

A Chronicle of Redemption

Chapter 35: The God-Centered Life

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CHAPTER 35: THE GOD-CENTERED LIFE **Daniel**

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Daniel 1. Daniel 1. Last week we talked about, looked at our God-centered God in the book of Ezekiel; how God lives and works and saves and redeems for His own glory. Don't think for a second that this takes away from God's love for us. His love for His people is infinitely good and infinitely great. God's desire and passion for His glory does not take away from His love for us. It completes His love for us because it centers it around Him, where everything centers around. So, the question is how does our God-centered God affect the way we live as individuals and as a church?

This is where the book of Daniel gives us a clear portrait of God-centered lives in a man-centered world. 605 BC, almost ten years before Ezekiel was exiled, who we looked at last week, and nearly 20 years before the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed...605...King Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon comes into Jerusalem and Judah and begins to plunder the temple in the Jerusalem and the city. Listen to Daniel 1:1-4,

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans [or the Babylonians].

Among these of these young men, chosen to come to the Babylonian palace, were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, likely teenagers at the time.

They were brought to learn Chaldean ways, Babylonian ways. Not just these youths being brought, the king and his royal family being brought, but you'll notice there in verse 2, articles from the temple. You see, it was common for the Babylonians, when they would overtake another nation, they would assume clearly the Babylonian gods are superior to the god or gods of those they have overtaken. So, they would take plunder from the temple to the god of the people they were overtaking and bring it back and put it in their temple as a sign that their gods are superior to others' gods.

God is sovereign over all things in the past, present, and future.

Well, the Babylonians have something to learn in the days to come about the God of Israel. They were going to learn, and the whole point of this book is to show that there is one God over all gods, and He is the Lord, and He is supreme. There is one God who is sovereign, reigning, in control over all things in the past, present and future. That's the message of the book of Daniel. The point of this book is to show the Israelites and the Babylonians and every other nation that there is one God who reigns supreme and sovereign over everything. He is sovereign over every king, every ruler, every event, every battle, every nation and every individual; one God who reigns over it all.

These Hebrew boys, Daniel and his friends, are going to be an instrument in the hands of a God-centered God to show His great glory. Oh, I want my life...I want our lives, this church to be a display of a God-centered God.

A God-Centered Perspective...

So, what does that look like in practice? I want to split that up into a God-centered perspective that leads to God-centered praying, based on God-centered promises, and then it will just naturally flow from there, what this means for our lives. Now, the challenge is Daniel 1-12 and thick chapters...stories in the first six chapters, basically, a story per chapter and then visions in the last six chapters. So, we're going to try to skim through it all to see an overview. Hopefully, you have read through it in our Bible reading as a faith family this last week. So, this will be kind of a recap of what we have seen.

God humbles the proud.

Let's start with a God-centered perspective. In the book of Daniel, God humbles the proud. God humbles the proud. Go with me to Daniel 4 at this point. Daniel 4...end of Daniel 4, verse 28. In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar, the king has a dream. It's his second dream, and Daniel, once again, just like he did with the first dream Nebuchadnezzar had, Daniel interprets the dream. The whole dream that Daniel interpreted was about how Nebuchadnezzar had all this power and authority, but it was going to be taken from him because of his pride. Well, Nebuchadnezzar didn't get it.

So, you get to verse 28, and after this has been interpreted, he's still continuing in pride. All this came upon Nebuchadnezzar. Verse 29 says, *"At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, and the king answered..."* So, this is Nebuchadnezzar. He said, *"Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"*

Okay, Nebuchadnezzar has a couple of things to learn at this point. I want you to see in his words a reflection, not just of a pagan king's heart, I want you to see a reflection of all of our hearts at the core of this king's words. We are all prone to self-sufficiency. Listen to these words, verse 30, *"Is this not the great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power...?"* Self-sufficiency, dependence on our own power. It was the mantra of King Nebuchadnezzar, and it is the mantra of the American dream in the 21st century. It is the mantra of sinful man. "You can do it. You can do anything you want. Put your mind and your heart and your skill behind something and look at what you can achieve, in your own

power, in your own strength. You have it in you, so believe in yourself and trust in yourself and look to yourself and muster up what you can do and look what will happen.”

