

Daniel: Dreams Do Come True

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[0 : 00] Reading from Daniel chapter 2, which is on page 884 in the Red Church Bibles there, starting at verse 1.

In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams. His mind was troubled and he could not sleep. So the king summoned the magicians, the enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed.

When they came in and stood before the king, he said to them, I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means. Down to verse 10.

The astrologers answered the king, there is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks. No king, however, great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer.

What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods and they do not live among men. This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon.

[1 : 06] Verse 24. Then Daniel went to Ariok, whom the king had appointed, to execute the wise men of Babylon and said to him, Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king and I will interpret his dream for him.

Down to verse 31. You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue, an enormous dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.

While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in summer.

The wind swept them away without leaving a trace, but the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king.

You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory. In your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air.

[2 : 34] Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. After you, another kingdom will rise inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.

Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, for iron breaks and smashes everything. And as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.

Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom. Yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay.

As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united any more than iron mixes with clay.

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

[3 : 48] This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands. A rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy. Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honour and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him.

The king said to Daniel, Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.

Thanks, Kirsty.

Well, keep your Bibles open at Daniel chapter 2. Yes, it is a long chapter. And no, we're not going to be here forever looking at it all. But there is so much there.

[4 : 53] So let's turn to God's word now. Amen. Let's pray. Father, you are the great God who not only made the world, but has spoken truth into this world.

And yet we are people who need to understand that word to us. We need the help of your Holy Spirit to reveal the mysteries that are contained in your word.

We need your Holy Spirit to show us what the truth is and how it applies to us. And so we pray that you would be active amongst us, helping us to see the God who is revealed in this chapter we're about to look at, the God that we are to trust.

So please help us now. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So, can anybody tell me what's going to happen next week?

Where will I be? And what will you be doing? What's the world going to be like in 50 years' time, if you're still alive?

[6 : 38] Or will the world even exist? We all think and dream about the future. Who's going to win the next election?

What's going to happen in Syria and Iraq? Will Ireland recover financially? Or is there another recession on the way?

Or perhaps you're more concerned with personal things. Who will I marry? Where am I going to live? What kind of job will I get?

Will I pass my exams? What will I do when I retire? We all dream about the future. And King Nebuchadnezzar, the character we meet in chapter 2, has a dream.

Look at verse 1. In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams. And his mind was troubled, and he couldn't sleep.

[7 : 48] It sounds a little bit more like a recurring nightmare. But we know from later in the story that this was a dream about the future.

Look at verse 45. The quote at the very end of verse 45. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future.

The dream is true, and the interpretation is trustworthy. So this dream that Nebuchadnezzar has reveals God's plan for the world and what is to come.

It's about the future. And like us, Nebuchadnezzar was desperate to know what was going to happen. After all, he was king of the Babylonian Empire, the world's leading superpower at the time. So as we encounter Nebuchadnezzar's dream, there are four things we learn about the future, especially God's plan for the world.

[9 : 03] So here's the first thing we learn from this dream. And it's this. The future is hidden from us. Look at verse 2.

The king summoned together the magicians, the enchanters, sorcerers, astrologers, which wasn't just people who looked at the stars, but wise people, to tell him what he had dreamed.

So here we have this select group, which represented the world's best mediums, astrologers, analysts, economists, and scientists, all together.

They were highly trained, university graduates, all leading experts in their fields. Collectively, they had a vast, vast knowledge of things that had taken place in the past, and they had a great understanding of things that were happening in the world at the time.

This was the king's, if you like, think tank. His personal advisors to tell him what was going to happen and how they should be prepared for the future.

[10 : 17] And whenever a dream came along, that was a great opportunity for them to be involved. Look at the rest of verse 2. So they came in and they stood before the king.

He said to them, I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means. The astrologers answered, the king in Aramaic, which was the language of the whole empire and even beyond, so that meant this was a message that was to be for the whole world.

O king, live forever. Tell your servants the dream and we will interpret it. Give us the dream, O king, and we'll tell you what would be good policies to make, what taxes to introduce, what nation we should attack next.

But Nebuchadnezzar is no dope. He knows there are plenty of phony fortune tellers and analysts who will see this as an opportunity for promotion and a little bit more pay.

They could spin any old lie if they wanted to. So the king is clever. He applies a little bit of pressure. Verse 5. The king replied to the astrologers, this is what I have firmly decided.

