

THE DREAM MASTER

When Your Dream Really Does Come True

A Study through Daniel
Spring Series 2024

Text: Daniel 2:20-23, 26-48

The story before us recounts the most significant revelation God has given His people in the Bible about the future trajectory of all earthly government, which He has appointed to rule over His people (Rom. 13:1-7).

Paul's statement that all earthly governments and those who rule in those kingdoms have been raised up and appointed by God would have been jarring to believers living under the power, enjoying the benefits, and at times experiencing the cruelty and affliction of the Roman Empire and its emperor (at that time, godless Nero).

Even more disturbing is Paul's instruction to submit to those authorities (Rom. 13:1-2, 5), pay the taxes they impose (Rom. 13:6-7), pray fervently for them, and strive to live righteously (Rom. 13:2-4) and peaceably (Rom. 12:18) in the kingdoms where God has placed you. The only exceptions to this in the statements of Scripture and the examples in Scripture are when earthly governments command you to do something that God clearly prohibits, or when they prohibit you from doing something God clearly commands.

What I want us to see this morning is that Paul's instruction to believers in Romans 13 is grounded on a much larger biblical reality that we find in Daniel 2, when God reveals to Daniel the content and interpretation of a dream He repeatedly sent to a pagan king ruling over the most powerful kingdom on earth in Daniel's time – Nebuchadnezzar.

There are five things about this dream that we should note this morning: 1) The content of the dream has to do with God's sovereign authority over all earthly kingdoms/governments; 2) the scope of the dream encompasses all earthly

kingdoms/governments from Nebuchadnezzar's time to the coming of Messiah's kingdom; 3) the fulfillment of the dream is sure because it has been ordained by God (Daniel 2:45); 4) the intent of the dream is to counsel pagan rulers to turn from idols (Habakkuk 2:18-20) and submit to God (Psalm 2:10-12); and 5) the implications of the dream should strengthen the resolve of God's people to live faithfully and attractively for God in those kingdoms (Habakkuk 2:1-4).

With that in mind, let's let Daniel unpack the dream and its implications for us this morning.

I. A Grateful Doxology to a Gracious God (2:20-23)

Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might."²¹ He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;²² he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.²³ To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."

Daniel's doxology points to a massive reality about God that everyone in the story needs to know and embrace – "to Him belongs wisdom and might!" (2:20). And the fact that God has all wisdom and might calls for three observations about God that are great cause for joyful celebration and confident expectation as we live in the kingdoms of the world – even in a kingdom like Babylon!

A. For God's Uncontested Power – God alone orchestrates and accomplishes all things! (2:20-21a)

Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might."²¹ He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings;

B. For God's Unmatched Wisdom – God alone knows and determines all things! (2:21b-22)

... he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;²² he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.

C. For God's Unparalleled Kindness – God alone graciously reveals to His people the truth about all things! (2:23)

*To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for **you have given me wisdom** and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for **you have made known to us the king's matter.**"*

What Daniel wants God's people to know is they can live faithfully, confidently, and obediently in the kingdom of their day because God rules; God reigns; and God responds by supplying fresh mercy and grace for each day!

II. A Desperate Question from a Fearful King (2:26-30)

*The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "**Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?**" ²⁷ Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: ²⁹ **To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be.** 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, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.*

- This account is one of two places in the Bible where God gave a powerful ruler of a world empire a dream about the future which they could not understand without the help of one of God's servants.
- The other place where we find a dream like this is when God sends the Pharaoh of Egypt a dream about what will happen in the near future (7 years) to Egypt and the surrounding kingdoms.
- In other words, in this chapter Daniel is presented to us as a new and greater prophet and deliverer than even Joseph!

A. The Key Question – "Are you able?" (2:26)

- Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know one thing from God's servant when he appeared – "*Can you do what no one else has been able to do for me? Can you tell me the dream and give me its interpretation? Can you quiet my fears and calm my troubled heart?*"
- And that is ultimately the question that every person has about the future, regardless of what kingdom they happen to occupy.

- And only someone with access to God’s wisdom can provide answers that are accurate and meaningful!

B. The Significant Answer – “No . . . but there is a God in heaven who can!” (2:27-28)

- There is only one source for the answer Nebuchadnezzar seeks, and it is God. There is only one person who has access to God, and it is Daniel. And what qualifies Daniel and gives him access to this wisdom is that he is someone in the kingdom of Babylon who loves and fears God and who lives according to the wisdom God has given in the Torah.
- And that is true today – when we seek answers to the most significant issues that disquiet our hearts and trouble our souls, there is only one place to find them – and that is in the wisdom God provides in His Word.

III. A Divine Revelation from an Omniscient God Whose Wisdom Never Fails (2:31-35)

“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 midriff 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 off 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.³⁶ “This was the dream.

- As Daniel recounts the content of the dream God sent to Nebuchadnezzar, he intends for us to see and recognize that this revelation was only available from God.

A. The Content of the Dream: What did the king see?

1. A colossal statue of a human image (2:31);
2. Divided up into five sections made of materials of descending value and increasing hardness (2:32-33);
3. Smashed, pulverized, and completely removed by a supernatural stone (2:34-35);
4. A stone that grew into a huge mountain that filled the whole earth (2:35c).

