

IN EXILE

"WHAT DREAMS MAY COME"

DANIEL 2:1-48

This Week's Core Competency

Eternity – I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish his eternal kingdom. John 14:1-4 *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.*

Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's interpretation of it are closely linked to the gospel that Jesus preaches and his relationship to it. Jesus preaches the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near" (Mt 4:17); "kingdom of heaven" appears 31 times in Matthew. The same message is referred to by the synonymous expression "the kingdom of God" found in Mark and Luke (Mk 1:15; Luke 4:43); "kingdom of God" appears 15 times in Mark and 32 times in Luke. It's the same kingdom. Matthew, however, prefers the expression "kingdom of heaven" over "kingdom of God" because as a Jew writing to Jews he exhibits the Jewish reverential reluctance to refer to God directly. Contrary to what many might assume, the kingdom of heaven in Jesus' preaching does not refer to *heaven* or to God's rule *in heaven* or *from heaven*. It refers to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth ruled over by the son of David (Mt 1:1; 2:1-6). It's called the kingdom "of heaven" because it's the kingdom

Jesus believed He Himself would come in glory, judge the nations, and assert His own political rule of them.

– Craig A. Blaising

established on earth by the God of heaven.

The Gospel writers are careful to connect the coming of Jesus to the coming of that kingdom. The angel who announced the birth of Jesus told Mary that God would give her son, Jesus, "the *throne* of his father David, and he will reign over the *house* of Jacob forever; his *kingdom* will never end" (Lk 1:32-33). Gabriel's mention of "throne," "house," and "kingdom," is reminiscent of the promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7:16: "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." One author claims: "Being familiar with the history of the Israelite monarchy and the Old Testament prophecies about the messianic kingdom, Mary could only have understood these words as announcing the coming of the prophesied kingdom" (Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 82).

And while many contend that the kingdom is exclusively "spiritual," i.e., that it is essentially moral and spiritual rather than political and national, and/or that it is solely Christ's rule from heaven over his people now, Jesus believed that as the Messiah, he would come in glory, judge the nations, and assert his own political rule over them in the future. He tells his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the *kingdom* prepared for you since the creation of the world' . . . Then he will also say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels' . . . Then they will go away to eternal

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punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (Mt 25:31-34, 41, 46). The nationalistic traits of the kingdom should not be purged away for the sake of the spiritual traits. Christ's kingdom is *both* national and spiritual.

The kingdom the Gospel writers envision is the kingdom that God reveals to Nebuchadnezzar in his famous dream—a dream none of the king's "magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers" (Da 2:2) can interpret, only Daniel. In that dream God shows Nebuchadnezzar "what will happen in days to come" (v. 28) as the sleeping king's thoughts turn to "things to come" (v. 29; cf., Lk 21:24). In a nutshell, Daniel tells him that three Gentile kingdoms will follow Nebuchadnezzar's, and then the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed nor left to another people (v. 44). Daniel tells him: "While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth" (vv. 34-35). And then Daniel goes on to explain that the rock represents the kingdom that the God of heaven will set up, which will crush all existing kingdoms and bring them to an end (v. 44).

According to Daniel's subsequent night vision recorded in chapter 7, the coming of the kingdom follows the coming of "one like a son of man." About what he saw, Daniel says: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (vv.13-14). Keeping in mind that "Son of Man" was Jesus' favorite epithet for himself, consider what one commentator writes: "'Son of Man' was a title applied by Daniel to the one who would rule the eschatological kingdom (Dan 7:13). Jesus clearly uses it in this sense . . . 'Son of Man' sayings by Jesus affirm His belief in a coming kingdom consistent with the prophecies of Daniel, and they demonstrate that He thought of Himself as the central figure. Jesus believed He Himself would come in glory, judge the nations, and assert His own political rule of them (Matt. 25:31-46)" (Darrell L. Bock and Craig A. Blaising, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 236).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Read Daniel 2:1-48

31 "You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. 32 The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. 34 While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

36 "This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. 37 You, O king, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; 38 in your hands he has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

39 "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to

yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. 40 Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. 41 Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. 42 As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. 43 And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

