

Survey of the Bible Daniel 2:23-49

The last time we were together we saw how Daniel was confronted with the proposition of losing his life, along with his friends and the entire company of wise men, if the King's dream was not revealed and interpreted.

Daniel immediately goes before the Lord and seeks His wisdom and understanding and subsequently receives the information from the Lord regarding the dream.

And our text demonstrates how Daniel is thankful for the Lord's answer.

Daniel 2:23 ²³ "To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, For You have made known to us the king's matter."

And so, at this point, Daniel makes plans to get an audience with the King so as to reveal what God has revealed to him.

And as Daniel approaches the King the same demands are made clear, which is not just the interpretation of the dream but the ability to give the King the actual dream itself.

Daniel 2:26 ²⁶ The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?"

But notice the answer Daniel gives to the King,

Daniel 2:27 ²⁷ Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians *nor* diviners are able to declare *it* to the king.

Why do you suppose Daniel prefaces his answer with this?

Daniel is making it clear that mere men are not able to know the secret things that an all-knowing God does know and is willing to make known to His servants.

Daniel 2:28 ²⁸ "However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind *while* on your bed.

You can imagine the excitement that Nebuchadnezzar must have had and yet the apprehension he may also be experiencing as his concern for the future and God's revelation concerning his future is about to be revealed to him.

The rest of the chapter goes into the details of the dream of which entire books have been written and so this short study would not be able to do it justice, but we will highlight some of the things contained in the dream.

The entire dream revolves around a great statue that is made up of a variety of materials.

Daniel 2:32-33 ³² "The head of that statue *was made* of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

What seems to be the pattern of material types in descending order as Daniel reveals it to the King?

The top part of the statue is made of the most precious of materials while the bottom part of the statue is made of the more base materials.

What does this suggest?

The top part of the statue is regal in nature but its support is made of materials that easily crumble under the weight as Daniel is about to convey. But the weight of the statue is not responsible for its collapse but something outside of the statue.

Daniel 2:34-35 ³⁴ "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. ³⁵ "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

What could be the stone that was cut out without hands?

Remember, every book of the Bible is ultimately speaking of the Christ and His kingdom and here in Daniel we are looking at the future kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar.

There are only two kingdoms in the world since the fall of man. The Kingdom of God that rules over-all and the kingdom of

darkness whose seed is the seed of Satan according to Genesis 3:15.

Both kingdoms will be at enmity toward each other until the very end when the Kingdom of God defeats the last enemy which is death.

1 Corinthians 15:22-27 ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, ²⁴ then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be abolished is death. ²⁷ For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET.

If in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar there is a stone that is not man made then what kind of stone is being intimidated?

A stone that is out of the realm of creation which is to say a stone that comes from the eternal God who is above creation since He is Creator.

It is this stone who has been given all judgment and who will judge the kingdoms of this world.

John 5:21-23 ²¹ "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. ²² "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Acts 17:31 ³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

No man or kingdom can stand against the stone cut out without hands and Nebuchadnezzar has this revealed to him quite clearly. But the stone that crushed the statue continues to flourish and grow.

Daniel 2:35 But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Again, this is a tale of two kingdoms. One, (which would include all the kingdoms of man in the world in all times), will be

destroyed while the other will fill the whole earth. One is man-made the other made without man's input. One is evil, the other righteous. One is temporary, the other eternal.

The big picture that Daniel is revealing is that as powerful and magnificent as any kingdom of this world may appear it is first and foremost a product of God's will to exist for His purposes as we saw last time.

Daniel 2:21 ²¹ "It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding.

The second thing to notice is that God's will is moving in the direction of eternity with His own Kingdom in mind and the process by which this takes place is through the stone made without hands, which is to say that the Son of God is always in mind as the agent through whom this Kingdom is established in the earth for all of eternity.

Nebuchadnezzar is being used by God for a variety of reasons not the least of which is to show Israel, in their captivity, that God is still in control of the future of His people.

But Nebuchadnezzar is also being shown that even his own kingdom is upheld by God as He allows Nebuchadnezzar to continue to reign as King of Babylon and this is where the interpretation of the dream becomes evident to the King.

Daniel 2:36-38 ³⁶ "This *was* the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. ³⁷ "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; ³⁸ and wherever the sons of men dwell, *or* the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given *them* into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.

As Daniel begins to reveal the interpretation we see how the different materials are described to different kingdoms of the world.

Nebuchadnezzar's Kingdom is shown to be the head of gold. But there are other kingdoms that will rise and fall in history as Daniel continues to describe a total of three different kingdoms in the future that will be less glorious than the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar.

Much ink has been spilled trying to describe precisely what these kingdoms are. And it would not be unreasonable to suggest that they are describing particular kingdoms that follow Babylon which include the empires of Medes-Persia, Greece and Rome.

But it is not the kingdoms of this world that are to take center stage, no matter what particular kingdoms they may be in any particular time in history. That's not the point Daniel is making as God has revealed this to him.

The point is that whether there are four or twenty four kingdoms from this point on in history, God has ordained that any kingdom in this world will fall before His throne as He is moving toward a time in history when He will finally establish His everlasting Kingdom as He crushes the head of Satan in full on the last day as He crushes all kingdoms opposed to Him.

But we are told in Daniel that this Kingdom of God is established in the days of those kings.

Daniel 2:44 ⁴⁴ "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people;

We know that God in fact established His Kingdom at a particular time in history.

