

Daniel 2:31–49 (ESV)

31 “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. 49 Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king's court.

We return this morning to middle of chapter 2 of Daniel. Daniel is delivering on his promise to tell King Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of the dream he had.

This is the dream.

31 "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.

So the king knows when Daniel is done talking that Daniel **really did know** what the dream was that King Nebuchadnezzar had. Otherwise, the king would have had Daniel killed. What the king saw in his dream is relatively simple. He saw a great image. This word "image" is normally used to describe a statue. It is the same word as is used for the **statue** that the king builds in the next chapter.

Something made this statue frightening. Maybe it appeared to be alive? Who knows. But it scared the king, and I doubt he was easily frightened.

The image had 5 parts.

The head was **gold**.

It's midsection beginning from then neck and going down to the waist was made of **silver**. From there down to the knees was made of **bronze**. The rest of the legs were made of **iron**. And its feet were a mixture of **iron and pottery**.

Then a stone, supernaturally made, struck the image in the feet and broke it all up. Then the whole image was broken up until it was like dust that blew away. And like dust, the remnants of them disappeared. They were no longer in existence. Then the stone filled the earth.

Let's go to the interpretation. Verse 36b

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.

The first part is the easiest. The golden head is Nebuchadnezzar. He was technically a king of kings. He had conquered many other kings and he was king over them. But clearly there was a **heavenly King** over him. That seemed to be a concept whose implications were hard for the king to accept, just like it is for us. Now note the next phrase.

God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, 38 and into whose hand he has given

We probably **read** this **differently** than Nebuchadnezzar would have heard it. The **Jewish people** and the **Jewish territory** were just a thorn in the king's flesh. They were an irritating people who simply would not accept his rule. And sure, they had a god. Everybody had a god. Most places had lots of them. The king would have seen the Jewish god just like all the others. And he may not have placed much stock in **any** of them.

What Daniel says would be **mind blowing** to the King. Daniel is saying that it is **the Jewish God** who has done all this. The Jewish God had given the Jews into the King's hand, as well as the rest of his kingdom. We can rest assured that this is **NOT** how Nebuchadnezzar saw his world. Daniel was telling the king that there is **one God** and **He**, and **He alone** reigns supreme. He is not limited to a nation or a people. His existence is not dependent on people believing in Him. He exists and He does **what He wants to do, when** He wants to do it, **with whom** He wants to do it. He, in a word, reigns. And He reigns supreme over all men. What we think is irrelevant. He is in charge.

Our world has done an interesting thing with truth. They have made all truth, **personal** truth. Some would say that I am happy that you follow Jesus because that seems to make you happy. But the truth that makes **me** happy is **different** than yours. And both are good. Because truth is relative.

The problem with that thinking is that God does not exist **because you believe in Him**. God exists even if you know nothing about Him. Your belief or disbelief does not change His existence in the least. But for sure, on one real day in the future, your belief in this one true God (or lack of it) will determine your eternal destiny. We will all face the Son of God on that day, whether we believe in Him or not.

King Nebuchadnezzar was probably **ignorant** of the one true God. But that made little difference to what the one true God **did**. In the end, our belief never determines our reality. Our belief only changes us. It does not shape reality. Reality remains untouched and unchanged.

Also, we should consider that what Daniel told the king would have probably been seen as an insult to the king's pride. With what we see later, the king wanted to take credit **for his triumphs**, for his **accomplishments**. Don't we always want to take credit for those kinds of things? Daniel is telling the king that the King is simply a pawn in the hand of God. God set up his kingdom and He can tear it down whenever He wants.

We go on.

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.

Daniel is making his theology lesson even clearer for the king. This God is in charge of **everything**. Humans, beasts, birds, all of it. There aren't a bunch of gods with their own domain, some making the crops come up, others over the animal kingdom. No there is one God who reigns over everything.

And note that God did not **allow** the king to rule over them. He did not **foresee** that the king would rule over them. He **MADE** the king rule over them. Think about that just a little. Think of all the details that had to be covered to orchestrate such a thing. It is very impressive.

Now why is Nebuchadnezzar the **head of gold**?

We will notice something as we go down the body. The head is made out of the most valuable material. But it is not the strongest material. The iron is the strongest material, but it is the least valuable.

We have a couple of interesting clues. In verse 39 it says the next kingdom that arises will be inferior to Nebuchadnezzar's. But at the same time in verse 40 we see a kingdom strong as iron because iron destroys things. It seems like two things are being emphasized by the materials. **Value**- one metal is superior and one is inferior. And **strength to destroy**. Iron is emphasized because it is most effective at destruction.