[11 : 36] If you do not tell me what my dream was, so there to tell him what he was dreaming, and interpret it, if you can't tell me these things, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turn to piles of rubble.

But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honour. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me.

Nothing like a torturous death to focus the mind. No payoffs here if you get it wrong. It's off with your head. But even with the threat of their lives hanging over them, they still can't deliver.

Verse 10. The astrologers, these wise learned men answered the king, there's not a man on earth who can do what the king asks.

No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or entrancer or astrologer. The answer is crystal clear to the king.

[12 : 48] The future, it's hidden from us. We simply do not know. Now, you mightn't have your own personal astrologer or analyst to hand.

But don't tell me that you've never had a little peek at your stars. Or maybe you're a secret listener to Mystic Meg. We might think it's all quite funny to have a little look and a little listen.

But you know what, it's very common for people to go to a spiritualist or a psychic just to know what their career prospects are going to be like. Or people who go and have a look at their hand.

Do you see that long line that comes down here? It'll tell you how long you're going to live. Only recently, I talked to someone who was so concerned for their family's welfare, they paid 50 euro to have a card reading.

It's not just fun. People seriously believe that there are those with special gifts and abilities who can tell us the future.

[14 : 04] But perhaps you're a bit sceptical of the spirit world. Maybe instead you just like to listen to what the economists have to say. Should we buy or should we sell?

Do we invest or do we sit tight? Looks like Apple's a good one to invest right now. Well, the fact that we're still suffering from a world recession suggests that they don't really know too much either.

Have you ever noticed that the government that is in power always predicts a bright and beautiful future? Those in opposition predict doom. Well, look at verse 11.

What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it. No one can reveal the future to the king or to me or to you or to anybody else.

You may remember the famous prediction by the BBC weatherman Michael Fish who told quite confidently there was no danger of any hurricane. The next day Britain woke up to find half the country flattened.

[15 : 21] The point is while astrologers, scientists, economists can't see into the future we all to some degree live our lives around what people say about the future.

Did you hear what so and so said? Better adjust my life to that. We live life trusting people, investing our security in things and those people who really have no idea what the future holds and where the universe and history is headed.

Doesn't it all seem a little bit foolish to be trusting in people and what they think is going to happen? Well thankfully there is one who does know.

Second, the future has been revealed to us. Well with no answer for the king, the king loses the rag. Verse 14 When Ariok, the commander of the king's guard had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact.

[16 : 36] He asked the king's officer why did the king issue such a harsh decree? Ariok explained the matter to Daniel and at this Daniel went into the king and asked for some time so that he might be able to interpret the dream for him.

So Daniel returned to his house and he explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery so that

he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Do you see where Daniel turns? He doesn't turn to the financial section of the Irish times or the Babylonian times.

He doesn't check out his star sign. No. He turns to verse 18 the God of heaven.

This great God he turns to in praise because it is God who revealed the mystery. Look at the end of verse 19. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said praise be the name of God forever and ever wisdom and power are his.

[17 : 59] He changes times and seasons. He sets up kings and disposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and he gives knowledge to the discerning.

He reveals deep and hidden things. He knows what lies in darkness and light dwells with him. I thank and praise you O God of my fathers.

You have given me wisdom and power. You have made known to me what we asked of you. You have made known to us the dream of the king.

This is our all wise and sovereign God God who changes kings as quick as he changes the weather.

Here is our all powerful all knowledgeable God who reveals what is hidden and he knows what is secret. In reality we've got no idea at all what's going to happen this afternoon never mind in 20 years time.

[19 : 06] We can't see if we're going to have good health or bad health. Whether we're going to be successful or have a life of struggles. We don't know if we're going to get married or if we'll remain single.

If our children will outlast us or if we will outlast them. But there is a God who does know.

Verse 22 He reveals deep and hidden things. He knows what lies in darkness. You see we might think that man has the ability to see into the future.

That's what we're led to believe every single day. But it's God alone who reveals the future. Look at verse 25. Ariad took Daniel to the king at once and he said I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means.

The king answered Daniel also called Belshazzar are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it? Daniel replied no wise man enchanter magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he is asked about but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.

