

Daniel 2

His Kingdom Shall Reign

Americans are a strange bunch. On one hand we're very focused on living for today. Our national savings rate is a negative figure. As a people we actually spend more than we make and few save. On the other hand psychics are a multi billion dollar industry.

We don't want to plan for the future but we're interested in knowing the future. We're willing to take a chunk of that money we should be saving and spend it to find out what's going to happen. And even though these psychic hot lines are as phony as can be Americans still spend their hard earned cash to try and find out their future.

In reality this live for today-but worry about tomorrow attitude didn't originate with us here in the 21st century. In fact as far back as the 7th century BC there was a king who suffered from the same weakness.

Turn with me to Daniel 2 pg 856

The time was 603 BC. The most powerful nation on earth was Babylon and it's ruler was Nebuchadnezzar. The Assyrians were now wiped out. The Egyptians had been decimated and three years earlier Nebuchadnezzar had extended his control eastward to Jerusalem. Daniel was a teenager at the time living in Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar came against it.

Daniel and many Jews were taken as captives back to Babylon, but Daniel was chosen out with a number of others to be trained to serve in Nebuchadnezzar's court. He's now been through 3 years of education and instruction. He's learned the wisdom of his Babylonian teachers. God has blessed him greatly for his refusal to give up his Jewish faith.

What's so exciting is that even in the capture of Jerusalem the sovereign Lord of the universe was working out His plan. God was in control. God is always in control.

And yet, Though God is Sovereign and in Total Control of History, He has Chosen to Work Through Frail, Finite Human Beings **Read vs 1**

The Babylonians did not count the first year of a king's reign as year one. It was

called “The Year of Accession” (ak-sRshlōn). Nebuchadnezzar was now three years into his reign which meant that Daniel was finished with his studies and had a position in the royal court.

But Nebuchadnezzar had a troubling dream that seemed to repeat itself. Here was a man who was ruler of the world, secure on his throne, with all his enemies subdued or in captivity. You’d think a guy who had it all would sleep well. But I believe Nebuchadnezzar was worried about the future.

What’s going to happen when I die? What does the future hold? What’s that number for the psychic hot line? Well God chose to give Nebuchadnezzar the answer to his question in a dream. Not so that He could bless Nebuchadnezzar, but so that He might glorify his own name.

Read 2-4

King Nebuchadnezzar was in a bad mood when he called his wise men. His dream troubled him so greatly he could not sleep afterward. Two things caused the king such distress over his dream. First, he believed his dream was very important. In his culture and religion, dreams were a means of revelation from the gods. He wanted to know what the gods were trying to tell him.

Secondly, like the Pharaoh of Joseph’s day who did not understand his dream, there was an ominous sense that something was wrong. Because he didn’t understand the meaning of his dream, he did not know what was wrong, or what he should do about it.

Nebuchadnezzar’s brain trust was made up of 4 different groups: the *magicians*, who were fortune tellers; the *astrologers*, who were stargazers; the *sorcerers*, who were the spiritualists and enchanters; and the *Chaldeans*.

The Chaldeans were the leading group who were looked upon as the wisest of the wise. They were supposedly the wisest and most knowledgeable in all the arts and sciences of Chaldea (which was another name for Babylon).

So the king gathered the best in human wisdom, scholarship, and occultism. They say, “Tell us your dream and we’ll interpret it. No problem.”

Just one thing. **Read vs 5-9**

Uh oh! These guys are shocked. In the next verses they say only the gods could answer the kings request.

Though God is Sovereign and in Total Control of History, He has Chosen to Work Through Frail, Finite Human Beings Satan has a plan. He's the master of death and destruction and what happens next seems to play right into his hands.

Read vs 12-13

Satan's plan was to wipe out any godly influence including Daniel. Especially Daniel. Satan wanted the godly Jews wiped off the face of the earth and the rest assimilated into the surrounding Gentile nations. Satan's plan was to destroy the messianic line through whom Christ would come.

But remember, God is Sovereign and in Total Control of History. Ps 76:10
"Surely the wrath of man shall praise you..."

Read vs 14-16

Though God is Sovereign and in Total Control of History, He has Chosen to Work Through Frail, Finite Human Beings In this case it's Nebuchadnezzar. His anger brings Daniel into the picture. Suddenly it's clear. This is God's plan.

I. *Though God is Sovereign and in Total Control of History, He has Chosen to Work Through Frail, Finite Human Beings*

II. *Though God is Sovereign and in Total Control of History, He has Chosen to Work Through the Prayers of His People*

Read vs 17-19

Gene Getz writes, "That the sovereign God responds to our prayers is an extension of this divine mystery. When we pray it makes a difference." Dick Eastman states, "Somehow, the simple act of prayer links the sovereign God to a finite man. When man prays, God responds. difficult situations change. Unexpected miracles occur."

We're not told how much time Nebuchadnezzar gave Daniel but I have to believe it wasn't long. these young men were living on borrowed time.