Ladies and gentlemen, God is not impressed by anyone’s resume in this room. It does not matter what you have done. The reality is anything you have done, you have done only because God has sovereignly given you grace to do what you have done and power to do what you have done. It doesn’t matter if you are a pagan king and want nothing to do with God. The reality is you have breath at this moment only because a sovereign God has ordained your breath. Therefore, the next breath you breathe, the next step you take, decision you make, skill you employ, all of it is under the umbrella of a sovereign God who gives you the ability to do it, who will one day take that away and hold you accountable for how you used it.

We are prone, though, to self-sufficiency, dependence on our own power, which leads to us being prone to self-exultation...self-exultation, desire for our own praise. Nebuchadnezzar said, “Babylon, I have built it by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty.” The goal of sinful man is to make much of himself, and the goal of a holy God is to make much of a holy God. So, God humbles the proud. May not happen immediately, but it will happen in due time.

So to Nebuchadnezzar, God says in verse 31:

While the words were still in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, “O, King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beast of the field. And you shall be made to eat like grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.” Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles’ feathers, and his nails were like birds’ claws.

God exalts the humble.

Not a good day for Nebuchadnezzar. God humbles the proud, and God exalts the humble. God exalts the humble, even...right after this...in Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan king’s life...listen to what happens. Verse 34:

At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the hosts of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”

At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

So whether it is pagan kings or Hebrew boys in this story, God is showing that we are dependent on His power, and we live for His praise. This is the God-centered life. God exalts the humble. We trust in His power, whether it was abstaining from the king's food in Daniel 1, whether it was wisdom to interpret dreams in Daniel 2, whether it was living through a fiery furnace in Daniel 3, interpreting dreams in Daniel 4, standing up against the king in Daniel 5, or spending the night in the den of lions in Daniel 6, trusting in the power of God and living for the praises of God, God always gives His power for His praise.

Let me show this to you. Look at the end of Daniel 2...look at Daniel 2:46. After Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's first dream...God gives Daniel the power to do this. The result is, Daniel 2:46 says, "*[Then] King Nebuchadnezzar...*" just picture this. "*King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. The king answered and said to Daniel, 'Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.'*"

This is astounding. This is the most powerful king in the world at the time, bowing at the feet of an exile from Jerusalem and giving praise to his God. Daniel 3...Daniel 3:26, after Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are thrown into a fiery furnace, what happens to them and to what effect? Verse 26:

[Then] Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

"Therefore," pagan king says, verse 29, "*I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their house laid in ruins, for there is no other God who is able to rescue in this way.*"

If we just read Daniel 3 and see this cool story about some guys who were brought out of a fiery furnace and stop there, we miss the whole point. The whole point is the end of the chapter for a pagan king to declare that this God is worthy of praise and honor and glory; to declare that anyone who doesn't give Him glory, who defames Him, will be ruined.

You get to Daniel 4, it starts with the praise of God and, just like we read a second ago, it ends with the praise of God. In Daniel 5, you have another king, King Belshazzar, who is rebuked and ultimately killed for defaming and dishonoring God. Then, you get to Daniel 6...go to the end of Daniel 6, verse 25, after Daniel spends the night in the den of lions and comes out alive, another king, this time King Darius, "*wrote to all the peoples,*" Daniel 6:25,

Nations, and languages that dwell on all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear for the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He

delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of lions."

Here's the picture. God is so passionate about His praise. They made known among all the nations that He will send His servants through a furnace or into a lion's den to bring it about. This is a God-centered perspective, our lives totally dependent on the power of God and totally dedicated and devoted to the praise of God. So spurn, brothers and sisters, spurn self-sufficiency and self-exaltation. Do not trust in your own power and refuse to live for your own praise. Let God do the lifting up as you depend on Him and live for His glory.

God-Centered Praying...

That leads to God-centered praying. Now, go to the beginning of Daniel 6. This probably is the most famous story from the book of Daniel, Daniel and the lion's den. Here's the deal. We talk a lot about the sovereignty of God around here, as well we should, because we're reading the Bible, and the Bible talks a lot about the sovereignty of God, but there is a dangerous temptation for us to think about, hear about the sovereignty of God, believe in the sovereignty of God, and then conclude, "Well, if God knows everything and ordains everything, and if God knows the future and ordains the future, then why don't we just sit back and see what happens?"

Like, why do we need to pray if God has already ordained what's going to happen? What does prayer do? Doesn't the sovereignty of God make prayer unnecessary? Some even, in history, have concluded evangelism or mission as unnecessary. God will save who He will, draw those people to Christ who He desires, and that's it. So, we just sit back and see what happens. This is where I find it very interesting that in this book that puts the sovereignty of God so clearly on display also emphasizes so clearly the importance of prayer and the centrality of prayer in Daniel's life.