I believe we are seeing two things. The **purity** of the **authority structure** and the **technology of weaponry and warfare**. We see the **authority** structure grow from **best to worst** and we see the **skill of warfare** and destruction go from **worst to best**.

Now let's look at what we already know of king Nebuchadnezzar. Who did the king consult when he decided to kill his mystic division? No one. He was a king

and, other than God's reign, he reigned supreme. He reigned with purity of authority. He did not need laws. His word was law.

Now, how does God reign? Does God ask man's counsel or permission in order to He make a decision? Of course not. He has absolute authority. And what is the law of God? Was it arrived at by a counsel of men? No. It is the spoken will of God. If Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is the **gold** kingdom, God's kingdom is the **platinum plus** Kingdom. God is perfect and the perfect law giver and the perfect law enforcer. That is **better** than gold.

But Nebuchadnezzar is as close as you get on this planet. He has ultimate imperfect power. His word is imperfect law. He imperfectly enforces it. But it reflects God's kingdom more than any others in its purity of authority.

Now think about this a little bit. Excluding the kings of Israel and Judah, where else in scripture do we see God intervene so much in the life and decisions of a heathen King? I do not know of any where God played an active role of **disciplining** and **shaping** a king's attitudes. Sometimes gentile kings were sent warnings of judgment by prophets. Sometimes they were punished for their sins. But we do not see God doing **discipline** on them like we see with Nebuchadnezzar. Why? What was so special about Nebuchadnezzar?

I think (and this is only an opinion) it is that God gave Nebuchadnezzar such raw authority, such pure power. What is the greatest weakness of that form of government? Is it not the human who wields that power. Absolute power in the hands of Christ will create the best government that can be had. It will be **absolutely perfect**. Because the ruler is sinless. The ruler is perfect. But in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, not so much.

I think it is highly likely that God was showing His mercy to those **under** king Nebuchadnezzar's rule. Since God created this kingdom, God was also going to intervene to keep the king in check. He was going to show the king that he did not have **absolute** authority. He, too, had to answer to a **higher** King. We will see this lesson being taught in the next few chapters. And the king, just like us, was a **slow learner**. God was not going to let the king get too big for his britches. This government God gave him had **requirements**. It is only God who deserved the glory. God would not share it with Nebuchadnezzar.

The other element of this gold head is that the warfare was limited. The Babylonians only had so much power to destroy. They were not the killing machine like the Roman government. They certainly did not have the military might of the US. They were the greatest military might of the time, but the methods were still crude.

Before we go to the next kingdoms, there are some important lessons to learn. **First** we see that all earthly kingdoms are controlled by God. This is not a new idea. God actually sets the land boundaries for nations, as well as everything else. So before we get too distraught about the outcome of the war in Ukraine, realize that it will work out to the exact effect God wants it to have.

Second, all political kingdoms have an “after this” until God ends it all with **His** kingdom. Just like when I worked for **companies**, I learned to expect they would be **purchased** and things would change. There would be an “after this” so it is true with kingdoms. If the Lord tarries, what will the USA be? We do not know. But God has it under control.

Third, the evolutionary model simply never holds when it comes to human history. In the early 1900 there were idealists expecting a utopic world due to the evolution of mankind. But scripture has it pegged. Kingdoms are declining from year to year. They have more political power but less morality, less submission to the highest authority. The governments represent the worst of humankind **more** and the desires of God **less and less**.

And **fourth**, the image that the King sees is a single statue. While the body parts differ in composition, they are still fundamentally a part of a single whole. These are human kingdoms. They are as flawed as the humans who run them. Sin is in the design flaw so they will never function well for long.

When a person makes wine, they must keep the forming wine from receiving oxygen. If too much oxygen reaches the grape juice, it will turn to vinegar. Sin is the oxygen in the wine of kingdoms. And there is no amount of laws that can keep sin at bay. It would be easy to come up with a government that would work **if everyone was good**. Anyone could come up with an effective one. But it is **impossible** to come up with one that will work forever when people are sinful. The kingdoms of mankind are all just one big flawed statue that is destined to fall one day at the hands of the eternal kingdom.

And **fifth**, we do not know how the king viewed his kingdom, except that he was very proud of his accomplishments. But how would you feel if you were told that in a short while your **family tree** will end? Your **family name** will end?

For Nebuchadnezzar this kingdom was like a family business. It was painstakingly built, piece by piece, with great effort and price. He probably wanted it to be a legacy forever. All his buildings. All his territory. All his excellent governing systems. All the things he worked for. And Daniel is telling them they are all **exceedingly transient**. That had to be a blow.

