under Daniel don't like Daniel. Why? It's because he's excellent, because he has high character, and he has interrupted their political power. He is getting in the way of what they want to do, of their political ambition, their political power, and their political goals. So, they scheme and basically set up a trap for Daniel. The problem is they can't

find anything wrong with Daniel, so what do they do? They go after Daniel's God. They know what Daniel believes by understanding the Law of God. They are going to find a way to trip Daniel up. Either Daniel will have to compromise what Scripture says and be like them, or he's going to be killed. They come up with this plan and they approach King Darius. Everybody comes together, the governors, the satraps, the officials are all together, except Daniel. They walk into this room and start praising the king. They talk about how great the king is. They're schmoozing him and trying to build up his ego. Then, they have this idea for the king. They say, oh, King Darius, we think it would be a great idea for you to be treated like a god for thirty days, and if anybody prays or petitions to any other god except you, they should be thrown to a den of lions. The king's ego is built up, he feels good about himself, and he signs it into law. Once it's signed into law, it's done. Daniel is now in a pickle. He has a problem on his hands. What is he going to do? If he continues to serve his God, he's going to face the lions.

The answer to what Daniel does is found in chapter 6:10, so let's read that again, "When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously." Let's look at this verse and work backwards. "As he had done previously." This wasn't something new. He doesn't just start doing it after the law was signed in rebellion to the king. No, he had been praying, he had been disciplined; it has been going on consistently, and how much? Three times a day. Here is a man who is literally running a kingdom, and he is making time, three times a day, to spend time with God. That is convicting to me. If a guy who is running a kingdom can make time three times a day to spend with God, I believe all of us can as well. I know it's crazy, it's hard, but the point is it should be a lifestyle where you're dependent the Lord. I heard a famous pastor say, "It's hard sometimes for me to pray five minutes, but I can't go five minutes without praying." That is so good! We need to continue to have this lifestyle being utterly dependent on the Lord, and that's what Daniel has been doing and it is not going to change, regardless of the law that has been signed and put into effect. Daniel not only

continues to do this, he goes to the upper chamber, the windows are open, he's looking towards Jerusalem, and he's giving thanks to God. The question is what is he doing? What is he seeing? How is he doing? What's he praying? I think we get the answer later on in the book of Daniel.

You see, Daniel is twelve chapters. Daniel 1-6 is mainly a narrative about Daniel's life, but chapters 7-12 is about Daniel getting visions. He gets four visions about the future, about what's going to happen. As he gets these visions, they are recurring, sometimes in different timelines between Daniel 1-6. So, in Daniel 7 and 8, he knows there are more kingdoms to come and they won't always be good kingdoms. But, there is going to be one where a Son of Man is going to set up an everlasting Kingdom for all peoples, all tribes, all languages, and all tongues. This Kingdom will be right and it will be good. Daniel knows God is going to work again. He's going to do it again.

That leads to the second part of what God has done and what God will do. Daniel not only knows God is going to do something great in the future; Daniel believes admits when he's praying in verse 10 that God can do it again right now. You see, in Daniel chapter 9 before Daniel gets the vision, it says Daniel is reading the book of Jeremiah. As he reads it, Jeremiah prophesies how long they will be in captivity. Jeremiah says they will be in captivity for seventy years. Let's do the math. Daniel was part of the first people to enter into the captivity when he's fifteen years old. Let's say he is eighty-two or eighty-three at the time Daniel chapter 9 is occurring. This is when King Darius had first become king, before Daniel 6, and Daniel is realized an understanding; if Jeremiah is right and the Word of God is right, in a very short time period, God is going to move again. God is going to set the captives free. It might be a year, might be two years, but it's going to occur shortly. This leads into this prayer beginning in chapter 9:3 where Daniel is praying not only for his heart, but for all the people. He's confessing sin. He's repenting. Why? It is because he believes God is going to do something great right now. He believes it is going to happen. At the end of this prayer in verses 18-19, Daniel is asking God to move, "O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas

before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name." I believe that is the prayer he is praying when he is looking at Jerusalem. He was remembering the visions he received. He's remembering his time in the Word. He's remembering the book of Jeremiah. Here is a man who is eighty-three or four years old; he knows God is coming back!

