Blurry Kingdoms - Final Destination

Intro:
READ **Daniel 12:1-13**–The book of Daniel tells the story of God's sovereignty over earthly kingdoms and His faithfulness to His people, even in exile. In ch 1–6, Daniel and his friends remain loyal to יהוה despite pressure, persecution, and the demands of pagan kings. Nebuchadnezzar is humbled, Belshazzar is judged, and Daniel is delivered from the lions. Again and again, earthly rulers rise and fall, but the Most High reigns. Beginning in ch 7, the perspective shifts from earthly events to heavenly visions. Daniel sees beastly kingdoms, a heavenly court, and the Ancient of Days giving everlasting dominion to one like a Son of Man. Subsequent visions reveal the *rise and fall of empires, the persecution of God's people, the desecration of the sanctuary, and even spiritual conflict behind earthly kingdoms*. Daniel prays, confesses Israel's rebellion, and seeks God's mercy. Through it all, one truth remains: **earthly powers are temporary, suffering has limits, and God's kingdom will never end.** Today, in this last chapter, we finally get a glimpse of our ultimate hope. God will deliver His ppl, evil will be judged, AND the dead will be raised. Whoa! The promises of God reach beyond exile, persecution, and even death. *We hear this as Christians and accept it quite readily*. But, one of the "blurriest" truths of all is that God's ppl have a future that even death cannot take away. Let's consider that future hope and its implications today…
Text: MPT-the end of the story is resurrection. MPS-s.
Daniel 12:1-3–the Most High God is exalted above all things (11:36ff), and His power will cover the earth (11:45). At that time, the great warrior angel, Michael, will be sent to deliver God's ppl from persecution. Remember this is still in the context of the great persecution coming from Antiochus. **The exiles are told to keep hope for deliverance**. The blurry battle continues as the spiritual dimension is being reiterated from ch 10. We may see the political/military parts of this, but there is a heavenly dimension that is going on (still today). But God remembers His ppl (written in the book). While suffering and earthly hardship is allowed, there is hope. That is the ultimate msg for today; you may feel forgotten, but in Christ, יהוה has not forgotten you. **v2-3** are the focus for today. What Daniel is doing here (by inspiration of the HS) is significant. The language here is consistent in some cases identical w Isaiah's Servant Song (52:13-53:12). We know the passage to be about the suffering Servant and it's true. 53:4-*He took on our pain, bore our suffering,* v5-*pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities…by His wounds we are healed*. But the Servant Song also points to the victory of the Servant.
Isaiah 53:11-12–the light of life…a portion among the great. Just as the suffering servant figure in Isaiah is resurrected and restored to a relationship w יהוה, His ppl will be resurrected and restored to relationship with Him. This is the msg Daniel receives at the end of the book, and it's the msg that carries on in Christ. God's ppl experienced exile, persecution, and death; some die w/o seeing justicce in their lifetime. But יהוה gives the final word-death will not win! The hope we have in Christ gives us life eternal AND for today! Bc if these things are true, we are at peace…NOW. Not just in the future, but also today. So, *faithfully disciple your kids, serve your neighbors, shepherd ppl thru difficult seasons, remain faithful when nobody notices*. You may not get earthly recognition, but יהוה notices, He sees you. He loves you.
The latter half of this chapter are instructions to Daniel to seal up the words of the vision until the appropriate time. And Daniel asks when will it all take place. No answer given. **Just trust that the righteous will be vindicated, evil punished**. Kingdoms rise, kingdoms fall, but the יהוה's Kingdom will stand forever. But why? And how do we know we are a part of the Kingdom w the King that will never fail? I can (and will) give you an explanation, but let me show you first…
These photos are a collage of experiences and ppl who our mission team met with on our journey to India. Each person in these photos has a story of conversion, how they came to faith in Jesus. Stories of destroying all their household Hindu idols, forsaking family, and becoming a part of a Bible Training Center (JN) at the risk of capture/arrest. In one of the most unreached states in India we held a graduation celebration and were promptly whisked away so the onlooking radical Hindu group did not start a riot. (*Opposite of what Westerners want to do, bring heat.*) In another state, close to the Pakistan border there is a little more freedom, but still the house churches face persecution for gathering in the name of Jesus. In one of the modern cities in N. India where we celebrated the 17th anniversary of an Int'l church, a group of women serve the Lord faithfully, but none of them are married bc there are no Christian men…they refuse to bend on their convictions. This is giving up your life to follow Christ. I'm not trying to do a comparative study of who has it worse, it's the reality that the global church faces. **These are not "those ppl over there"** they are our bros/sis in Christ living their lives like we do for the glory of God and the good of His Kingdom. Worldly kingdoms have historically set up structures and systems for the enemy to use, trying to stop the spread of the gospel to the nations. But as gold is refined in fire, so is the expanse of the Kingdom of God. The message of Daniel is about the refinement of God's ppl, so the faithful remnant will reveal to the nations how good the Most High God really is. But again, why? Who would fight for such a suffering Kingdom? Those with hope. Those of us who know of the future hope that was sealed in Christ's victory. **1 Corinthians 15:20-24**–*death came thru one man, life thru another; but each in the proper time*. **v24**–then the end will come. When Jesus returns in all His glory for His bride, the Kingdom of God is complete. All earthly dominion, authority, and power will be defeated; and the current guarantee on our future hope is the resurrection of Christ. We have life today bc one man defeated death. We have a forever

King sitting on a forever throne and He is building His church thru you and I, His ppl, today, right now in OV and across the world in churches and ppl who cry out to Him in faith!

Rap: So, after 11 chapters of mystery, kingdoms, beasts, battles, visions, Daniel receives a personal promise that I believe applies to us today…**Daniel 12:13**–keep going. Rest. Be at peace, the Lord has you in His hands. Recall Daniel's journey, carried away as young man, served under multiple kings/empires. Witnessed political upheaval, persecution, visions that left him physically overwhelmed. Now God says, go your way, rest, you will stand in your allotted place in the end. There is no promise that Daniel will understand all of this, just that his earthly story is not the end. It continues. Resting/standing points to the future hope of resurrection, what we now know is in Christ, the firstfruits of resurrection. Those of us who belong to Christ have the same assurance of hope, grounded in the historical promise of יהוה. We don't know what tomorrow holds, how long trials and persecutions will last, or what our kids/grandkids will face. But we do know that our God reigns and that means something for today. So, remain faithful. Don't lose heart. In the end, you will rise and receive your inheritance. Your future hope is secured in the Son of Man. Go your way. Be faithful. Rest in Christ. Resurrection is coming. **LS**