Matthew 12:28 ²⁸ "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then *the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

Luke 17:20-21 ²⁰ Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; ²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, *the kingdom of God is in your midst.*"

And so, the Kingdom of God is here now as Christ has established that Kingdom, in which we who have embraced Him by faith presently participate, as Christ presently reigns over His Kingdom.

1 Corinthians 15:25 ²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

Again, this tells us that until that final day when all enemies will be put under His feet Christ is now reigning.

And this is the inference in the book of Revelation in the thousand year reign of the saints which is not a future reign on a fallen earth

for a literal thousand years but an extended period of time from the first advent to the second as the number 1,000 is used symbolically to describe this present reign of the saints.

Revelation 20:6 ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

And so, there is a sense of a reign with Christ in the “here and now”, but there is also a “not yet” sense of a reign in the future that both Daniel and the New Testament writers clearly describe by placing that reign in an eternal setting.

Daniel 2:44 *that* kingdom will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

This is the future “not yet” aspect of the Kingdom of God that will endure forever. God’s Kingdom has come; its powers already released in the world, but in a full and final sense are still coming as one day there will be a New Earth on which He will dwell with His people forever as promised.

And it is the four kingdoms of this world that are placed in juxtaposition to the everlasting Kingdom of God that is established with Christ’s first coming as we are placed into this Kingdom by faith, and that will find its consummation on the last day when Christ ushers in the final state of the Kingdom that will endure forever.

By the way, the number four as is taught here in our text in Daniel, relating to four kingdoms in this present world, is a number that describes the fullness of the work of God in a particular fashion as it relates to the physical creation.

For example, we have the entire physical universe completed on day four of creation week, after which time God then begins to fill the earth with living creatures.

In this physical world God has established four seasons which the earth will enjoy for eternity. In fact, we are told that God made the moon, which will certainly be part of the New heavens, specifically for the four seasons.

Psalms 104:19 ¹⁹ He made the moon for the seasons; The sun knows the place of its setting.

We have a designation of the physical world as having four corners, not because the earth is a square but because it is a way of describing the fullness of what it means to live on a physical planet like earth as we reference our world with North, South, East and West.

And so, it would be quite appropriate to reference the physical creation with four physical kingdoms throughout time, from the time of Daniel as our reference point, as God begins to close out one chapter of the physical universe and opens a new chapter with an entirely new physical universe with a new King and a new Kingdom on a physical planet called the New Earth.

So, however we identify these four kingdoms, one of which we know to be the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, we can safely say that they are all kingdoms from the future vantage point of Daniel that will come under the scrutiny and judgment of God and will be allowed to rule in the earth precisely because God wills it, but at some point in the future God will crush all kingdoms with the purpose of establishing His own.

And in fact this is how the second chapter of Daniel ends.

Daniel 2:44 ⁴⁴ "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

There is no other kingdom that follows the four mentioned in Daniel except for one kingdom whose ruler is the stone cut without hands who crushes all kingdoms identified in the four.

Now, for Nebuchadnezzar this interpretation is a mixed blessing. On the one hand he is seen as the king described as the head of gold and that from this point in history all other kingdoms will be less than his.

But on the other hand the entire statue, including the head of gold, is destroyed by God Himself through the stone made without hands which then in turn became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

This is the dream and its interpretation. And apparently Nebuchadnezzar is content with this information.

Daniel 2:46-47 ⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an

offering and fragrant incense. ⁴⁷ The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery."

Nebuchadnezzar is pretty impressed with Daniel but there is something here that is revealing about Nebuchadnezzar's humbling and we see it in verse 46.

To whom does Nebuchadnezzar pay homage?

The word homage is an Arabic word that can also be translated worship.

The implication is that Nebuchadnezzar primarily bows before Daniel and secondarily to Daniel's God. This trend will continue but as we'll see later in the life of Nebuchadnezzar that trend will be reversed.

But you would think that with the information that was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar he would understand that even his kingdom is one where God rules over it in power.

But chapter three shows clearly that simply having knowledge of God and His ways is not the primary basis for submitting to God. It turns out that Nebuchadnezzar's problem, like that of all men, is not a head problem but a heart problem.

But as we close out chapter 2 we see that at least Nebuchadnezzar is willing to acknowledge that the God of Daniel speaks clearly and he rewards Daniel for that.

Daniel 2:48 ⁴⁸ Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

This is reminiscent of another ruler of a great kingdom who had disturbing dreams and who sought out one of the Jews in his service who would interpret the dream and be rewarded for it.

Anyone remember who that was?

Genesis 41:39-42 ³⁹ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. ⁴⁰ "You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you." ⁴¹ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." ⁴² Then Pharaoh took off his

signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck.

God's people often find themselves living in a kingdom that is at odds with the kingdom of God. And though we may not always find ourselves on the receiving end of their blessings being put to our account, we know that God continues to work out all things for our good according to His good pleasure, for we who love Him as we follow Him.

The blessings that Joseph, Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego received from the kingdoms they served under could not compare to the blessings that all of God's people will receive in the Kingdom He has prepared for those who love Him.

Ephesians 3:16-21 ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

God is able to turn the hearts of Kings in any direction He desires even to the extent of blessing God's people. But the greatest King we will ever serve is the One who promises to allow us to share in the inheritance He has purchased for us on the cross and secured for us in His resurrection and ascension back to the Father.

By the way, as we end chapter two, I like Daniel's attitude toward his friends as he makes one last request of Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 2:49 ⁴⁹ And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel *was* at the king's court.