B. The Timing of the Dream: When did the king see all of this?

- Nebuchadnezzar received this in the 2nd year of his reign (2:1).

- He was a young and powerful king who had come to the throne by means of his strategic brilliance and military might.
- He was planning on a long and glorious future. And one night a dream came to interrupt his sleep and trouble his soul. God was doing far more than merely getting the attention of a powerful, proud, arrogant monarch – He was making the point that the whole reason this king had any standing at all was because God had given it to him! (2:37)

C. The Consequences of the Dream: Why was the king so fearful about this dream?

- In the worldview of Nebuchadnezzar's day, dreams were considered an important means by which the gods communicated with the human leaders of the kingdoms that worshipped them.
- Nebuchadnezzar obviously believed the gods of Babylon were communicating something important to him, which is why he called for his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and Chaldeans to tell him the dream and its interpretation (2:1-3).
- And clearly, Nebuchadnezzar felt the dream was communicating a bad omen since the statue was not just tumbled down and damaged by the supernatural stone – it was pulverized and totally removed.
- From Nebuchadnezzar's viewpoint, he was troubled by what he considered a bad omen; but, from a divine viewpoint, he was troubled because God was getting his attention!

Note: There is a huge difference between the dreams that Joseph and Daniel interpreted and the idea that God regularly communicates revelation to His people today through dreams.

1. In Joseph's day, there were no written Scriptures. Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible many years after Joseph lived and died.
2. In Daniel's day, the Scriptures were not yet complete and would have been certainly unavailable to a pagan king.
3. In both cases, the dreams were sent by God to a pagan monarch about His sovereign purposes for the nation.
4. In both cases, God validated the dream by incorporating it as part of His inspired Word through the pen of an inspired writer.

5. In no case did the dream run counter to any part of revealed Scripture that had been given to that point.

While God can on rare occasions use dreams in the life of a person, now that we possess His full and final revelation in the Bible, no modern dream has the authority of Scripture, nor may it be considered binding on the life of a believer or group of believers, nor can it take the place of Scripture either by countering or enhancing any of its theological, moral, ethical, or spiritual teachings.

IV. An Authoritative Interpretation from an Omnipotent God Whose Purposes Are Never Thwarted (2:36-45)

A. God Rules over the Kingdoms of the Earth (2:37-44)

1. He establishes their authority and appoints their rulers (2:37-38).
2. He ordains their order and their duration.
 - The head of **gold** represents **Babylon**, which God ordained to last for 66 years (605-539 BC).
 - The chest of **silver** represents **Medo-Persia**, which God appointed to last for 208 years (539-331 BC).
 - The torso and thighs of **bronze** represent the kingdom of **Greece**, which lasted for 185 years (331-146 BC); however, God ordained that it would be a kingdom that would rule over all the earth (and it did under Alexander the Great)!
 - The two legs of **iron** represent the **Roman Empire**, which began in 146 BC and lasted as a unified kingdom for more than 500 years until the division of the East and West Empires in 395 AD. The West fell in 476 AD, but the Eastern Empire continued until 1453 AD.
 - The feet and toes of **mixed iron and clay** represent all the **rest of the kingdoms of the world** until the appearance of the supernatural stone that crushes and removes them.
3. He sovereignly oversees their nature and activity to accomplish His divine purposes in human history.

4. He will hold them accountable for their sins against Him and His people.

B. His Kingdom Matters More (2:44-45)

Daniel concludes the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's vision by revealing that all the kingdoms and empires of the world are temporary! They will all be swept away and replaced by a Kingdom God Himself will establish and sustain!

1. The Establishing of an Eternal Kingdom (2:44a)

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.

2. The Removal and Replacement of all Earthly Kingdoms (2:44b)

It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,

3. The Appearance and Role of a Majestic Stone (2:45)

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."

V. A Stunning Response to a Sovereign God Who Protects and Promotes His Faithful Servants (2:46-49)

What happens next is almost unthinkable! It would have been absolutely unheard of in the annals of ancient Babylon – the great and mighty king rises from his throne and falls on his face, prostrated before a young Hebrew captive named Daniel.

A. Praise to God for His Wisdom and Power (2:47)

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."

B. Promotion and Honor of God's Servant (2:48-49a)

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.

C. Preservation of God's Servant (2:49b)

But Daniel remained at the king's court. (Which is why he was not involved in the affairs that happen in chapter 3).

Conclusion:

What are we to make of this dream and its interpretation, since so much of what Daniel saw has already transpired?

1. Like Daniel, we must live faithfully before God in our own personal walk with Him.
2. Like Daniel, we must faithfully live out our faith in God before people in the kingdoms where He appoints us.
3. We must display our confidence that the God of heaven has ordained and is overseeing all that is happening in the kingdoms of the world by living joyfully and confidently regardless of what happens in those kingdoms.
4. We must strive for the objectives of His coming kingdom by living redemptively in the kingdoms where He places us.
5. We must graciously, boldly, and lovingly present the truth of the gospel of Christ kingdom wherever and whenever God gives us opportunity.