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**Daniel 7:14, ESV.**

*14 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.*

**Night Visions: *The kingdom that shall not be destroyed.***

Many years ago, when I was a young guy, I was in Israel and happened to go to the West Bank, which contains ancient Samaria. Galilee is to the north. Consider this: From the Gospels we infer that Jesus walked between Galilee and Jerusalem multiple times, as did many Jews, mostly to celebrate the annual Jewish festivals in Jerusalem. In particular, he walked to the Jerusalem area to be baptized and begin his ministry, and at the end of his life, Jesus walked there to celebrate Passover and ride a donkey. On this last trip, he passed through Samaria. So, let's review the geography. In the south is Jerusalem in Judah. (The Roman name for Judah is Judea.) This is down by the Dead Sea. Northward is a region called Samaria, with a city called Samaria. North of this is an area called Galilee, near

the Sea of Galilee. The River Jordan connects the Sea of Galilee in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. This walk covered about 90 miles. It would have taken him several days. Today, you could drive this distance in about two hours. Let's remember this: Galilee to Samaria to Jerusalem in Judah, 90 miles. That's less than the distance from Boulder to Colorado Springs. I've never walked it, but I've driven it a number of times, and more importantly, I have travelled far greater distances on this Earth.

Here is a passage from the Book of Daniel, Chapter 7:

*<sup>13</sup> "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.*

*<sup>14</sup> 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.*

This is, for Christians, an important Bible passage, because it is said to predict the birth and ministry of Jesus Christ. In the context of the Book of Daniel alone, he is describing, in his role as a prophet, a person who appears before God to receive an everlasting and never-ending kingdom. This kingdom spans all of humanity.

Remember that the events in the Book of Daniel, while the book was probably written far later, take place during the period of the Babylonian exile, the low point of the Chosen People when they have lost their nation. Daniel is prophesizing more than a return to the United Kingdom of David, when there was one nation from Galilee to Jerusalem. He predicts an empire that is literally infinitely bigger and longer lasting. This passage is the ultimate vision of hope.

Let's look at the history of the nation of ancient Israel. The books of Judges and Joshua tell us that Moses died before the Chosen People entered the Promised Land. Before he died, Moses taught the generation born in the desert the history and moral obligations of his people. Joshua later divided the land between the twelve tribes of Israel. They represented the twelve sons of Jacob, in other words, the entire Israelite people. Each was given his own little kingdom. For perhaps 400 years, tribal leaders, called Judges, ruled Israel; it was a highly decentralized nation, with no central government, literally a loose confederation of tribes. Saul and then David unified the twelve independent tribes into one centralized kingdom, one nation of Israel. If we accept the numbers in the Bible, about 500 years passed between the entry into Canaan and the death of Solomon, the son of David, who became king after David. After Solomon died, his son, Rehoboam took the throne. There had been a lot of anger in Israel over the

taxes and forced labor demanded by Solomon and Rehoboam. It caused the ten northern tribes to break away, with a new nation, called Israel or the Northern Kingdom, centered in Samaria, to be established in the north. The southern nation, with Jerusalem as its capital, was named Judah. About two hundred years later, the Northern Kingdom was conquered by Assyria, who distributed its residents around the vast Assyrian Empire. They thus became the famous “ten lost tribes of Israel”, and they were, for the most part, assimilated into the Assyrian empire. Perhaps 345 years later, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and sent its leading citizens into exile. But they were sent into exile as a unit, were not completely assimilated into the Babylonian Empire, and retained their identity as the Chosen People. Here is a key number. The United Empire of Israel only existed under David, Solomon, and for a brief time under Rehoboam. That was at most 120 years, and it did not include the life of Jesus.

I’d like to get back to my trip to Israel. While I was there, I stayed for most of the time at a faculty housing facility at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, arguably the leading research university in Israel. I did travel to Samaria and to the Sea of Galilee in the area called Galilee. I didn’t walk, like Jesus did. I drove. It took a couple of hours. But in doing so, I traversed almost all of the old United Kingdom under David and Solomon, and I passed from the capital of Judah to the

capital of the Northern Kingdom, Samaria. Think about how small their world was: I drove between the capitals of two nations that existed for only a brief period. Here is another number to consider. We keep referring to the “vast” Babylonian Empire. When it existed, it was about the size of California. And the Babylonian Empire that conquered Israel existed for about 87 years.

Let’s get back to this line of Daniel’s, “*I saw in the night visions*”. When Daniel, and we are not sure that there truly was a prophet named Daniel since the book was written about 400 years after the events in it took place, says this, he is referring to revelations from God that come to him while he is sleeping. Dreams are a common form of communication between God and Israelites at critical moments in time; they were an important literary device in Hebrew Scriptures. A dream is how Jesus’ father Joseph learned to escape to Egypt to save Jesus from the murderous Herod. Pilate’s wife had a dream warning Pilate not to kill Jesus. When Jacob was fleeing his brother Esau, he had a dream assuring him that God would protect him. By saying that they came to him in a “*night vision*”, Daniel is giving his words the legitimacy of the voice of God. Notice that God’s kingdom spans “*all peoples, nations, and languages*” and “*shall not pass away*”.

