

Daniel 2

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Date: 19 October 2025

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[0:00] Well, God is faithful. We sang that, and he's given us this faithful passage today for our benefit.! And so I'm thankful that you are here. Last week, we were reminded that resolve is required.

! This week, we're going to be taught that a word must be revealed. A people resolved, a word revealed.

It's a great text, long text, but we're going to orient ourselves with three movements. In verses 1 to 12, we see a restless king. In verses 13 to 45, we see a revelation from God. And then in verses 46 to 49, we have a response to consider. So the title today is A Word for the World. A Word for the World. Let me pray. Father in heaven, we come to this great text, not only in size, but in implications.

And I pray that you would prepare our hearts and our minds to receive all that you would have for us in this word today. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts that are ready to respond. And we pray this in Christ's powerful name. Amen. Amen. Well, in a few weeks, I'm going to be in Tokyo, and I'm going to be with dozens of pastors, all trying to make progress in the work of handling God's word. But there's a problem. I don't speak Japanese. But good thing I have a translator. Otherwise, everybody is in trouble. I also downloaded this app. Maybe you've downloaded.

It's called Google Translate. It's pretty remarkable. I can take Google Translate, put it over a worksheet in Japanese, and instantly it will translate it into English. Or I can record somebody speaking Japanese, and it will instantly interpret it from Japanese into English. Just think of the human ingenuity to create something like Google Translate that can interpret human language in a moment.

[2:17] Wouldn't it be nice, though? Wouldn't it be nice if we had something that not only translated or interpreted human language, but human experience and human situation and circumstance? Humans created Google Translate. But when it comes to the fears and the wrestlings of the heart and mind of humanity, human wisdom and human ingenuity simply is insufficient. So we come to this text. We find a man who's troubled. He is deeply distressed and restless. He had a dream, and that dream has stirred up in him all kinds of wrestling and insecurity, and he fears what is to come. He is seeking an interpretation.

And he'll find that human attempts to help him, they're going to fall short. But what humanity can't do, God can do. And God will act because God is set on reaching the world. God is set on reaching someone like Nebuchadnezzar. And God is set on reaching someone like you and me. Why do I say that God is set on reaching a restless world? Well, let's remember what Pastor Helm taught us in the first week with Jeremiah's letter, his letter to the exiles in Babylon. And we were reminded that in that letter, God, in part, God was sending the people of Israel into Babylon to seek its welfare. He said this, seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you, for in its welfare you will find welfare. God sent his people to Babylon for its good. But not only Jeremiah's letter, in our text we are starting

Nebuchadnezzar's journey. Three consecutive chapters here where God is engaging Nebuchadnezzar. God is trying to get his attention. God is trying to reach him. Babylon was a powerhouse of the day, of the ancient world, a pinnacle of human existence. And Nebuchadnezzar was on the top.

And God was wanting to reach him. Because God is set on reaching the world. So as we start here, let's consider, let's consider this man that God is trying to reach in chapter 2 of Daniel. First, a

restlessness that is unsettling. A restlessness that is unsettling. Nebuchadnezzar, he inherited a very strong kingdom from his father. And as he started his own rule, he was trying to expand that kingdom and the glory of Babylon. He defeated the likes of Carchemish, Ashkelon, Hamath. He had secured Syria. He had besieged Jerusalem. And so Nebuchadnezzar was a very powerful ruler. And his eyes were on even greater glory. And yet think about it. This king, with all the military power, all of the political protection and all of the cultural prestige, is troubled. With all of that, he has dreams. And he is deeply distressed. His sleep left him.

He's a restless man. In Babylonian culture, dreams were of massive importance to them. They believed that they were a means by which the gods would be communicating to them, especially to their king, their ruler. Divine messages. So Nebuchadnezzar must have been wondering, are the gods trying to send me a divine message here of importance for me and the future of the kingdom that I am leading?

[6:17] The story reads as though he can't fully remember his dream. He certainly doesn't know what it means. And so he's seeking desperately for some kind of interpretation. His spirit is troubled.

And we get the sense that he knows, he knows that these dreams are of massive significance for him. The unknown dreams leave him unsettled. It produces fear. It produces a sense of anxiety, insecurity.

