

GOING WITH GOD

Sermon Five

OUR GOD REIGNS

Daniel 5

“The writing is on the wall” is a term used by the world to indicate the certainty of something that is about to happen. Few people however probably realise that this term comes from the fifth chapter of Daniel as the finger of God writes a message of judgement on the banquet hall of the king’s palace. What a terrifying and awesome sight that must have been. The finger of God writing on the wall is an awesome picture of the fact that God is sovereign and that our God reigns. The Scriptures at other points refer to the power of the finger of God. In Exod 8:19 it is the finger of God that sends the plague of gnats upon the Egyptians when Pharaoh hardened his heart against God. In Exod 31:18 it is the finger of God that writes the Holy Law on

the tablets of stone for the people. In Luke 11:20 it is Jesus who says that he drove out the evil spirits by the finger of God. In chapter one, we saw at the beginning of this book that God is a God who rules and overrules. In this chapter as we consider the finger of God we will again discover God to be the God who reigns. The finger of God is still at work in the world today in the lives of both believers and unbelievers as well as in the destinies of nations and kingdoms. The world ignores this at its peril. True believers accept it, see it with the eyes of faith and are blessed. Let us look together this morning at just how God reigns.

1. GOD REIGNS OVER KINGS AND MEN

The one thing that becomes very apparent from all of Scripture and in particular in the book of Daniel is that God is no respecter of man and is little impressed with the

authority and status of a man. We have seen in the first four chapters how God dealt with the arrogance and pride of king Nebuchadnezzar and how he ultimately brought the king to his knees in worship. The king has now died and is followed by his son and then his grandson king Belshazzar, who clearly had not learnt the valuable lessons about God his grandfather had. King Belshazzar's lifestyle was not too dissimilar to that of modern man today. Let's just look at three characteristics.

1.1 He was indulgent

It was customary for the kings of the day to throw lavish parties and to indulge their sinful natures with what ever pleased them. Today we live in an age where the seeking of pleasure is a high priority.

1.2 He was indifferent

At the very moment he was throwing this lavish indulgent party the armies of the Medes and Persians were encamped around the city walls of Babylon. The king however felt secure behind the high fortified walls. They had more than enough food and got water from the river Euphrates that flowed through the city. He was in immanent danger and yet did not realise it. Again God's word has warned us that we are living in the last days. It has warned of judgement for those who do not obey and yet the majority of the world carries on as if they have no cares in the world. They are indifferent to the danger preferring to live in the pleasure of the moment.

1.3 He was irreverent

Perhaps the outstanding feature of the king's life was that he treated God with contempt, drinking from the gold

goblets consecrated to God in the temple and at the same time worshipping their pagan gods. Again we live in an age where even the existence of a divine being called God is treated with scorn and contempt. Many who accept the idea of God accept a multitude of God's as opposed to accepting the existence of one true holy God.

In middle of this lavish indulgent party the finger of God intervenes and writes on the banquet wall judgement against the king and in so doing announces that He is indeed the God who reigns over the kings and authorities of the earth.

Notice the words written on the wall.

God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.

You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.

Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

What a picture of an awesome and powerful God who reigns on high.

If anyone had an understanding of this then it was Job who noted at Job 20:4-7,

“Surely you know how it has been from of old, ever since man was placed on the earth, that the mirth of the wicked is brief, the joy of the godless lasts but a moment. Though his pride reaches to the heavens and his head touches the clouds, he will perish forever, like his own dung; those who have seen him will say, Where is he?”

Kings come and go but the eternal God reigns from on high!

God reigned over king Belshazzar even though he did not recognise Him and ultimately was destroyed by Him. The armies of the Medes and Persians camped diverted the river Euphrates away from the city of Babylon and were

able to get under the city wall where the river had flowed and captured the city killing the king.

The psalmist understood God's reign over the kings of the earth when he noted at 2:2, "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. Let us break their chains they say and throw off their fetters. The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. The he rebukes them in his wrath...".

God not only reigned over the king with negative consequences, he also reigned over Daniel with positive consequences. At this stage Daniel was now about eighty two years old when he was summoned, many years after having been taken into exile at the age of sixteen. In these intervening 66 years the finger of God had been upon the life of this humble man. He gave him wisdom and courage

to interpret and speak the truth unlike any of the wise men of the day. God reigned in his life for His glory. The fingerprints of blessing were on his life whereas the fingerprints of judgement were upon Belshazzar. Is the finger of God for you a blessing today or a judgement? Does it write judgement or blessing on the wall of your heart today?

2. GOD REIGNS OVER NATIONS

If it were not enough that God reigns over kings and men, we discover again in this passage that God reigns over nations. In chapter one, we saw how God punished the nation of Judah for their sin by delivering them into the hands of the Baylonians and taking them off into exile. Now in our present passage God again reigns over the nations by using the Medes and Persians to punish the Babylonians and in particular king Belshazzar for his sin.

It is God alone who both raises and brings down nations and kingdoms. This is best illustrated in the dream that God had given Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2 of the large statue depicting the four kingdoms that would come and go before God would set up His kingdom that would never end. With the defeat of the Babylonians by the Medes and Persians this prophecy was already fulfilled with the head of gold being the Babylonian empire smashed and replaced with the arms and breast of silver being the Medo-Persian Empire. The remaining empires will come and go and God will ensure that it is his kingdom that will reign in the end. Our God reigns! Again the psalmist had a very good understanding of this and in many psalms referred to it.

Psalms 2:1, “Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?”, 22:28, “dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations”, 47:8, “God reigns over the

nations; God is seated on His holy throne” and 66:7, “He rules forever by his power, his eyes watch the nations – let not the rebellious rise up against him”.

CONCLUSION

The history of mankind is written by the finger of God. It is a history of judgement and punishment but also a history of blessings and abundance. Our God reigns over kings, men and nations his purposes and plans to achieve. He reigns whether we recognise Him or not.

As we go into our national elections we must take heart that our God reigns and that it is in his hands. We however need to be in prayer for this not thinking that we have no responsibility in this.