Now as he is praying in chapter 6:10, he is holding onto the truth that no matter what happens, even if he dies, God is going to come back right now and God is going to come back in the future. God is going to do it again. Daniel has a choice. Is he going to live for the king of the day, live for moment, and regret it for eternity, or, is he going to die and live for the King of kings who has an everlasting Kingdom? That's Daniel's choice. Daniel decides to live for the Kingdom because he believes what God has done. He believes God can do it again, and he believes God will do it again. I can hear all the 'buts.' "We believe that and we understand that, but do you really know what's going on in our country right now?" "Do you really understand all the chaos, all the tension, all the issues?" "What happens if this happens?" "What happens if that happens?" I don't know...maybe the whole thing implodes...but I know my King. I know the true King. No matter what happens Tuesday, no matter what happens in the days to come, or how long the virus lasts, our King is still the true King, and He can do it again.

The year was 1940, and there was this expert in revival named Dr. Orr who lectured at Wheaton College. For historical science, he decides to take his lecture and some theological students to England. This is right at the beginning of WW2, but they go to England and begin to look for all these places of revival, and they go to John Wesley's house. John Wesley, a man in the 1700's who preached and taught and prayed for revival. He was one of these men among other men in that time period who believed an awakening needed to occur, and people from America and Europe came to Christ in massive amounts. John Wesley was one of the reformers of that time where through his prayers, preaching, and teaching, the Lord used in

mighty, mighty ways. So, here these students with Dr. Orr are in John Wesley's house and they're going through his kitchen and see some of the preserved books of Wesley's, and finally they go upstairs. They look near his bed and there are two spots, two circles in the carpet where the carpet had been worn down, and they asked why. It was said it was where he knelt spending hours and hours praying for revival. They were amazed and blown away by this. Slowly, the students left the room and got back on the bus to go to their next spot. When Professor Orr got on the bus, he sees he's missing one student. He goes back into the house and upstairs he found one student kneeling in the carpet kneeholes praying with his face on the bed, the same exact spot Wesley prayed. As he looks, he hears this, "Oh Lord, do it again! Bring a revival! Do it again!" Professor Orr gently walks over and says, "Come on Billy, we must be going." Billy Graham walked out of that room, and the Lord did it again!

This is what I believe. You don't have to be Daniel. You don't have to be John Wesley. You don't have to be Billy Graham. True change occurs when you and I get down on our knees and prayer and ask God to move. I believe He can do it again. I believe He will do it again.

No matter what happens, we still have to face the lions, and Daniel faces the lions. He prays, he gets caught, and they sent him to the lion's den. The lions of this world are difficult. We can feel the lions grab our throat where we feel like we can't breathe, whether it is health issues, economic issues, family issues, or Satan himself. 1 Peter says that Satan comes around like a roaring lion looking to devour somebody, but do you know what I know? No matter how hard our life gets, and I don't want these trials to come, but if and when they do come, I believe God is still with us. He is not going anywhere. As you look through Scripture, there is always this promise to basically every single biblical character when they had to take a step of faith: 'Be strong and courageous, for I am with you.' We need to remember that no matter what happens in life, God is with us. Let me say this as well. The lions of this world will bring us down and make life hard on us, but we have the Lion of Judah, and His roar is loud! My kids just finished the Chronicles of Narnia series from CS Lewis describing a kid's version about Christ. The Christ-like figure is named Aslan. He is a

lion, and one of my favorite quotes about Aslan is "he is not a tame lion." That's who our God is. He is with us, He will never ever let us go, and all the lions of this world, no matter how they come at us will eventually hear Him roar. We long for that day.

