

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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The Kingdom To End All Kingdoms
Daniel 2:31-49

In case you haven't been here the last couple of weeks, let me quickly bring you up to speed. Daniel and his 3 friends were young Jewish men who were taken captive by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC. When they were brought to Babylon, they were pressured to adopt the pagan customs of Babylon and abandon the way of life God had prescribed in His word, the Bible.

So, in this book, we find a vivid representation of a conflict that exists between the godless kingdoms of this world and the kingdom that God is establishing on this earth among His people.

In last week's text, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that deeply disturbed him. So, he gathered the magicians and wise men from his kingdom and gave them this order: tell me the interpretation of my dream without me telling you what my dream was.

Of course, none of them could do it because only God could accomplish something like that. And, that's exactly what happened – God did what only God could do. He gave Daniel the knowledge to know the dream and its interpretation.

And that's where we will pick up this morning. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar about his dream and its interpretation.

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.

So, here is the mysterious dream that kept the most powerful man in the world up at night. He saw a great image that scared him to death. That word "image" is sometimes translated "statue" in the Old Testament.

- Here's an artist's rendering of what it might have looked like...



- The head was gold.
- The chest and arms are silver.
- Its mid-section and thighs were bronze.
- Its legs were iron.
- And, when you get down to the feet, there's a blend of iron and clay.

That's the image. But Nebuchadnezzar's dream was about more than just that statue. It was about something that happens to that statue. A stone was cut out but not by a human hand. It doesn't have the ornate decorations of gold. It doesn't exude the raw power of iron. It seems like it's just a plain, common stone. But this stone becomes the centerpiece of the dream. It strikes the feet of the image and grinds every part of it up into a powder that's blown away like dust in the wind.

All the glorious gold and silver is gone. All the powerful iron is gone. Nothing is left but that plain, common stone. But, as it turns out, there's nothing plain or common about the stone. All of a sudden, it becomes a mountain. And not just a mountain. It's a mountain that fills the whole earth. In the end, the only thing that lasts...the only thing that remains and seems to matter is that stone that becomes a mountain.

And that's Nebuchadnezzar's dream. But what does it mean? Let's keep reading...

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.

Ok. So, the head of gold represents Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom, the kingdom of Babylon. And Daniel tells him that his days are numbered because a kingdom is coming that will overtake Babylon...

That kingdom is represented by the chest and arms of silver. In 539 B.C. the Medo-Persian empire invaded Babylon under the rule of King Cyrus...so, the second kingdom is the Medo-Persian empire.

He goes on to say that a third massive kingdom will come after the Medo-Persian empire. That's exactly what happened in 330 B.C. when Alexander the Great led the Greek Empire to overthrow the Persians. The Greek empire was one of the largest in the history of the world, just like this prophecy predicts...so the midsection of bronze represents the Greek Empire.

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.

The next kingdom is a kingdom of iron that is marked by raw strength. Most scholars agree that this is talking about the Roman Empire. Rome conquered the Greek peninsula in 146 B.C. Rome was an unstoppable force on the world's stage. And, the prophecy says that this kingdom will be a divided kingdom. Does that fit with Rome? Absolutely. In A.D. 395, the Roman Empire had grown so large that it became nearly impossible to rule. So, it split into two empires – the Eastern and the Western Roman Empires.

So, nearly 1000 years in advance, Daniel prophesied that this kingdom would be a divided kingdom.

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.”

So, there are some things that are not really clear about this part of the prophecy. For instance, verse 44 says that God will set up His eternal kingdom in the “days of those kings.” But there is only one king actually referred to in this text – Nebuchadnezzar. So, which kings are being referenced here? Well, some would say that it’s the kings of all the kingdoms he just mentioned. The problem with that is the fact that these 4 kingdoms span a period of over a thousand years. So, that doesn’t seem to fit, at all.

But there is a clue here. Right before the mention of ‘those kings,’ verse 42 draws attention to the toes of the image. How many toes does the average person have? Let me count really quick...I count 10. And the idea of 10 kings is actually developed later in the book of Daniel. In chapter 7, Daniel has another vision. He sees 4 beasts coming out of the sea. Those beasts represent 4 kingdoms, just like in this vision. The fourth beast has 10 horns that are said to represent 10 kings. Then, in the book of Revelation, chapter 13, there’s a description of the government that will be established by the anti-Christ. That government is described as a beast that emerges from the sea. It also has 10 horns. Those horns all have crowns...meaning they are 10 kings.

So, when verse 44 says that the kingdom of God will be set up on the earth in the days of “those kings,” I take it to be referring to the kings that will be a part of the global government that will be established when the anti-Christ sets up a government on this earth. We’ll talk more about that when we look at that specific prophecy in chapter 7.

But, however you interpret that specific part of this prophetic vision, the main point is crystal clear: God is sending a stone into this world that will crush the kingdoms of this world and establish the eternal Kingdom of God on this earth.

So, who is this stone? Well, listen to how Daniel describes this kingdom in chapter 7...

Daniel 7:13–14

13 “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

The stone is the Son of Man who comes on the clouds of heaven and has dominion and glory so that all people, nations, and languages will serve Him. Does that sound familiar? I hope so.

Listen to the way Jesus describes His second coming in Matthew 24:30: *Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

The Stone is the Son of Man and the Son of Man is Jesus.

