

# A tale of two realities

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[ 0 : 00 ] In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams. His spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams.

So they came in and stood before the king. And the king said to them, I had a dream and my spirit is troubled to know the dream. Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, O king, live forever. Tell your servants the dream and we will show the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The word from me is firm. If you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb and your houses shall be laid in ruins.

But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation.

They answered a second time and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream and we will show its interpretation. The king answered and said, I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time because you see that the word from me is firm.

[ 1 : 20 ] If you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change.

Therefore tell me the dream and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation. The Chaldeans answered the king and said, There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand.

For no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. The thing that the king asks is difficult and no one can show it to the king except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh.

Because of this, the king was angry and very furious and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. So the decree went out and the wise men were about to be killed and they sought Daniel and his companions to kill them.

Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Ariok, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. He declared to Ariok, the king's captain, Why is the decree of the king so urgent?

[ 2 : 33 ] Then Ariok made the matter known to Daniel and Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time that he might show the interpretation to the king. Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah and his companions and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.

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. He reveals deep and hidden things.

He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with him. 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.

Therefore Daniel went into Ariok, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him, Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon.

[ 4 : 04 ] Bring me in before the king and I will show the king the interpretation. Then Ariok brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him, I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation.

The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belshazzar, Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation? 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. 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.

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. 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 known to the king and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.

You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you and its appearance was frightening.

[ 5 : 35 ] The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. As you looked, a stone was cut out by human hand and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces.

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. This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation.

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 and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, making you rule over them all.

You are the head of gold. Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you and yet a third kingdom of bronze which shall rule over all the earth.

[ 6 : 52 ] 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.

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.

And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. 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. 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 other people.

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

[ 8 : 00 ] A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure. Then king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him.

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.

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.

Daniel made a request to 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.

Good. Good morning, everybody. Please keep that bit of the Bible open. There's an order, a list of headlines on the back of the service sheet.

[ 9 : 09 ] You can follow where we're going in the sermon and space there to make notes if you find that helpful. With our Bibles open in front of us, let's pray. Lord God, you are the one who reveals mysteries.

We wouldn't know anything of any real significance apart from that truth that you reveal things to us that we need to know and we don't otherwise know.

Please would you do that again for us this morning. Please reveal yourself to us, reveal truth to us as we look at this bit of the Bible together.

In Jesus' name. Amen. So, last week, we were thinking about the book of Daniel as a tale of two cities.

The two cities were Jerusalem and Babylon. And you'll remember the storyline is that Jerusalem has been taken into Babylon, the southern half of the kingdom of Israel, centred on its capital city of Jerusalem, has been captured by the big bad bully, Babylon, who's taken them into exile.

[10:22] The land's been invaded. The best people have been carried off, including Daniel, a teenager, probably about 14, and he gets enrolled as an undergraduate in the university in Babylon.

Later, all the people will end up deported. The city will be destroyed. So, Daniel, as we were thinking last week, is crisis literature, 999 literature.

But more than that, we were thinking last week about how Jerusalem is the city where God's people belong. Not just the Jerusalem that is the city at the eastern end of the Med, down south from here, but Jerusalem being the city that is coming, the home that God will take us to.

And Babylon is the city that represents human depravity. It's where everybody lives. So it's also the place where God's people live, here in Babylon, in exile, until the new Jerusalem comes.

And we're thinking last week, of course, that that is quite similar to us here in London. We are God's people, far from our heavenly home, living like exiles, like strangers, like aliens, in a city that largely doesn't acknowledge God.

[11:36] I was talking to somebody recently who does a lot of traveling in his job, and he was saying how people always say to him, oh, that's very glamorous. And he was saying, no, it's not.

You know, one hotel in Brussels, another one in Northampton, they're exactly the same. Short stay, move on, you know, who wants it? And he was saying, basically, he just can't wait to get home, because that's where he belongs.

There is a world of difference, isn't there, between a short stay, travel lodge, and your home.

Christians can't wait to get home. So that was last week, Daniel as a tale of two cities.

This week, I want to think about Daniel as a tale of two realities from Daniel chapter two. The first reality is, if you like, the what you see is what you get reality.

In other words, look out of your window and describe it. That is real. That is reality. But there's another way of looking at everything that we see as we look out of a window.

