

THE AGE OF EMPIRES

God's Plan for the Ages

A Study through Daniel Spring Series 2024

Text: Daniel 2:20-23; 2:31-48; 7:1-14

Daniel 2:20-23

*Daniel answered and said: “**Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.**”²¹ He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;²² he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.²³ To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king’s matter.”*

Daniel 2:31-48

“You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening.”³² The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze,³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.³⁴ As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.³⁶ “This was the dream.

*Now we will tell the king its interpretation.³⁷ You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory,³⁸ and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold.³⁹ Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.⁴⁰ And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these.⁴¹ And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay.⁴² And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle.⁴³ As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,⁴⁵ just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. **A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”***

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him.⁴⁷ 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.”⁴⁸ Then the king gave

Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel 7:1–14

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. ² Daniel declared, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. ³ And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.

⁴ The first was like a lion and had eagles’ wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. ⁵ And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, ‘Arise, devour much flesh.’ ⁶ After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. ⁷ After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. ⁸ I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

⁹ “As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. ¹⁰ A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. ¹¹ “I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. ¹³ “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. 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.

Introduction:

The story before us recounts the most significant revelation God has given His people about the future trajectory of all earthly governments He has appointed to rule over them (Dan. 2:31-49).

There are five things about the dream in Daniel 2 that we should note this morning: (1) The content of the dream has to do with God’s sovereign authority over all earthly kingdoms and governments, (2) the scope of the dream encompasses all earthly kingdoms and governments from Nebuchadnezzar’s time to the coming of Messiah’s kingdom, (3) the fulfillment of the dream is sure

because it has been ordained by God (Dan. 2:45), (4) the intent of the dream is to counsel pagan rulers to turn from idols (Hab. 2:18-20) and submit to God (Ps. 2:10-12), and (5) the implications of the dream should strengthen the resolve of God's people to live faithfully, attractively, confidently, joyfully, and redemptively for God in those kingdoms (Hab. 2:1-4).

With that in mind, let's listen in as Daniel explains the dream and its interpretation to Nebuchadnezzar and let's make sure we don't miss the implications that Daniel's interpretation has for us this morning.

I. **A Divine Revelation from an Omniscient God Whose Wisdom Never Fails (2:31-35)**

"You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening.³² The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze,³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.³⁴ As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.³⁶ "This was the dream.

- As Daniel recounts the content of the dream God sent to Nebuchadnezzar, he intends for us to see and recognize that this revelation was only available from God.
- The king needed wisdom that could not be found on earth and that was not available to anyone who did not have a relationship with the God who sent the dream.
- This God was YHWH and ***His wisdom was available to those of His servants who truly feared Him (Deut. 6:4-5) and who were faithful to remember and obey His Word (Deut. 6:6-9).***

A. The Content of the Dream: What Did the King See?

1. A colossal statue of a human image (2:31)
2. The statue divided into five sections made of materials of descending value and increasing hardness (2:32-33)
3. The statue smashed, pulverized, and completely removed by a supernatural stone (2:34-35)

4. The supernatural stone grown into a huge mountain that filled the whole earth (2:35c)

B. The Timing of the Dream: When Did the King See All of This?

- Nebuchadnezzar received this dream in the second year of his reign (2:1).
- He was a young and powerful king who had come to the throne by means of his strategic brilliance and military might.
- God was making the point that the whole reason this king had any standing at all was because God had given it to him (2:37)!

C. The Consequences of the Dream: Why Was the King So Fearful About This Dream?

- Nebuchadnezzar obviously believed the gods of Babylon were communicating something important to him, which is why he called for the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and Chaldeans to tell him the dream and its interpretation (2:1-3).
- Nebuchadnezzar clearly felt that the dream was communicating a bad omen since the statue was not just tumbled down and damaged by the supernatural stone – it was pulverized and totally removed.
- From Nebuchadnezzar’s viewpoint, he was troubled by what he considered a bad omen; but from a divine viewpoint, he was troubled because God was getting his attention!
- God wanted to humble this proud king, not harm him. And the reason God wanted to humble him was that He might bless him!

Note: Daniel is going to get a more intense version of this same dream almost sixty-five years later – long after Nebuchadnezzar’s death (7:1-14). As the demise and destruction of the empire represented by the head of gold approached, God gave Daniel a word of explanation (wisdom) for His people. In chapter 2, the dream was intended to give wisdom to the nations; in chapter 7 the vision was intended to give wisdom and comfort to God’s people.

II. An Authoritative Interpretation from an Omnipotent God Whose Purposes Are Never Thwarted (2:36-45)

A. God Rules Over the Kingdoms of the Earth (2:37-44)

1. He establishes their authority and appoints their rulers (2:37-38).
2. He ordains their order and their duration.
3. He sovereignly oversees their nature and activity to accomplish His divine purposes in human history.
4. He will hold them accountable for their sins against Him and for their oppression of His people (7:10-12).

B. His Kingdom Matters More (2:44-45)

Daniel concludes the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's vision by revealing that all the kingdoms and empires of the world are temporary! God Himself will establish and sustain His kingdom and it will never be overthrown, nor will it ever end!

1. The Establishing of an Eternal Kingdom (2:44a)

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people.

2. The Removal and Replacement of All Earthly Kingdoms (2:44b)

It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,

3. The Appearance and Role of a Majestic Stone (2:45)

just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this.

4. The Certainty of God's Sovereignty (2:45)

"The dream is certain and its interpretation is sure!"

III. A Stunning Response to a Sovereign God Who Protects and Promotes His Faithful Servants (2:46-49)

What happens next is almost unthinkable! The great and mighty king of Babylon arises from his throne and falls on his face before a young Hebrew captive named Daniel.

A. Praise to God for His Wisdom and Power (2:47)

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.”

B. Promotion and Honor of God’s Servant (2:48-49a)

Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.⁴⁹ Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon.

C. Preservation of God’s Servant (2:49b)

But Daniel remained at the king’s court. (Which is why he was not involved in the affairs that happen in chapter 3).

Conclusion: How should a chapter like this shape our belief and our behavior as we live in our own day and time?

1. Like Daniel, we must live faithfully before God.
2. Like Daniel, we must faithfully live out our faith before men in the kingdoms where God appoints us.
3. We must display our confidence in God regardless of what happens in those kingdoms.
4. We must live redemptively in those kingdoms.
5. We must graciously, boldly, and lovingly present the truth of the gospel of Christ’s kingdom to the citizens of those kingdoms.