Here is a passage from Galatians, a letter written by Paul. The faithful in Galatia were under pressure by Jewish-born followers of Christ who were insisting

that to be a Christian you had to also follow the burdensome tenets of the Jewish faith. Paul is trying to convince them that this is not true:

*<sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

*<sup>4</sup> I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, <sup>2</sup> but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. <sup>3</sup> In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. <sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup> And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*

The word that is used in the original Greek of the letter and is translated to "the elementary principles of the world" is "Stoicheia", and it refers to low level restrictive laws. He is saying that before Christ came, we were enslaved either by the legal structures of the Old Covenant or by the arbitrary worldly systems of Paganism. But Jesus came, allowing us to be part of his kingdom no matter who we are. All people, Jews and non-Jews, wealthy and the poorest, are the same in the Kingdom of God the Father. Some verses later, he sums it up:

*<sup>5</sup> For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

Christ has set us free from human-made systems. We are no longer spiritual slaves.

He is not saying that we are free from human nations, from the restrictions of

governments. But he is saying that there is now something higher, something eternal and all-encompassing, of which we are all a part. We are united. We are all equal. Although physically, we still live in the human-controlled world, we have been liberated spiritually. We no longer must live in religious systems that are as arbitrary, temporary, or temporal as human governments.

When I drove to Galilee from Jerusalem, it's not that it looked like I was in Los Angeles. Things were different. The coast of the Sea of Galilee was more placid and less developed than the California coast. I saw no sand. But the Sea of Galilee is in truth a freshwater lake. It was greener in parts than I expected. I remember one part being densely built up with buildings made of white stone. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus is portrayed as traveling as an infant from his home all the way to Egypt. This could have been 400 miles in one direction. And perhaps even as a tiny child, Jesus, as God, recorded the trip mentally. But as an older child and an adult, he doesn't appear to have traveled any more than 100 miles from his home. That was most of the length, though the Unified Kingdom of David, and through both of the divided Kingdoms of the north and Judah. And it was through several of the twelve mini-kingdoms of the 12 original tribes of Israel.

Here are two verses from the end of Chapter 24 of Matthew. These are the words of Jesus, not long before the final Passover with the Apostles:

*<sup>30</sup> Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

Jesus is talking about the End Times, when all human kingdoms and nations come to an end. Gathering the elect from the four winds means that all humans, all those made in the image of God, are welcome in this new, universal, everlasting nation. The part about mourning refers to the fact that judgement will also happen at this moment. We're all familiar with the glorious descriptions in the Book of Revelation of the New Jerusalem, of the new Heaven and Earth that will one day exist, when there will be no pain and no war, when all will live with justice and prosperity, and we will thrive under the radiance of God's grace. But the notion of a better world to come is very old; both Isaiah and Micah talk about it in their prophecies. Here are some words from the second chapter of Micah. He served as a prophet in Judah after the Northern Kingdom had been conquered by Assyria. Micah prophesized that a day would come when the elite of society would lose their power. He predicted a day when all live with justice, as equals, and that there would be so little need for weapons of war, their metal would be used for farm tools. In the following verse, he is speaking to those who use violence and their positions of power to make others suffer:

<sup>3</sup> *He shall judge between many peoples,  
and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away;  
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war anymore;*

Micah goes on in the next two verses to predict that one day all people will live without fear, and that we will be in the presence of God for eternity:

<sup>4</sup> *but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree,  
and no one shall make them afraid,  
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.*

<sup>5</sup> *For all the peoples walk  
each in the name of its god,  
but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God  
forever and ever.*

We are citizens of a nation in this world, and there is nothing wrong with being happy to be born where you were born and living wherever you happen to live. Pride is a dangerous thing, and we must work to keep it under control, but there is also nothing wrong with being proud of the nation of which you are a citizen. Those of us who happen to live in democracies and have found a level of prosperity as a result can serve others: We can work hard during our earthly lives to help others thrive in the same way. But no matter what our earthly positions, we live in a world that is filled with turmoil. We cannot escape it. Still, we don't have to be preoccupied with it or controlled by it. We don't have to let it destroy

the daily joy that we would otherwise get out of being alive. There is one important thing to keep in mind if we want to maintain a balance between that surrounding turmoil and our internal joy.

We must remember that the peace we get from this world is fleeting. It is limited. It cannot on its own overcome the chaos around us and the anxiety within us. When we try to take what satisfaction and happiness this world gives us and leverage it to live true lives of calm and confidence, it's like using a 350 mg acetaminophen tablet to cure a cobra bite. It might make you feel a bit better in the moment, but it will fall far, far short. What gives us true peace, what lifts us above the insanity of worldly kingdoms, is accepting dual citizenship in God's kingdom. It has always existed, will always exist, and one day will be the only nation. While we are here on Earth, God gives us the Holy Spirit to keep our values straight, and to allow us to compartmentalize all that this very temporary world throws at us. We do not have to wait until the End Times. The physically tiny and unified nation of ancient Israel that we refer to when we study the Bible existed for a bit over a century. Perhaps it was very important to God for us to understand that even the worldly kingdom of the Chosen People was not meant to compete with the Kingdom of God. As Daniel learned in his night vision, only God's kingdom includes "*all peoples*" and "*shall not be destroyed*".