Look at Daniel 6:1, *"It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one, to whom the satraps would give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. Then Daniel became distinguished above all the other presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom."*

So, get the picture here. Daniel has grown. He has now served numerous kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius. So, the picture here is Daniel, some estimate, in his eighties, now having rule and reign and position, second only to the king. He's one of three presidents. He's the most prominent of those presidents, and the king planned to give him the kingdom. So, his position in the kingdom is great at this point. Listen to what happens next.

[Then] the presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. [Then] these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."

I love this. These guys know that Daniel will be obedient to his God no matter what it costs him. So, they are scheming based on his integrity, based on his faithfulness to God. They

say, "We know we can catch him being faithful to his God." May that be said of us. No matter what it costs.

[Then] these presidents and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

So, the setup is complete. Anyone who prays to, petitions a man or god, apart from King Darius will be cast into the den of lions. Now, put yourself in Daniel's shoes when this decree comes out. There is all kinds of room here for justification, isn't there? Like, "Okay. I'm not supposed to be caught praying publicly to God. Well, I can pray privately. I can pray when no one else is looking. I mean, prayer is something between you and God anyway, and after all, God has raised me up to this position for His glory to influence this kingdom. Aren't I better off to God alive than dead?"

So, the clear justification is there for Daniel to continue praying, but silently, in a way that he would not be brought before a den of lions. So, what did Daniel do? 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 just as he had done previously.

We pray consistently.

Oh, I see a portrait of God-centered praying here. We pray consistently. He prayed three times a day every day. Why? "Daniel don't you know that God is sovereign. God's going to do what He has planned." Daniel knows. We see it later based on the words of Jeremiah. This is a 70-year exile. Then, God will bring His people back. So, he knows what's going to happen. Why pray? Just coast it out. However, three times a day, Daniel is lifting his head and his heart toward God. Why? Because he knows that prayer is a God-ordained means for the accomplishment of God-ordained ends. God has an end, a purpose, to glorify His name. How is God going to do it? He is going to do it as His people pray and seek Him and know Him and petition Him to make His glory known.

Three times a day every day he is praying. The sovereignty of God is driving his prayers. Why? God, help us to see this. We are not passive observers of God's sovereign purposes. We don't just sit back and say, "Well, God is sovereign. We're just going to watch what He does." No. We fall on our knees in prayer because we are active participants in God's sovereign plans. Yes, God is accomplishing His purposes, His ends, His will in the world, and He is doing it through the prayers and the lives of His people. The God-centered life prays consistently because we know God is sovereign, which means He has sovereignly ordained for me to know Him, for us to walk with Him, be used by Him to petition Him to accomplish His purposes in the world.

So, we don't sit back as spectators of a sovereign God. We dive in as participants with a sovereign God who is making His glory known through our praying and through our going and through our living. So he's praying consistently. Oh, to think Heather and I have been praying for years for one particular person in our lives, just their heart would be open to the love and the mercy of God in Christ and for years, it's been, "Well, why not? Why?" Pressing

in in prayer, and over the last few weeks, Heather gets a call, and she says, "Yes. I need Christ. I want Christ. I love God, and I want to grow in Him." To see this...this is not us sitting back, "Well, maybe it'll happen if God is sovereign." Pressing in and praying, and when it happens, rejoicing and praising God for what He has sovereignly done. This is how it works. Prayer and the purposes of God going together, and we have the privilege of being a part of the accomplishment of divine purposes. When you know that, you pray consistently. You don't want to miss out on knowing and glorifying this God and seeing His glory spread.

We pray with courage.

We pray consistently, and we pray with courage. Daniel knows what is going to happen to him, and he prays anyway. He goes to his house and opens the windows. Now, this is not a contradiction of Jesus' words in Matthew 6, where He warns against praying to receive others' approval. Let's just go into a room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. He's warning against praying to receive man's praise. Daniel is praying to receive man's condemnation. Man is about to kill him or try to, as a result of his prayer, and he prays anyway. Oh, what a picture. Daniel saying, "You can take my physical life, but you cannot take my prayer life." Wow. Prayer, non-negotiable, more non-negotiable than breath itself to the God-centered man. Prayer more precious than life.