Do you realize that in 200 years from now, if Christ does not return, no one on earth will be regularly thinking about you. You might show up in an ancestry chart. Your name might be mentioned. Maybe, if you documented it in the right place, your story might be read. Maybe something you wrote will be read. But the human tribute we receive by the few people in our lives who regularly think about us will be gone. The money you earned will all be gone. Your accomplishments will be a distant bit of unwritten history. Solomon recognized that. The only thing we can do that will **last** is store up **treasures in heaven**. We can invest our lives in **that which God will reward us for**. And for the most part that means **investing in the lives of others**. Nebuchadnezzar did not believe that. But God was going to teach him a thing or two about that soon.

39 Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you

This is the silver kingdom. And it is inferior? How so? Do you remember how the politicians in Babylon got king Darius to do his bidding? They got him to write down a law. Once the king wrote down the law, the king himself was not able to change it. There was a breakdown in the authority structure. The rule of law took precedence over the rule of the King. While we regard this as a very good thing in a wicked world, it still represents a less pure form of government. The king does not have absolute authority.

So Darius and the Medes and Persians is the most likely body of silver.

39 ... and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.

This was more than likely the Grecian empire formed by Alexander the great. As an aside here, I want to point out one more time that we must be very careful how we apply our understanding of the word "all". We should always limit it by its context. The context is referring to Kingdoms in their known world. This does not mean that there were not places in the world, like North America, that were not under the reign of these kingdoms.

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.

Most scholars believe that this is referring to the Roman government. The Roman Military was an incredible war machine.

Others believe that it was the kingdoms of **Ptolemy Lagus**, who was one of Alexander's generals. He reigned in Egypt. Octavius Caesar conquered his land.

And **Seleucus Nicator**, another of Alexander's generals who reigned in Syria. Pompey conquered his land.

So both ended up making up Rome.

Whatever the case, all kingdoms mentioned were extremely violent.

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.

Those who hold to a futurist view of Revelation believe that this is a revived Roman empire. Many believe that the European Common Market years ago, which is now the European Union, is the revived Roman Empire. They would say the unity of those countries is very weak, but they have great military might. They believe that Daniel 7 describes the same kingdom in greater detail. Rev 12, 13 and 17 also refers to 10 horns which are 10 kings. They think that there will be 13 countries in the EU that consolidate into 10 and the anti-christ will come out on one of those countries.

Those who take other views of Revelation believe all kinds of things. But most common is that the 10 toes are simply Rome at some point in the future when Daniel was written.

It looks to me like the mixture of iron and clay means that politically this will be the weakest kingdom so far. It will be held together by agreements. That is the clay. Their politically arranged marriage where one country gives up something to get something will not be stable. The old Roman government was a Republic that had many such elements in it. The EU most assuredly has weak alliances.

I think the iron is the power to make war that these countries hold. They have a great deal of military power now but if this passage is speaking of the future, I look for their **capacity to inflict destruction** to grow greatly in the coming years. Now it is incredible that Daniel could have made this prophecy in **600 bc** for kingdoms that would come for nearly a thousand years to come, and maybe more. Many scholars seek to **discredit Daniel** as being a book written well after **it claims** to have been written. And the biggest argument is that it could **not** have been **written then** because it could not have so accurately described the future. That is a problem for a secular scholar because the assumption is all that exists is here and now. But it is easy for us to believe, because the Bible declares itself to be a book inspired by God. The book came from outside of here and now. It was

supernaturally provided outside of the abilities of man. So yeah, it can and does predict the future accurately when God wants it to.

Rather than go on to the rock that destroys all other kingdoms, I would like to stop here and we will take that up next week, Lord willing.

I think the biggest takeaway from this morning's passage is for us to consider this truth, that there is a God and that God is in charge. Just like all the other parties in the Mystic division in Babylon, our world has all kinds of opinions about God. There are many religions. There are many voices expressing many ideas. There are many claiming to have the corner on the market on truth. But just like in Daniel's day, there is still only one true God. And God proves Himself by doing that which none of the false gods can do.

And our God does not change at all according to **how many people** believe in Him or how many **do not**. At the end of time it will be Christ, and Christ alone that we stand before in judgment. All mouths will be stopped on that day. And there will only be one thing that matters. Did you **trust in Christ** and work He did for you on that cross 2000 years ago to save you from your sin? Did you **believe in Christ**? Did you **give all that you know of yourself to all that you know of God**? Did you surrender to King Jesus in this life?

With all the clatter of voices in our world,

With all the skeptics mocking our God.

With those who flippantly use His name as if it holds no power at all, as if there is no one behind it.

With all the religions, including religions saying there is no god at all.

With all that, there is coming a day when there will be perfect and absolute clarity for every human being.

Every knee will bow to Daniel's God, the only God, who, among all the religious voices, could tell King Nebuchadnezzar what the future holds.