His sleep is gone. A sleepless, restless man, unsettled by what is unknown that he cannot control in the future. Anybody else in the room had sleepless, restless nights because of the unknown of what is ahead that you cannot control. Well, what does Nebuchadnezzar do? What he does, he turns to the most educated, most knowledgeable, most respected men of the day who had received the best of trainings. He turned to the best of the best that Babylon could offer. He's looking for an interpretation. They want to help, but they need something to work with, Nebuchadnezzar. They ask him for the dream first. That seems reasonable, doesn't it? Nebuchadnezzar, he drastically overreacts. He says, no, I want both the dream and the interpretation. He even raises the stakes, offering a warning or even reward based off of how they respond to this situation. Nebuchadnezzar senses that this is a divine message that he must know. And in his restlessness, he even moves to lose some control. And the wise men, though, they chirp back at Nebuchadnezzar in verse 11. Look at that, basically saying, dude, what you're asking, no human on earth can do. What you are asking, O king, only the gods can show. That's a stunning acknowledgement. But again, it flips the switch for Nebuchadnezzar even more. And in his lack of control, he sends out this devastating death sentence to all the wise men. So here we have, this dream is a mystery. Nebuchadnezzar is a man that is restless and completely unsettled and undone. What are we to make of the story up to this point? Well, Nebuchadnezzar's restlessness and the wise men's finiteness strikes at the cord of our human limitations. Humanity has done great things, have we not? And yet we lose sleep because we cannot control the unknown future.

Humanity's done great things, and yet we are constantly troubled by the questions we can't answer. We've done great things, and yet we fear that the legacy that we have built could be removed in a moment. We have a restless man that we can resonate with. We can acknowledge and need to acknowledge that there are mysteries in this life that human ingenuity and human wisdom cannot interpret.

We're reminded with Nebuchadnezzar that even though you might have all the power, all the prestige, all the protection, that we are finite, and we are limited, and we are frail. The ruler who's the top of the top, these wise men who are the best of the best, they can't interpret this mystery.

[10:19] The greatest need of Nebuchadnezzar is a revelation that no human can offer. So a restlessness that is unsettling in verses 1 to 12, it gives way to a revelation that only God can give in verses 13 to 45. First, a revelation to Daniel, and then a revelation to Nebuchadnezzar.

So our friend Daniel enters into the story starting in verse 13 and beyond. Because Nebuchadnezzar's cruel command, this devastating command, was actually a death sentence to Daniel and his three companions.

And yet when we think about this, his reaction can't be anything close to Nebuchadnezzar's. It's the complete opposite when you look at those in contrast to his situation. Nebuchadnezzar, this fearful mystery, it leads him into this place of restlessness, seeking the best of human wisdom. But Daniel, in the face of a fearful death sentence, is full of peace, full of prudence, and he seeks the mercy of

God. In the face of death, he relies not on human wisdom, but he turns to the God of heaven and asks for mercy in verse 18. Do you see it there? He told his faithful companions, his faithful crew, to cry out to God to seek mercy concerning this mystery because of the wise men and the death sentence that they had received, but also for the sake of the restless man who sat on the throne of Babylon. And guess what? In God's mercy, God reveals the mystery to Daniel because what man cannot do, God can do. God reveals because God is set on reaching the world. Verses 1 to 3, 13, we see the limitations of humanity. But Daniel's prayer in verses 20 to 23, they show the eternal greatness of God. Humanity rises and falls with the seasons, but God is the one who is changing them. Kings may come and go, but God sets them up and removes them. Humanity may have great insights, but God is actually the source of all of their understanding and wisdom to begin with. In God's mercy and might, he is the one who reveals the mysteries that humanity cannot discern. This Daniel, beautifully portrayed here as dependent on God. Nebuchadnezzar sought the best of human wisdom.

Daniel seeks out the mercy of God. In the midst of your restlessness, in the midst of your fear, in the midst of your questions, where do you turn? The best of human wisdom or the mercy of God? [13:33] Now, to be clear, we can rely in a lot of ways on human wisdom, and God can work through that to bring about much good in society through human wisdom and human achievement, and yet it is limited.