So, he is thrown into a den of lions where, inevitably, he prays a lot more, and he spends the night before a God who shuts their mouths. Can you imagine? Like, when you are sitting next to a lion, you don't stop praying. You don't rest for a second. He comes out the next morning alive, some other guys get thrown in, and God receives praise; the courageous prayer. That's the last story in the first part of Daniel.

We pray contritely.

Now, go over to Daniel 9. We pray consistently. We pray with courage. Third, we pray contritely. Daniel 9. I wish we had time to read through this whole chapter, this whole prayer, but here's Daniel. He knows that in 70 years, the exile will be over, but he is not sitting back. It says in verse 3, "*[Then] I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession...*" Listen to the contrition here, the brokenness. "*O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled...*" He's saying the same thing over and over again with different words, "*...turning aside from your commandments and rules.*" You'll read through the rest of this prayer and, literally, just about every verse involves confession of sin and wickedness and rebellion, crying out for mercy, contrition.

We pray with confidence.

When your life is centered on God, you realize your need for mercy at every moment. So, his prayer of contrition leads to praying with confidence. Listen to how this prayer ends in verses 18 and 19. This is...it's amazing when you think about what he's just prayed in brokenness, and now, he says, "*O my God,*" verse 18, "*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.*"

Do you hear contrite confidence here? Brokenhearted boldness before God. Crying out for mercy and then saying, "Lord, pay attention and act." However, listen, he is not appealing for God to answer his prayers based on who he is. "Not based on my righteousness, but because of your great mercy, for your great name." Daniel, in his praying, is appealing to

the God-centered nature of God. "God, you desire your glory. So, for your name's sake, act and forgive and respond." It's not a coincidence when we get to the New Testament and Jesus' disciples say, "Teach us to pray." He responds and says, "Our father in heaven," What? "Hallowed be your name."

That is not a declaration as much as it is a petition. It is, literally, a prayer, "God, Father in heaven, make your name known as holy." So, this is what drives our praying, from beginning to middle to end. "God, we want your glory, act for your name's sake. Save people for your name's sake; bring family members and friends and co-workers, the nations to Christ for your name's sake. If in this cancer, you can receive the most glory through healing me on the spot, then do it. For your glory, do it. Or, if in this cancer, you can receive the most glory by sustaining me in the middle of suffering, then do it. For your name's sake, do it." The glory of God drives praying. "Act for your name's sake."

This is where we find ourselves. We are in a battle. You get into Daniel 10. Wish we had time to look at all of these and be here another six hours, but here's the deal. In Daniel 10, he's praying for weeks, for three weeks, and a messenger comes to him and says, "Your prayers have been heard, and these last three weeks, there's been a spiritual battle raging in the heavenlies as you've been praying." Daniel 10 just opens our eyes to a reality that is greater than what we see, that when we pray, we are praying...and Paul says the same thing in Ephesians 6, "There are spiritual forces of evil at work in the heavenly realms."

The reality that, as we pray, there is a prince in this world and all his minions who are blinding the minds of unbelievers, 2 Corinthians 4:5; hindering the activity of the church, 1 Thessalonians 2:18; holding people captive, 2 Timothy 2:25. As we pray, we are not playing games, brothers and sisters. We are entering into spiritual battle for the souls of men and women around the world for our own growth and purity and holiness. This is a battle that we are in and be confident, God will win this war. He will make His glory known, and His purposes will be accomplished.

God-Centered Promises...

God will redeem His people.

So, pray with confidence consistently, with courage and contritely. God-centered praying, all of it based on God-centered promises. This is not doing justice to this book. Let's just get that out on the table, but these last six chapters, Daniel 7-12, are visions that Daniel has, and I want to draw your attention, very briefly, to three of them. One, a vision in which Daniel realizes that God will redeem His people. It's actually right where we left off in Daniel 9:20. Gabriel brings a response to his praying.

Listen to verse 24, what the response is. See if you can follow along here. Daniel 9:24:

Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place [or most anointed one]. Know therefore and understand that from going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the

sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.

All right. Old Testament theologians have called this “the dismal swamp of Old Testament scholarship”, and hours, years throughout church history, have debated on this passage, and I’m going to sum it up in about 60 seconds. Not claiming that I have figured it out, but summing up what most biblical scholars who would read this passage see seventy weeks there in, verse 24, is a reference to seventy sevens, literally 490 years, and this is a prophecy about what is to come.

