

“GOD REVEALS THE DREAM TO DANIEL.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

June 12, 2016, 6:00PM

Scripture Texts: Daniel 2:25-45

The mystery of the king’s dream.

The king called in all his cabinet, all his special appointed experts, all the intellectuals, the scientists, the pseudo-psychologists and religious scholars. But all the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t tell the king his dream.

So the first revelation is the bankruptcy and futility of all pagan religions. Mediums, occultist, palm readers, astrologers, it’s all worthless. Any power or knowledge from them is demonic, however disguised in light and truth.

The one true living God is the God of all mysteries and the one who reveals mysteries as He pleases. We may be in the dark but God never is.

How like God is it that He reveals His plans and purposes to a pagan king? God shows that He will do what He does in His way, by whatever means He pleases, according to the counsel of His own will.

With the first revelation of the futility and bankruptcy of pagan religions there is a second. God also reveals all human political systems are fragile and short and doomed. Like dominoes, one after the other will fall.

Before we get to that notice a couple of things about Daniel and his character as he begins to speak to the king.

First, we see a contrast between Arioch’s arrogance, in taking the credit for finding Daniel, and Daniel’s humility in taking no credit for himself. When asked if he has an interpretation, he could have said yes, but says no. He claims no credit for himself. He takes the opportunity to exalt God.

Daniel 2:30 But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king.

Take every opportunity you can to exalt God, lift Him up, praise Him and thank Him publically. Whatever successes we have, whatever gifts or abilities, whatever

blessings, all of it is given by God, from His hand. Give Him all the credit. Our hearts are factories of self-promotion.

If you compare yourself to others you might find reason to brag, but if you compare yourself to God, you will have the right estimation of things.

True humility is when we take our eyes off ourselves and look only to God. Who is able to exalt themselves while standing at the foot of the cross? At the cross we get a true picture of what we are and what we contribute to God's work.

As Isaac Watts wrote, "When I survey the wondrous cross...I pour contempt on all my pride."

Notice also Daniel's boldness, a boldness that comes from confidence in the truth of God. the more we know the truth and the more we speak the truth the more we become settled in the truth.

The kingdom's of this world.

Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar what his dream is about.

Daniel 2:28 there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar *what will be in the latter days*.

The dream is of the succession of four kingdoms until the coming of a greater and permanent kingdom. There is nothing in the text to tell us the actual identification of the kingdoms after Nebuchadnezzars. I will give you what most interpreters suggest, but know it's not crucial for us to know. What we do need to know is clear, there is a God who is in control of history and history is moving toward an inevitable decline and fall and then an inevitable coming of a great and final kingdom.

The head of gold, Babylon.

Daniel 2:37-38 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 kingdom is clearly Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man alive. He was the king of kings. He ruled the world, he held world

domination. He could take the life of anyone he wanted with a single word. He had fabulous wealth.

Yet unknown to him he was a mere pawn, one moved by the will of God.

Notice the description of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. Do you see the loaded verb? Twice it says *has given*, God has given him all he has. There is only one reason he has the power and wealth and glory and rule that he has, because God put him on the throne at this time.

No human ruler and not even Satan himself can “chew through the leash of divine sovereignty” (Davis, *Daniel*, p. 45).

Only God gives kings and kingdoms their glory and power and authority. He raises them up and He takes them down. Babylon only reigned from 605 to 539 BC, about 65 years.

Nebuchadnezzar will dispute his place in history and the source of his greatness in chapters 3-4, but he will eventually get it that there is one God and he is not it.

The chest and arms of silver, Persian or Medo-Persian, Cyrus.

Daniel 2:39 Another kingdom inferior to you *shall arise after you*, (it's chest and arms of silver).

Notice those four scary and humbling words, shall arise after you. Every single earthly kingdom has a before this and an after this. They are all transient. Despite the shouts of “O king, live forever” or “Long live the Queen” none is forever and all fall.

The Medo-Persian Empire under Cyrus reigned from 539 to 331, just over 200 years. It was bigger and longer than Babylon, but morally inferior.

The middle and thighs of bronze, Greek, Alexander the Great.

Daniel 2:39 and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.

We know Persian fell to Alexander the Great who swept over the whole Mediterranean world. It is said when got to India, he wept because he ran out of lands to conquer.

The Greek empire reigned from 331 to 146 BC, about 180 years.

The legs of iron and feet of clay, Roman, the Caesars.

This last kingdom is the Roman Empire, the mightiest and longest lasting, reigning from 146 BC to 400 AD, just over 250 years.

Rome was strong like iron, but tried to unite too many divergent peoples, hence the mixture. It also had a great moral decline. Iron and clay. Like the US, a strong nation, but morally and spiritually weakening, iron and clay.

There are a few features of this great image that are worth noting.