44 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. 45 This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

"The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle the constituent metals of the statue in vv. 31-35.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 34, 35, 44.
- * Highlight "but not by human hands" in vv. 34, 45.
- * Box "like" indicating *comparison* in v. 35.
- * Circle "mountain" in v. 35.
- * Underline "another kingdom," "third kingdom," "fourth kingdom" and "a kingdom" in vv. 39-40, 44.
- * Box "as," "so," "just as," and "even as" indicating comparison in vv. 40-43.
- * Circle "those kings" in v. 44.
- * Bracket "of heaven" in v. 44.
- * Circle "kingdom" in v. 44.

day 2 EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Nebuchadnezzar's dream contains a *static* element. Identify it.
2. It also contains a *dynamic* element. Identify it.
3. Interpret what the distinguishable parts of the statue represent.
4. What do you infer from the different metals in the statue moving from head to tow?
5. Identify the three kingdoms to rule the whole earth following Babylon.
6. Explain the meaning of the *metaphor* "mountain" in verse 35.
7. Identify and explain the *comparisons* used to describe the fourth kingdom (vv. 40-43).
8. Identify the *fifth* kingdom and distinguish it from the previous four.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about what is signified by the fact that the rock, which becomes a huge mountain, is "cut out but not by human hands."

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2:1-48 is about God. This is evident from Daniel's prayer and praise in verses 20-23; moreover, the entire narrative echoes poems in Isaiah that highlight the wisdom and knowledge of Israel's sovereign God over that of the nations' idols (41:21-29; 45:19; 46:13-14; 48:5-6, 16). According to the prophet, it is the LORD:

"who foils the signs of false prophets
and makes fools of diviners,
who overthrows the learning of the wise
and turns it into nonsense,
who carries out the words of his servants
and fulfills the predictions of his messengers."
(44:25-26)

It's about Daniel. One commentator writes: "Daniel's godly living in the Babylonian exile served as an example for Jews living in a foreign culture in the literature of the later Jewish Diaspora (e.g., Tobit, Judith; Cf. Longman, 62-69, on the application of Daniel's example to the relationship between faith and culture for the contemporary Christian). But Humphreys, 221, correctly observes that in ch. 2 'the God of Daniel is the central figure and not the courtier'" (Andrew E. Hill, "Daniel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2nd ed., 8:58).

It's also about the dream and its interpretation. Four Gentile nations will rule the world during the "times of the Gentiles" (Lk 21:24), which extend from the Babylonian captivity until God establishes his kingdom on the earth.

The plot of the story unfolds according to the typical narrative pattern. First, the storyteller sets the stage for the action that follows. With regard to the story he tells in chapter two, he merely has to update the *chronological* setting, since he has already described the *geographical* and *cultural* settings in chapter one, and the major characters remain the same. It's now the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (2:1a).

Second, he describes the incident that incites the action. In the story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, it's the king's troubling dreams, one of which prompts him to summon his advisors, whom one commentator describes as "'professionals' trained in the literature and lore of the Babylonians—especially divination and other magical arts . . . Collectively these experts 'were the political consultants, trend spotters, and religious gurus of the day'" (Andrew E. Hill, "Daniel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2nd ed., 8:60). Standing before him, the king tells

them, "I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means" (v. 3).

Third, he describes how the plot thickens as the story builds and gets more exciting. This he does in verses 4-13. The king's counselors say to him, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it" (v. 5). But the king refuses; he insists that they tell him the dream first then interpret it. And if they do not, he threatens to cut them into pieces and to turn their houses into piles of rubble (v. 5). Again they reply, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it," which leaves Nebuchadnezzar convinced that they're stalling for time (vv. 7-8). As tensions rise, his astrologers accuse their boss of demanding the impossible. "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks. No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men" (vv. 10-11). Their hyperbolic protests do two things. They push the king over the edge, making him so angry that he orders their execution, and they prepare the way for Daniel to do what is humanly impossible.