So, here is the point of this dream: Through the work of Jesus, the Kingdom of God will be victorious over the Kingdoms of this World.

- Do you ever look around our world and feel like the cause of truth and righteousness and moral purity is in decline?
- Do you ever feel like the sinful mess of this world is only getting messier?
- Does it ever seem to you that Christianity is fading and that the powers of hell are on the rise?

Can I let you in on a little secret? Jesus wins. Jesus is coming again, and He is going to put an end to the mess. He is going to complete the work He began at the cross and continued in His resurrection. He is going to establish a kingdom on this earth in a way that Habakkuk 2:14 says will cause the glory of God to cover this earth like the waters cover the sea. God wins.

And that's the point of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. But that's not the end of this passage. Remember, this is a message God is sending Nebuchadnezzar. So, this passage isn't just about knowing the truth about God's kingdom, it's about responding to the truth of God's kingdom.

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.

This paragraph wraps up the whole vignette of chapter two and gives us context that encourages us to respond wisely to the truth revealed in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. There are two things happening here.

1. You see what happens in the life of someone who lives like God is their true, victorious King. Daniel consistently is living like God is His true King...and God pours out blessing on Daniel. He preserves his life and causes him to be promoted to one of the highest positions in the entire nation. Now, that isn't to say that blessing will always take the shape of a promotion at work or even the preservation of your life. Later in this book, we will see people who remain faithful to God who are martyred for their faith. But, even in that, God pours out His blessing...those martyrs are raised to new life and inherit the glorious kingdom of God. (c.f. - Daniel 11:32-35; Daniel 12:2-3). So, Daniel lives like God is his true and victorious King...and it leads to blessing.
2. You see what happens in the life of someone who does not live like God is their true, victorious King. Clearly, God is giving Nebuchadnezzar an opportunity to bow before Him as his Lord and King. And, at first, it seems like Nebuchadnezzar becomes a true believer. He says God is the God over all the little 'g' gods of this world. He says that God is the Lord over all the kings of the earth. And, since Nebuchadnezzar is a king on the earth, you'd think he is including himself in that statement. So, it looks like we have a true convert on our hands.

But guess what happens in the very next chapter, chapter 3? Nebuchadnezzar makes an image of gold (which probably represents himself) and demands that everyone bow down and worship it or die.

Do you know what happens in chapter 4? Nebuchadnezzar is walking through his palace and begins to reflect on how great he is. He is full of pride and completely leaves God out of the equation. And that doesn't bring blessing...it brings a curse. Nebuchadnezzar loses everything. His sanity. His palace. His dignity. Even his kingdom.

So, Nebuchadnezzar knows some amazing truths about God. He knows that God's kingdom is going to last forever, and the kingdoms of this world will fade away. He knows that the gold and silver of this world are fleeting treasures that will one day disintegrate and disappear. He knows that there is a stone that is coming that will prove victorious...so you'd better be on His side. And he not only knows that truth, he says he believes all that truth...he just doesn't live like it. He just keeps on living like he's always lived. And he loses everything as a result.

So, who made the better choice? Who proved to be wise in this passage? Daniel or Nebuchadnezzar? Clearly, Daniel made the wise choice. Both men knew the truth about God's kingdom, but only one of them lived like he believed the truth about God's kingdom...and it was the difference between a blessing and a curse.

And that's our big idea for this morning: **Wise people live like they believe the truth about God's kingdom.**

The kingdom of God isn't a kingdom of lip-service to Jesus. It isn't merely about sitting in a room like this, singing songs that are true, hearing sermons that are true, and saying we believe what is true. The kingdom of God is about the power of Jesus on display in this world through the lives of those who trust Him.

1 Corinthians 4:20

For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. The kingdom of God isn't about learning how to say all the right things. The kingdom of God is about experiencing the power of Jesus as you live by faith in Him. And the sad reality is that many people are following in Nebuchadnezzar's footprints and don't even know it. Listen to this warning from Jesus...

Matthew 7:21-23

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' When Jesus returns to this earth to set up His kingdom, many will point to how they said the right things while they were alive...they didn't deny Jesus...they didn't curse Jesus...they said He was their Lord, their King...but they lived on their own agenda, not God's. They trusted in themselves and pointed to their own works, not their faith in the work of Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8-9...

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. It is by grace alone through faith alone in the work of Jesus alone that we are given entrance into the kingdom.

On the day of His return, when you meet our True King, face to face, will your life show that you are trusting in your work or His, for entrance into God's kingdom? Are you ready to meet the King? Do you believe Jesus is coming again and are you ready to meet Him on the day of Judgment? Are you ready to meet Him if this was that day?

Do you believe that Jesus is your One, True King? Then, are you laying your life down in surrender?

- Is anything in your life off-limits to Jesus?
- Is there a step of obedience that you are not willing to take?
- Are you living like your whole life belongs to your One, True King?

Do you believe that Jesus is a victorious King who will defeat every enemy and give eternal victory to the people of His Kingdom?

- Are you trusting in Jesus to provide forgiveness of sin and entrance into God's eternal kingdom?
- Are you trusting His power to give you victory over sin?
- Are you looking forward with hope?

Do you believe that Jesus will bring this world to an end and set up an eternal kingdom in the new heavens and earth?

- Are you living like this world will last forever?
- Are you storing up treasures on earth or heaven?
- Are you telling others?