[20 : 28] He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. You see Daniel knows it's not him it's God God sees all of history all of time from beginning right to the very end nothing that happens in between is hidden from him in fact it is God's very intention that we know what is going to happen look at verse 29 he doesn't want us to be in the dark he wants to reveal things to us look at verse 29 as you were lying there O king your mind turned to things to come and the revealer of mystery showed you what is going to happen as for me this mystery has been revealed to me not because I have greater wisdom than the other living men but so that you O king may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind

God not only knows the future he actually reveals the future to us he reveals deep and hidden things so is God going to reveal my future does that mean when I have a dream God is speaking to me about my future or should I expect and maybe ask God to when I sleep at night please God give me a dream or a vision about what's going to happen to me next week because there are many people who claim that that is what God actually does well I'm just not quite sure about that one not because he can't but because of what God has actually said himself in the

Bible look at Hebrews chapter 1 I have it on the screen there so you can read it from there Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 to 3 here's what it says in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets through people like Daniel at many times and in various ways sometimes God spoke audibly sometimes through a dream or a vision he even spoke through a donkey but in these last days verse 2 he has spoken to us by or through his son whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe the son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being you see the climax of God's revelation is his son the

Lord Jesus Christ God does tell us what the future is but the future is not about us it's all about his son so we mustn't think of God as our own little personal fortune teller who's there to tell me about my life who I'm going to marry and where I'm going to work and what church I should attend and what I should have for breakfast and whatever else you want God to tell you and the pastor down the personal message for everybody after the service by the way after the collection has been taken

what your life is going to be that's really not where it's at claiming to have personal messages from God just feeds our self centred sinful lives we're not the centre of the universe we're not to confuse our fuzzy thoughts and our colourful pictures with

God's spoken words yes God is concerned about our lives deeply yes God does have a plan for your life but that plan is revealed through his son the Lord Jesus Christ Jesus is the climax of God's revelation salvation it's all about him and the future revolves around him not you or me so what is the plan what is going to happen well thankfully the future is unveiled for us third God doesn't give each of us a personal plan for our lives he's not a little magic genie where we kind of have him in the corner and give him a gold its chest and its arms were of silver its belly and thighs of bronze its legs of iron its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay so we've got this huge big statue in four sections the gold the head then we've got silver across the chest then bronze for the thighs and iron mixed with clay down at the feet but look at verse 34 while you were watching a rock was cut out not by human hands and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them what did all this mean well two big things first oh

[26 : 51] I haven't got it there you can just listen here's the first big thing man made kingdoms are destined to fall man made kingdoms are destined to fall look at the statue in verse 36 because here's where the interpretation comes this was the dream and now we will interpret it to the king you oh king are the king of kings the god of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory the end of verse 38 you are the head of gold so nebuchadnezzar yes you have power but remember this it's god who's given you the power to rule you are the head of gold you're the one who has this great big superpower of an empire but nebuchadnezzar verse 39 after you another kingdom will rise inferior to yours your empire nebuchadnezzar is going to be blown out of the water somebody else is going to come along and take your place next a third kingdom one of bronze will rule over the whole earth you think your empire is big well another one is going to come that's going to even be greater and bigger than yours finally verse 40 there will be a fourth kingdom strong as iron for iron breaks and smashes everything and as iron breaks things to pieces so it will crush and break all the others you think a world empire is big there's going to be an even greater one than that now we'll come back to these kingdoms in more detail when we get to chapter 7 if you want to ask me about them afterwards you're welcome to but we'll get to the detail later on but for now

I want us to look at their downward spiral now sooner does one kingdom rise Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire then another one comes along and takes its place and the further that we seem to go into the future the more fragile the kingdom seem to be verse 42 as the toes were partly iron and partly clay so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle and just as you saw iron mixed with baked clay so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united any more than iron mixes with clay yes the kingdoms are going to be strong and powerful they're going to take over other nations and they're going to invade and they're going to do all these sorts of things but they won't last they're going to break up they're going to divide they're brittle they're going to disintegrate and they're all going to fall apart just think about it for one minute where is the great Babylonian empire today it's actually Iraq with its toppled leader Saddam Hussein and in its place a dispersed people what do we have a broken government at war with ISIS you couldn't get a more divided and broken nation it's fallen apart it's disintegrated or what about Britain who rules the waves even Scotland wants to break away now one writer put it like this kings and kingdoms presidents and dictators democracies and tyrannies and monarchies come and go they rise and fall only to enter the landfill of history man-made kingdoms and governments and rulers they are all destined to fall so that's the first thing we see from this dream that's unveiled before us we cannot trust the kingdoms and rulers of this age because they will all fall apart the second thing we do learn though is that