Fourth, he describes the moment of greatest tension in the story. This he does in verses 14-16. The plot reaches its climax when the king issues a decree sentencing the wise men to death and commissions Arioch, commander of the king's guard, to execute it. It's at this point that Daniel is first mentioned, introducing hope into a seemingly hopeless situation. He goes to the king and asks for time to interpret the dream, which the king grants. Clearly a sovereign God continues to bestow favor on the Hebrew captive in his encounters with his Babylonian overlords.

Fifth, he describes how the story winds down to its conclusion, detailing the resolution of the original conflict. This he does in verses 17-27. After his audience with the king, Daniel returns home where he urges his friends to plead for mercy from God. Implicit in their prayer is a plea for God to reveal the dream and its interpretation, so that they might escape execution; God grants their request in a night vision (v. 19). Once they know the dream and its interpretation, Daniel goes to Arioch, who takes him to the king (vv. 24-25), whom he assures that God can interpret his dream. "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in

heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in *days to come*" (vv. 27-28).

Sixth, he describes how the conflict introduced at the beginning of the story is resolved. This he does in verses 29-45. He begins by telling the king his dream (vv. 31-35) and then going on to interpret it (vv. 36-45). In his dream the king sees an awesome statue, parts of which are made of different metals—a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly of bronze, legs of iron with feet of iron mixed with baked clay. These are the *static* elements in the dream. The king also sees a rock cut out and propelled toward the statue by divine hands, which reduces the whole statue to dust then dispersed by the wind. The rock then becomes a huge mountain filling the whole earth. This is the *dynamic* element in the dream. The point of the dream is, of course, that God will establish his

kingdom on earth following three Gentile kingdoms that rule the world after Babylon (605-539 B.C.), each inferior, perhaps morally or politically, to its predecessor: Media-Persia (from 539 B.C.), Greece (from 331 B.C.), and Rome (from 63 B.C.). According to the prophet, "In the time of those kings," i.e., those represented by the toes of the statue, "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people" (v. 44). That kingdom lies in the future for Daniel as it does for us (Mt 24:30; 25:31; Rev 19:11-16; 20:1-4).

Finally, he describes the outcome of the story (i.e., the *denouement*). This he does in verses 46-48. In the end, Nebuchadnezzar recognizes Daniel's God to be "God of gods and Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries" (v. 47). Moreover, he elevates Daniel and his friends to prominent positions in his kingdom.

The Message of the Passage

Knowing that your sovereign God will establish his kingdom on earth in days to come will empower you to live wisely in a secular, unsympathetic, even hostile, culture in the meantime.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 *living questions* to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living questions*:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **second year** "The events related in this chapter happened in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. According to several reliable scholars, Nebuchadnezzar officially became king on September 7, 605 B.C. On the first of Nisan, 604 B.C., the following spring, the first official year of his reign began. The intervening months constituted his accession year and were credited to his father's reign. The first year of his reign then ended on the first of Nisan the following year, 603 B.C. The second year of his reign (v. 1) began in 603 and ended in 602 B.C." (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Daniel," 2017 ed., 25, www.soniclight.com). "Hebrew usage, which reckoned fractions of a year as a full year, would have referred to this as the king's third year, and 'three years' (1:5) would have been said to have been completed (cf. Matt. 12:40)" (Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, TOTC, 95; contra., Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 48-50). Miller demonstrates how Daniel could have finished a three-year training program by Nebuchadnezzar's second year (Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, NAC, 76-77).

vv. 32-33 **gold, silver . . .** "The head was of fine gold. Its chest and arms were silver. Its abdomen and thighs were bronze. Its lower legs were iron, and its feet were a combination of iron and clay. Archaeologists have discovered similar images made of several types of precious metals in Babylonia. Several features are noteworthy. First, the head is the only member of the body made of only one metal. All the other parts had more than one substance with the exception of the arms. For example, the upper torso was silver but bronze lower down. The same was true of the legs and feet. Second, there is a consistently decreasing value to the substances beginning at the top and proceeding to the bottom of the image. Third, the image was top-heavy. The specific gravity of gold is about 19, silver about 11, brass about 8.5, and iron 7.8. Fourth, the substances progress from the softest to the hardest, top to bottom. The feet are a non-adhering combination of very hard and hard but fragile materials. The clay in view may have been baked clay that the Babylonians used as tiles in construction projects" (Constable, 35).