Daniel used the time so well. He didn't plot his escape. He didn't hold a conference with all the wise men. He said, "Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, come, we need to pray, "plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery". Four young men, four Old Testament believers, a long way from home, went down on their knees and laid out their predicament before God.

Now, I'll be the first to admit that prayer is a mystery to me. Mt 6:8 ...*your Father knows the things you have need of, before you ask him.* Obviously prayer isn't designed to let God in on what's happening.

At the same time James 5:16 informs us *The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

God is sovereign but prayer makes things happen. How does it all work? I don't know. Just let me give you this word of warning. If your theology causes you to disobey God something is wrong with your theology.

If your theology of the sovereignty of God causes you to pray less because you think it doesn't really matter your theology is warped!

Daniel's first response was to pray. Then he followed up with praise in verses 20-23. Counting nouns and pronouns Daniel referred to the Lord 13 times in 4 verses.

There's no question the value he put on prayer. The only question is what value do you and I put on prayer.

I. Though God is Sovereign and in Total Control of History, He has Chosen to Work Through Frail, Finite Human Beings

II. Though God is Sovereign and in Total Control of History, He has Chosen to Work Through the Prayers of His People

III. Because God is Sovereign and in Total Control of History, His Kingdom Shall Reign Over all the Earth

Daniel is now brought into the throne room of the king. He stands before the man who has the power of life and death. He is respectful, courteous , and gracious. But at the same time he's bold.

Read vs 27-28

Daniel informs Nebuchadnezzar that only God knows what the future holds and He is the only trustworthy guide for the future. Now here's the rub.

Nebuchadnezzar's king of the world here. The Babylonian gods: Bel, Marduk, Aku, Nebo were the ones who brought him victory. This Jehovah of the Hebrews was just another second rate deity who couldn't stand against the power of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had taken the vessels out of the temple in Jerusalem.

Now Daniel sees what's happening. The true and living God is bringing all this to pass in order to bring glory to himself. He wanted Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel and all the Jews to know that He was in control.

Look back at vs 20 which is in the midst of Daniel's praise to God. **Read vs 20-21**

We're going to look at all kinds of prophecy in this book. We're going to see the content of people's visions and dreams. Some of it will be clear and some will be hard to understand. But one thing is going to stand out: God is in control of this world. God has a prophetic plan for this world that culminates in His kingdom and the kings, dictators, and presidents are raised up and brought down for His purposes.

History is His story.

What has Nebuchadnezzar seen in his dream? **Read vs 31-35**

Nebuchadnezzar must have been spellbound as this teenager from Judah told him the details of his dream. That was it exactly. But now what did it mean?

Read vs 36-43

Now what about this dream? There are two basic questions we need to answer.

First; Isn't a little strange for God to speak in a dream? It almost sounds occultish.

Well there are several occasions in Scripture where God is said to use dreams.

He spoke to Joseph, Abimelech, Solomon, Pharoah in dreams. What we need to remember is that the number of times God is said to speak in a dream are very few. Compared to the totality of Biblical history God used few dreams. Not only that, but when God has spoken through dreams it has always been during periods of revelation.

Today we don't look for God to speak through dreams because we live in a time of completed revelation. God has given us His complete and finished revelation in the Bible. In fact, it's been completed since 96 AD.

The second question is: What does the dream mean?

We aren't kept in the dark about Daniel's prophecies. Along with the dream comes the interpretation. According to verse 28 this has to do with the "latter days." Nebuchadnezzar's dream foreshadowed 4 world empires.

What was happening was this. Israel, God's own people, except for a remnant, had literally pushed him aside. They had said, "We don't want you to rule over us." So God allowed pagan Gentile rulers and kingdoms to move into center stage. The focus of influence moved from Jerusalem to Babylon and a time began known as "the times of the Gentiles."

Jesus spoke of this in Luke 21:24 ... *Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.* Then the next thing that happens is the second coming of Christ.

The statue represents four world empires. Kingdoms that have authority to rule the world. Daniel interprets the dream about these kingdoms.

The head of the image is made of gold. We're told right here that this represents Nebuchadnezzar.

The chest and arms of the image are made of silver. That kingdom is not named here, but it is in chapter 8. This is the Medio-Persian Empire which follows the Babylonian Empire.

The belly and thighs of the image are made of bronze. this part of the image is also named in chapter 8. This is Greece.

But, there's one more kingdom. A fourth kingdom. It has legs of iron and feet of iron mixed with clay. This one is not named.

The common interpretation of this image assigns the legs to the Roman empire and the feet to a revived Roman empire in the last days. In fact 995 of the commentaries you read take this view.

I have a great respect for biblical scholars who study passages and come to conclusions. I tread very lightly when the majority of them over time have come to the same conclusion. But this time I have to differ with the majority. Remember, where is the city of Babylon located today? Iraq

Think about this. Babylon existed since the days of Nimrod in Genesis 10 but it wasn't until Nebuchadnezzar made Babylon the center of a world empire that it mattered prophetically.