The picture is...and different scholars, as they debate, start at different points, but they all get to the same place. 490 years from wherever they start, just soon after when the people of God are restored to the city of Jerusalem where the temple is built, takes you to the first part of the first century where an anointed one comes, who finishes transgression and puts an end to sin and atones for iniquity. The picture is, God, in the midst of His people in exile, 500 years before the coming of Christ, saying, “Hold on because I’m sending an anointed one who will be cut off and who will take away your sin, and my redemption will come.” God will redeem His people.

God will resurrect His people.

Second, God will resurrect His people. Now, turn with me to Daniel 12. Resurrect His people. This book is filled with rescues, the book of Daniel. Rescue from a fiery furnace, rescue from a lion’s den, but the ultimate rescue happens in Daniel 12:1,

At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

There are so many illusions here to what we see in the book of Revelation. This last half of Daniel is the Old Testament version of the book of Revelation. This is talking about the end of history when God’s people will be raised up, all whose names are written in the book, the book of life. Raised to everlasting life, others to shame and contempt. Then, obviously, Daniel is going to die before this happens. You get down to the very last verse in the book and look at where it ends, “*But go your way to the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.*” It is a good thing when you die, and you are still standing. Reminds us of Jesus’ words in John 11, “*He who believes in me, even though he dies, he shall live.*”

God will reign over all peoples.

God will resurrect His people, and ultimately God will reign over all peoples. This is where I want to take you to, probably, the two most important verses in the entire book of Daniel. Daniel 7:13-14. What happens in Daniel 7 is he sees a vision of earthly kingdoms, and then above these earthly kingdoms, he sees God’s kingdom reigning over all, a kingdom that belongs to the Ancient of Days, a reference to God as the timeless Lord of all history.

In verse 13, Daniel says, *"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."*

God will reign over all peoples, and in this particular picture, Daniel sees a vision of a coming king, a king greater than king Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar or Darius or Cyrus...coming king who is human like a son of man, a reference to Genesis 1 and Psalm 8. He is human, and He is also divine. He's coming with the clouds of heaven, a clear reference to His deity, which is why...and we don't have time to turn there, but you go to Mark 14:61, and you see Jesus brought before the high priest, and the high priest asks Him, "Are you the Christ?" Jesus responds...one person said, "It's the Christological climax of the gospel." Jesus says, *"I am. And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power coming with the clouds of heaven."* As soon as He said it, they shouted, "This is a blasphemer, claiming to be equal with God." They spit on Him and began to beat Him and led Him to a cross because He had claimed to be the Son of Man, human/divine, coming with the clouds, that God would give...the Father would give...dominion, glory and a kingdom to.

His kingdom would be universal, over all nations, over all peoples, over all languages. This is why Jesus said at the beginning of the Great Commission, before saying, "Go and make disciples of all nations," what did He say? *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."* Who gave it to Him? The Ancient of Days. Upon His death on the cross for our sins, His resurrection from the grave over sin, He was given all authority in heaven and on earth, and that's why we go to the ends of the earth because Jesus is worthy of glory, universal glory, in all nations, over a universal kingdom that is also an eternal kingdom for all time. His dominion will be everlasting, and His kingdom will never, ever, ever be destroyed.

God-Centered Practices...

Praise God!

This is how a God-centered perspective leads to God-centered praying based on God-centered purposes. Now, it just flows. What do our lives look like, then, if we are God-centered based on what we have seen in Ezekiel and Daniel the last couple of weeks? Based on all we have seen in our God-centered God and this picture in Daniel, I exhort you, number one, praise God. Praise God. Give God the glory He is due. He's sovereign over all things in the past, the present and the future. He holds our lives, our times, all time in His hands, and He deserves, He desires and God demands total praise.

Pray to God!

Revere and worship God and pray to God. He's the source of all strength. We have nothing apart from Him. We can do nothing apart from Him. So, cry out for His mercy based upon His glory. Let your prayers...let your lips be filled with petitions for God to hallow His name. "God make your glory, your name known as great in this city, in my workplace, in this church, in the nations. Make your name known as great in my family." Know that when you pray, you are involved in a spiritual battle that is raging in the heavenlies.

Proclaim God!

So, pray with courage and confidence and with contrition and consistency for God to make His name known. Praise God, pray to God and proclaim God. Tell a man-centered world that there is one God who is the Savior of all nations. In a world of many gods and many kings, tell them there is one God and one king.

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