vv. 34, 45 **not by human hands** "Signifying supernatural activity . . . This kingdom is established by God, rather than by men, as signified by the symbolic destroying stone being 'cut out of the mountain without hands" (Wood, 66, 72). The stone is "divinely prepared and propelled to accomplish the divine plan" (Baldwin, 104).

v. 35 **mountain** "In biblical imagery, a mountain is often a metaphor for a kingdom (see Ps 48:2; Is. 2:2; 11:9; Jer. 52:25; Ezek. 20:40; Zech. 8:3). The same is true in this case, as the later interpretation makes clear (v. 44)" (*The Nelson Study Bible*, note on Da 2:35).

v. 39 **another kingdom** "The identity of the first kingdom is clearly Babylon. The identification of the following three kingdoms is disputed. The common view is that they represent Media, Persia, and Greece. Most conservative scholars identify them as Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome" (The NET Bible, 59^{sn} on Da 2:39). The first identification is often labeled the Greek view and the second identification the Roman view (see Hill, 8:69).

v. 44 **the days of those kings** "Those kings" evidently refers to the 10 kings represented by the 10 toes. They are quite clearly contemporaneous with one another, not sequential rulers. God's kingdom, the mountain of verse 35, will fill the earth and will last forever (cf. 2 Sam. 7:16). It will never suffer destruction or be succeeded by another kingdom, as all the preceding kingdoms had. It will begin with the Millennium and continue forever in the Eternal State" (Constable, 42-43). "The God of heaven will work out his sure purpose to set up a lasting kingdom in the days of those kings; the expression is vague, for no kings have been mentioned since Nebuchadnezzar, but it is natural to assume that the writer intends the kings of the last-mentioned kingdom" (Baldwin, 104). "The time of those kings may refer to the four empires or, more likely, it refers to the time of the 10 [presumably] toes (v. 42) since the first four kingdoms were not in existence at the same time as apparently the toes will be (cf. comments on the 10 horns of the fourth beast, 7:24) (J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 1336).

v. 44 **kingdom** "Not only Daniel 7, but parallel passages leave us in no doubt that this fifth realm is the kingdom of God, ruled over by Christ and enduring eternally, even after its earthly, millennial phase is over" (Gleason L. Archer, Jr., "Daniel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 7:48).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

I love Daniel's first response when he received bad news. King Nebuchadnezzar had a disturbing dream. He insisted the wise men interpret his dream without him even telling them what it was about! No one could do this! When Daniel learned that he and all the wise men's lives were in danger because no one could tell the king his dream, he immediately enlisted some friends and went to God in prayer. Daniel knew that what the king asked was impossible. He also knew that with God, all things are possible (Matthew 19:26). Rather than trying to manipulate circumstances or trying to find a way to escape, Daniel approached his problem with his most effective weapon—prayer. And he didn't pray alone, he recruited some godly friends to pray with him. I wonder what our kids are learning from our prayer lives. Do they see us running to God first? Do they see us calling on our brothers and sisters in Christ to pray earnestly with and for us? Do our prayer habits teach our kids how to pray? God is waiting for us to come to Him in prayer. He is a personal God who cares about the crisis in our lives. He also cares about the little things. God answered Daniel and his friend's prayer and revealed the king's dream and its meaning to him. What prayer is he waiting to answer for you and your family?

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Daniel 2

1. Why couldn't King Nebuchadnezzar sleep?
2. Were the magicians able to tell the king his dream?
3. How did Daniel know what the king's dream meant?

What Do You Think

1. If you were in Daniel's place, how would you have felt when you heard the king's decision to kill all the wise men?
2. Who do you turn to first when you are having a hard time?

What R U Going To Do

God gave King Nebuchadnezzar the dream of the statue to show him that He knows the future and controls all things. Draw a picture of what you think the statue looked like and bring it to church for 3 extra tokens.

Core Comp

Personal God - I believe cares about everything in my life.

Memory Verse

Philippians 3:19b-20 – *Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.*

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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