The Medes and Persians had a long history but it wasn't until Cyrus made Babylon the center of his rule that the second kingdom of prophecy appeared.

The Grecian states had been developing for centuries before Alexander but prophecy takes no account of this. It wasn't until Alexander made Babylon his world-center that the third kingdom of prophecy became present. Alexander died in Babylon.

With that in mind, what would you think would be the identifying mark of the fourth kingdom?

See, we're not interested in every kingdom that's significant *politically*. We're interested in every kingdom that's significant *prophetically*.

The prophetic significance revolves around Babylon. And as far as Rome goes not only was there never a time when Babylon was it's capital, Rome never even controlled Babylon at the height of its power.

I believe without question that Rome has nothing to do with Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The fourth kingdom hasn't risen yet. The fourth kingdom will be centered in the middle east with it's head in the rebuilt city of Babylon.

Now, I don't think that Saddam Hussein is the anti-Christ but isn't it interesting that Saddam Hussein has committed himself to rebuilding Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. He has spent millions trying to restore the glories of the ancient city. If you saw the video a few Sunday evenings ago with Charlie Dyer he showed pictures of what Hussien is doing there.

Sadam Hussein sees himself as the successor to Nebuchadnezzar's greatness. He's even minted coins with his image imposed over Nebuchadnezzar's.

God's prophetic center is not in Europe. It's in the Middle East. God has clearly defined future plans for Israel and for Babylon. Isaiah and Jeremiah spell out the complete and total destruction of Babylon. Revelation 17 and 18 put that destruction in the last days just before the return of Christ to set up His kingdom. That hasn't happened yet because the final kingdom hasn't been established.

But now notice, something happens to the image. **Read vs 44-45**

Verse 44 tells us this will happen in "the days of these kings." The toes of the image correspond to 10 rulers mentioned in Revelation 17 and Daniel 7. During this last kingdom there will be a confederation of 10 nations with a leader known as the Anti-Christ at its head.

The "times of the Gentiles" not only had a beginning, they have an end. A stone, cut without hands is going to crush the kingdom centered in Babylon. And God will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.

Who is the stone? Over 14 times in Scripture The Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as the stone. He is the rock that was smitten, pointing to His death on the cross. He's the "stumbling stone" and the "rock of offence" because His message of salvation by faith causes people to stumble over it's simplicity. He's called "the chief cornerstone" because He's the foundation of the church.

Daniel pictures him as the smiting stone. He came to destroy the kingdoms of this world. Unlike other kingdoms, the earthly Kingdom that God establishes through Christ will never be destroyed, or fade away and be taken over by another people. On the contrary, it will consume every kingdom as well as the remnants of the past kingdoms.

Now, some people have actually taught that this is the church. That's foolish. This can't be the church. The church didn't bring a dramatic end to anything. There's no evidence at all for that. You will also note that the stone of God's Kingdom came and smashed the image and it blew away like dust and the stone filled the earth. The church didn't cataclysmically destroy all the nations of the earth. The church didn't end the times of the Gentiles. There's one more kingdom to come.

The Kingdom of God in Daniel 2 cannot be the church, because the church has never overcome Gentile world power and it never will. The church didn't come and instantaneously fill the whole earth and take over. It grows quietly and inconspicuously, not violently with destruction.

Daniel is referring to a literal, physical, earthly Kingdom that God sets up as the times of the Gentiles ends.

In fact, it is a physical Kingdom that you can read all about in the Old Testament. It's referred to hundreds of times. The Old Testament says that Jerusalem will be rebuilt, Israel will be restored to the land, the curse will be lifted, there will be an abundance of food, there will be health as well as healing where needed, there will be a high birth rate, the topography will change, a new Temple will be built, and so on. These elements indicate a literal, physical Kingdom. It certainly will have a spiritual reality to it, but it will exist in the physical realm.

Now look at Nebuchadnezzar's response. **Read vs 46**

He doesn't know Daniel's God, so he figures the only way to get to Him is through Daniel. This is just a temporary response, as we'll see in the next chapter but it prefigures what will happen at the culmination of history. Everyone, even the high and mighty, will be on their faces awestruck by the power and glory of God.

Isaiah has a lot to say about the kingdom that's coming. **Turn Isaiah 11:6-10 pg 665**

God is in control and His ultimate purpose is to exalt His Son so that all bow before Him in worship.

You know what I wonder? Why would anyone want to wait to worship the Lord Jesus Christ? Why would anyone knowingly reject Him now, just to be compelled to kneel before Him as their judge?

God's in control. He's working all things after the council of His own will. Listen to the prophet Isaiah one more time:

Isaiah 9:6-7 pg 663

You want to know what's going to happen? Don't call the Psychic Hotline, read God's Word. He'll tell you what did happen: Jesus Christ has come to die for sinners. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

He'll also tell you the future. The things which must shortly come to pass. Jesus Christ is coming again to tear down all that this world exalts and elevates, so that all that's left is God and His glory.

Philippians 2, speaking of Jesus says: *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

REV 11:15 *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*