First, there is a unity in the diversity. Even though there are four kingdoms, there is only one statue. All the kingdoms and empires are essentially one, they are all human in nature. They are all doomed to be crushed and destroyed.

Did you notice the downward progression, or the digression, from gold to clay? The second kingdom is called inferior to Babylon and so it goes as the splendor declines.

What does this say to us about the flow of human history? Is it progressing or declining, is it getting better or worse? It's not just changing, it is declining. Things don't get better.

Those with an evolutionary mindset think we are evolving upward, that there is a general optimism about human progress. They point to the big bang and say look how far we have come.

But the truth is we must point to the Garden of Eden and see how far we have fallen. We are not getting better and better despite the illusion created by technological advances.

Even iron kingdoms fall, even the hardest and strongest. Don't be impressed by human power and human institutions and human politics.

All the kingdoms of the earth are transitory, and all of them will decline and fall and be destroyed, yes even the United States. There is an end to all nations. Every nation will come under the judgment of God.

When we look at empires from a human perspective they seem huge, invincible, impenetrable. Who could possibly topple an entire empire? Yet "the ***landfill of history***" (Davis, *Daniel*, p. 46) is filled with them. Or to use Daniel's words, they

are like *chaff*, blown by the winds of time and change, here today and gone tomorrow.

However great and magnificent this great image, it rests on feet of clay. Yet as weak as that is, that is not what brings about its demise.

This is the point of the last kingdom, God's kingdom, God's move to restore the Garden of Eden.

The kingdom of God.

The great stone, the rock of ages.

Daniel 2:34-35 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.

Daniel 2:44-45 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.

This is the real point of the dream and the focus of Daniel's interpretation. This is why God put this dream in Nebuchadnezzar's head, to reveal this mystery at this time.

This kingdom is not a new and better earthly kingdom, it is radically different from all the other kingdoms. It's spiritual, supernatural, not made by human hands, but coming from heaven by God.

It is indestructible, it can never be destroyed, it is eternal in duration.

It is final, there will be no more after it.

It is all powerful, destroying all the others.

It is universal, filling the whole earth.

Notice that this kingdom has a small and seemingly obscure beginning in the midst of the fourth kingdom, which is Rome. And then later it rises to ascendancy and glorious power, a great mountain filling the whole earth.

It will become the greatest and most central fact of all history. No human power can resist God's power and God's purposes. There is no question that this rock is Christ, the rock of ages.

I Peter 2:6-8 For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”

8 and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.”

Jesus is the precious cornerstone. Those who refuse to accept and submit to Jesus and recognize Him as the capstone will be crushed by it.

He will break into history and alter the course of history forever. His kingdom will impact every human kingdom and institution.

John the Baptist announced its coming then he declared, repent for the kingdom of God is at hand (Matthew 3:2).

For Daniel the event was only future. For us it is past and future, already and not yet. It has come and it is coming. There will be more to say about the Messianic kingdom in chapter 7.

Implications and applications.

There is a message for all the Nebuchadnezzars of the world. To everyone who is succeeding, who is living high, for whom everything is golden, remember there is an after this. One day everything will lie in the dust. Only the rock is firm and secure and to be trusted.

How do you think this message of Daniel would sound in the ears of the Jewish exiles in Babylon?

First, it would burst any bubble about a quick deliverance or any confidence in the next administration to make everything better. At best they have feet of clay and will crumble and fall with all who were before them. Put no confidence in the flesh.

Second, it would increase their assurance that God is sovereign and in control and that God's kingdom will come and it will prevail. We may suffer through the

disappointments of this life and of history, but we are confident that God's kingdom will come and it will be an everlasting kingdom. Does it help you to bear the present if you know the future?

God doesn't just control the history of Israel, the people of God, he also controls the history and destiny of all the secular kingdoms as well. And when secular nations oppress Israel, God is in control of that as well.

If you go to a big book store like Barnes and Noble, you can walk around the different sections. There is European History, US History, Current Events, and then there is a Religion section. I get the necessity of doing it that way but it creates an illusion, a false dichotomy. God is not just relegated to the Religion section. God is Lord over and in control of every section, every aspect. His sovereignty is limitless, all-inclusive, absolute.

What kingdom do you serve? What kingdom are you seeking to build? What kingdom are you investing in? Where your treasure is there your heart is.

Hebrews 12:28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Revelations 11:15 "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

This vision is a promise and a threat to every kingdom, to every nation, to every leader, whether kings or presidents, that there is a hidden kingdom coming, announced in the Word of God. However dares to resist it does so at their destruction.

Remember this dream, it has come true and it is coming true and it will finally and fully come true. We see clearly what Daniel saw only very dimly. But even our sight isn't perfect.

We are living in the last days, in the time of the setting up of the great kingdom of the Son of God. Our God reigns and His Son is coming.