And there is a God who reveals mysteries, who is merciful. And so this church needs to be one that has this impulse in the midst of the circumstances that we face and the restlessness that we experience, is that our impulse is to turn and seek the mercy of God. Because of what we see in verses 20 to 23.

Daniel didn't turn to his own wisdom. He turned to the God of heaven. What about you? Well, the story moves. It moves from this revelation to Daniel, now to the revelation that is given to Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel, starting in verse 24. Because God is set on reaching the world. And to reach the world, God chooses to reveal his word. In the story, Daniel calls the captain of the guard. He tells him, stop these plans to kill all the wise men. Because the word for a restless man had been revealed. It's beautiful, verses 27 to 30. Daniel says this, read with me. No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show the king the mystery that the king has asked.

[15:04] Human limitations. But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries and is made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.

And Daniel elevates before Nebuchadnezzar God, not himself, saying, it's not anything in me. But God is the one who has revealed this mystery. And God revealed it so that Nebuchadnezzar would know.

God was set on reaching Nebuchadnezzar. A word for the world. Daniel declares this word that's been revealed to him.

It's the dream and then it's the interpretation. It's a word about what is to come. We heard it. It's this dream of this mighty, scary image.

This gold head. This chest that is silver with its arms and the middle that is made of bronze and the legs of iron and the feet is a mixture of the iron and the clay.

[16:07] And then comes this stone. That is not cut out from a human hand. But it came and it struck the feet of the image. And the image crumbled and it crashed. And then it blew away like chaff of the wind.

But the stone remained. And it says that it became a great mountain filling the earth. That's the dream. What man cannot reveal, God reveals in the dream.

Not only that, he also revealed the interpretation. This image, it represents human kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was gold.

Because of its glory and because of its greatness. This restless man would actually have an incredible rule. And the silver would represent a subsequent kingdom that came after him.

And then the bronze, another one after them. And yet inferior to Nebuchadnezzar. And then a fourth one would arise with even great strength that would shatter the world.

[17:09] But it would still have fragility like clay. And Daniel moves to say, hey, this stone. This stone is representing a kingdom.

An everlasting kingdom that God will set up. And it's going to break into pieces all the other kingdoms that are going to fade away. Because it stands forever.

And then in the ultimate mic drop, Daniel says, A great God has made known to the king. What shall be after this? The dream is certain. And the interpretation is sure.

A word has been revealed to a restless king. It included this scope of the significance of his own kingdom.

And yet it also included a word about the replacement of his own kingdom. A likely interpretation and understanding of this prophetic word is we see this Babylonian rule that is replaced by the Medo-Persian rule.

[18:10] Which is replaced by the kingdom of Greece. Which is replaced by the kingdom of Rome. But the center of this dream and its interpretation is about the stone.

What does this stone symbolize? Symbolize. It's God's kingdom. It's a prophetic word about God's kingdom coming. And in the New Testament we learn that this word revealed about the rule of God is fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

What did Jesus say as he launched his ministry? The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. Because the kingdom of God arrived in the coming of Jesus.

And even in his ministry as he's opposed in his person and in his teaching. Jesus shares a parable predicting his own death.

And he actually quotes Daniel chapter 2 in Psalm 118. And he describes himself as the stone that would be rejected by many.

[19:18] But that stone would be vindicated and all who fall on the stone would be broken. What is Jesus saying? That the rule of God in the world is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

That though he was rejected and even killed, Jesus rules through death into life to usher in an eternal kingdom that will last forever.

The Bible teaches that Jesus, this stone, is either going to be a stone of salvation or a stone of stumbling. All depending on what you do with the stone.

If you believe in the stone. To reach the world. God chooses to reveal his word. And this word is about the rule of his son, Jesus.

See, Nebuchadnezzar, this king in power. He needed to hear a word about a greater power. As I studied, I kept singing a song from the 90s that I grew up with.

[20:27] It's called The Power. It's a hip-hop dance song sung by the group Snap. And you might know the refrain from vocalist Penny Ford.

And the refrain goes like this. I've got the power. You know that one? Over and over. I've got the power. I won't keep going.

Don't worry. Don't worry. But I thought of that line. Because each of these human kingdoms represented in this dream of Nebuchadnezzar would at one point claim that line.