Not only is God with us, He saves us. That's exactly what happens to Daniel in the lion's den. God puts an angel in that den and protects Daniel. When the king comes the next day and the stone is rolled away from that den, the king is amazed that Daniel is fine. Why is Daniel fine? It is because of his faith in God. I know we are not always rescued from the lions, but in this case, Daniel was. He comes up out of the den, justice was served for those who were scheming against Daniel, and they were thrown into the lion's den. Daniel was saved. The king is amazed and he praises Daniel's God.

Daniel has been saved by what God has done, and I truly believe that God used the lion's den and Daniel's prayer to set the captives free. In Daniel 6:28, it says, "So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian." Why is that important? It is because Cyrus is the king who comes in and sets the captives free. In Ezra chapter 1, it tells us to make the prophecy of Jeremiah fulfilled Cyrus was stirred in his heart to let God's people go home. I've always wondered what in the world got into Cyrus where his affections were stirred to let God's people go back to Jerusalem. Do you know what I believe? I believe Daniel's prayers worked. Do you know what I believe? Daniel being thrown into the lion's den and staying faithful to Christ, Cyrus saw the Lord God. Because of that, of God using Daniel and hearing his prayers, God was true to His Word, the prophecy came true, and the people were set free in seventy years. It's amazing; we serve a God who knows the future, who is sovereign and predict exactly when the captives would be set free, and, uses one of His servants for that will to be accomplished for not only Daniel, but God's people to experience salvation.

As we think through Daniel and his life, we also need to see our ultimate salvation comes in Christ. Christ, just like Daniel, was innocent. Christ was sinless. You could not find any error. Christ had excellent spirit in Him, but just like the days of Daniel, the political and religious leaders schemed

against Christ. They couldn't find anything wrong with Him, but they found a way to sentence Him to death. Just like the days of Daniel, the political leaders didn't know what to do with Jesus, but gave in to the law and sentenced Jesus to death. Just like Daniel, there was a death sentence, but also like Daniel, when that stone was rolled away, there was utter amazement of what they saw. Daniel was alive; Jesus wasn't even in the tomb. Unlike Daniel, Jesus faced death, took it on, and defeated it. The amazement of the tomb of Jesus when the stone was rolled away was that He was now alive, He had defeated sin, defeated death, defeated all the lions in this world, took on Satan and his forces, He took on your sin and mine, and because of what Jesus has done, the captives will ultimately be set free forever! Because of that, we now have hope. So we will continue to pray, continue to seek Him, no matter what comes because we know what Christ has done. He set them free in the days of Moses. He set them free in the days of Daniel. This was accomplished through what Jesus did at the cross, and He can set people free right now! Revival can occur right now. Whatever does happen right now, He will come back, He will set up His Kingdom, it will be right, it will be good, and it will last forever. That is our hope! That is what we put our faith and trust in. The more we realize and understand who our God is, what He has done, what He will do, that He is with us, He has saved us and will save us, it changes everything.

I don't know what's going to happen in the days and weeks, months and years to come. I think about my grandparents and I wonder what they would be thinking right now if they were alive and saw the world as it is. I think about the next one hundred years and what it would be like for my children and grandchildren. It can lead to fear and anxiety. What's going to happen? But, you know what? I don't know the future, but I do know the future. What would it be like to see the next one hundred years? I think we're going to see some bad things, some hard and difficult things, but what would it be like if we could see the return of Christ? That return puts everything else at ease because we know who He is, we know what He's done, we know He's with us, and we know His return is far greater, far mightier, and far more powerful than anything this world has to throw at us. He will make everything right. The more we set our eyes on that hope, the more it puts the election, Covid, and all the issues in our nation and the

world to rest. The Church needs to focus so much more, not on the moment, but on eternity. Focus on who our King is, no matter what happens November 3rd, four years from now, or twenty-four years from now, we believe in our King and He will take care of us, and that is our hope.