God's eternal kingdom will stand forever so we move from looking at the statue to looking at the rock look back at verse 34 while they were watching a rock was cut out not by human hands and this rock struck the statue on its feet of iron clay and smashed them then the iron the clay the bronze the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and they became like chaff on a threshing floor in summer literally they were just reduced to dust the wind swept them away without leaving a trace but the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth what what was this rock what what did it mean well look down at verse 44 he tells us what it means he says in the time of those kings the god of heaven is going to set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed nor will it be left to another people it will crush all those kingdoms and bring

them to an end but it will itself endure forever this is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of the mountain but not by human hands a rock that broke the iron the bronze the clay the silver and the gold to pieces what a wonderful dream god through the dream promised he was going to set up a kingdom that wasn't made by man but a kingdom made by god a kingdom not of human hands of governments and powers that we see today but established by the god of heaven and this kingdom would be greater and stronger and more powerful and above all it would be eternal never to be destroyed look at the middle of verse 44 it will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end but it itself will endure forever this is god if you like pulling back the curtains unveiling the future just giving a glimpse of what's going to happen he will bring to an end every man made kingdom he will remove and destroy every king and he will establish his kingdom with his king for all eternity the future has been unveiled to us which brings us to the last one the future is present among us Daniel looked forward didn't he to this powerful eternal kingdom he started a time in history when the dream was revealed these were all things to take place soon verse 45 the end of it says the great god has shown the king what will take place in the future but here we are today in 2014 where we stand at a point in time when the kingdom has already come what Daniel longed for and looked to has already come among us well why do you say that well if you want you can have a look at Luke's gospel chapter 1 verse 31 let me read to you what it says there where the angel came and spoke to Mary and she said you will be with child you will give birth to a son you will give him the name Jesus he will be great and he will be called son of the most high and the [35 : 07] Lord God will give him the throne and he will reign forever his kingdom will never end and as Jesus went about his earthly ministry performing his miracles casting out demons raising the dead he could say to the people who followed him the kingdom of God has come to you repent and believe I says Jesus am God's king I am here present in the world to establish God's eternal kingdom kingdom would come not by weapons of force not by brutality but sacrificially by his death on the cross his resurrection from the grave because by his death he was making it possible for people like you and me to be able to enter into his kingdom to be forgiven of our sin to be made pure and right so that we could enter into his pure and perfect kingdom and his resurrection proves beyond all doubt that he is

God's reigning and ruling king he's the one who defeated the grave who defeated death and he reigns and he rules over all he says my kingdom has come and I will establish the kingdom and you can be a part of it that's why we sang those songs at the beginning God our rock ascribe greatness to our God the rock he is our refuge our tower of strength he is the place where we find our security he's the rock of peace he's the one who gives us these things because his kingdom has come but like Daniel we're also looking forward to the fulfillment of his kingdom it has come it is here present among us but not in all its completeness because there is still opposition to Jesus and his rule and his reign and one day the risen

Lord Jesus is going to burst into this world again he is the rock he's the rock that's been cut out of the mountain that will wipe out every final and last opposition to his rule he's the rock that's going to come and crush and smash and destroy his enemies once and for all he is the rock that will be the huge mountain we read at the end of verse 35 that will fill the whole earth and for and for those who trust in God's promise this rock the Lord Jesus is our refuge he's our place of peace he's our security he will bring us to a land of blessing and reward the future is all about his son his kingdom and his eternal reign it's not about you or me if it's about us it's about us turning to him and when he comes all

God's people will celebrate at last and they will declare with one voice God's kingdom has come that's where the future is heading Jesus has come are we in his kingdom are we living for his kingdom are we trusting in the one who knows the future let's pray our father god we thank you that you are the eternal king the one who is lord over all the one who is reigning and in charge we confess we do not know the future and we dare not trust anyone else or anything else but we trust only you so help us in this world where we do not know and where we cannot see to walk by faith trusting in the king who has come and the king who one day will come we praise you for who you are in Jesus name amen