At the pinnacle of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, what would he say? I've got the power. And then he was replaced. And then came Cyrus, the Medo-Persian kingdom.

No, I've got the power. And then he was replaced. Alexander the Great. No, now I've got the power. And then he was replaced.

[21:29] Now comes the Roman rule. No, I've got the power. I've got the power. Then replaced. But what about Jesus?

He came and he calmed the storm with the word. He's got the power. He came and he healed the sick because he's got the power.

He came and he gave sight to the blind because he has the power. He came and he willingly, willingly laid down his life in death.

Only to pick it back up again in resurrection because he has the power. And he reigns and he rules even now. Bringing the kingdom of God in the world.

The power and the rule of King Jesus. He has the power. Power over sickness. Power over disease.

[22:32] Power over the things of this world. Power over sin. Power over death. Power over the devil. He has the power and he will rule for all eternity. This is the kingdom that came in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen? This is the word that was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar. Jesus Christ has the power, the stone. How are we going to respond?

Because the thing about this is that one in power wants to reach you. He wants relationship with you. He wants to invite you into his kingdom.

To experience all the blessings and the benefits of what he offers as the king. In power. All who believe in the stone can find forgiveness of their sins.

And the hope that he offers. God intends to reach the world. And so God reveals a word. And it's a word about the rule that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

[23:42] So this story, we had a restlessness that was unsettling. But God revealed a word. And it's a word about his son.

So we have a response that we must consider though. Each and every one of us. Because the reach of God's word is intended to reach each and every one of us.

We're helped by looking at Nebuchadnezzar verses 46 to 49. Nebuchadnezzar was humbled by the word revealed by God. He even honors Daniel and elevates him and his companions.

He acknowledges that this is the God of gods. And the Lord of kings who reveals mysteries. Well his journey with the one true God had begun.

But he was not yet fully ready to surrender to God. Chapter 3 is going to tell us that. It's going to show us that. But the word revealed did carve out some space.

[24:44] It seems like in Nebuchadnezzar's mind. He's starting a journey. That might be you here this morning. You might not be ready to pick up with Jesus fully.

But I wonder if you're interested in starting the journey. For Nebuchadnezzar God chose to reveal his word through a dream. But for us God chooses to reveal his word through the scriptures.

This is where God reveals himself to us. And so if you're here today considering the claims of Jesus. I want to invite you on a journey. To hear more of this word about Jesus.

In this community. We want to walk with you. And we want to talk more about what that means.

Others of you in this room. You've received the rule of Jesus by faith.

You can look to Daniel as your guide. What did Daniel do? He depended not on human wisdom. But he looked to the God. Of heaven. He praised God.

[25:44] He declared the word that he received with boldness. And not shame. But for all of us here. I don't know what is wrestling you.

Causing you trouble. Causing you restlessness. I don't know what is causing you sleeplessness. At night. But I do know. Know that God chooses to reveal his word.

About his son. In which you can find the forgiveness of sins. In life. In him. His kingdom is everlasting. Because he. Has.

The power. Last Easter. We heard some beautiful stories. About how God had revealed. His good news. To a few in our midst.

His saving power. Revealed through the scriptures. In Bible studies. And preaching. There were some individuals. Who started their journey. In this.

[26:42] Place. And they wrestled with God's revelation. In his word. And then they stood. And proclaimed. Their belief. In the stone of Jesus Christ.

For their. Salvation. Maybe this Easter. Maybe this Easter. That could be. One of you. As you receive. The saving rule.

Of Jesus. As we see. In the scriptures. It's a word. For the world. And the greatest need. Of a restless world.

Is the revelation. Of God's word. Let's pray. Father in heaven. We come before you. We thank you. For a passage like this.

A great. Passage. But we thank you. That it reveals. Who you are. I pray that you would help. Each of us Lord. Because we know. That you want to reach.

[27:37] Yes the world. But that includes people. In this very room. And so God. I pray that you would do that. By the power of your Holy Spirit. Wherever they are. In this journey. Of understanding. Who you are.

And your saving rule. In Jesus. I pray that you would meet them. And care for them. And reveal your power. That can be for them. As they trust. In your son Jesus.

And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.