[12:41] There's a heavenly view on the events of this world. That describes other things that are going on behind the scenes in the heavenlies. You can't see them, but they are just as real.

Do you remember the moment when Jesus was completely changed in front of three of his disciples? That story we call the transfiguration, the changing, where three of his disciples are given a glimpse, a sneak look, behind the curtain.

And they get to see Jesus in all, as he really is, in all his awesome, amazing majesty. And he is not like the Wizard of Oz, some wimpy anticlimax, but wonderful and glorious.

You couldn't see that gloriousness of Jesus, not normally, just by looking at him, all the time you lived alongside him, not unless somebody revealed it to you. And in Mark chapter 9, God did.

The two realities alongside one another. What you see is what you get. And the other reality that is unseen and we cannot see unless God reveals it to us.

[13:51] There was a workman who was leaving his factory after a day's work and he was pushing a wheelbarrow out of the factory and inside the wheelbarrow was a small package.

As he came out, the security guard stopped him and said, what have you got in your wheelbarrow? And he said, well, it's a small box. And the security guard said, well, I can see that, but what have you got inside it?

And the man said, well, you know the sawdust that is on the floor of the factory at the end of the day? That just gets swept up and thrown away. I needed some sawdust so I'm taking some home. Open the box, said the security guard. So he did. And inside was a whole load of sawdust. Okay, off you go, says the guard. Second day, the same thing happened. Same man, wheelbarrow, box of sawdust, looks inside, it is sawdust, off you go.

Third day, the same thing. And the fourth day. So on the fifth day, he's pushing the wheelbarrow out. The security guard stops him and says, oh, it's you again. What have you got in your wheelbarrow?

[14:52] And the man says, it's exactly the same as the other four days. We'll open up the box. Inside the box is a whole load of sawdust. So the security guard says, look, I've got this feeling that you're stealing something.

You're trying to pull a fasten on me. Why don't you tell me what it is that you're stealing and I promise I won't report to you. All right, the man says, I will. I'm stealing wheelbarrows. Now, that is the sort of thing that's going on in Daniel.

In Daniel, there's this constant interplay between two realities. The world around us, what we can experience and touch and feel, what everybody can see, that is very real to us, of course. But there's another parallel reality. What we wouldn't know by looking, you can only see it if somebody draws back the curtain. We've got to be told about it. Just because we can't see it doesn't mean it isn't real.

It's very, very real. The interplay between the wheelbarrow and the box of sawdust. We saw this a bit at the beginning of the very book, the first few verses of the book that we looked at last week.

[16:03] Just look back to chapter one and you'll remember how verse one tells us about Jerusalem overtaken by Babylon. God's people defeated by the power of Babylon. That's what the newspapers, the history books would report.

What you see is what you get. But now look at verse two and you'll see here is the parallel reality. We can't see this but the Bible tells it to us that God gave Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. The Lord did it. Now which is real, verse one or verse two? And the answer is both. Two realities alongside one another. Two ways of understanding what is happening.

Both the what you see is what you get reality and what we only know because God tells us. A glimpse behind the curtain. And all the way through Daniel, that's what all the dreams are about. They are God revealing stuff, revealing things to his people. What you can't see, you wouldn't know, but is genuine and God lets the individual, the people, know. So all the weird stuff he's doing later in the book.

[17:11] I don't know if you read on in Daniel but there's monsters and battles and winning and losing and that too is God revealing to his people another reality that they can't see, we couldn't see.

It's very, very real and we need to know it. So a simple question. Who understands history? And the answer of the Bible is it's the person who can hold these two realities together. What we see here and now and what God tells us about the things we see.

So Simon Sharma, for example, a very clever man, a historian, social observer, commentator of some note.

David Starkey, a rude man but a clever historian. But neither of them, non-Christian as they are, understand history.

[18:12] Because they, self-confessed non-Christians, are not in the slightest bit interested in what God said is going on in history.

They're not interested in that other reality. All they talk about is the what you see is what you get world. They're trying to look at history out of one eye. They're trying to decipher it without knowing the code.

They're seeing it upside down and inside out. It's kind of depressing for them, isn't it? They've given their whole life to history and they know less about it than the ordinary bog standard Christian God's people live in the world we can see holding firm to the reality of the world we can't see.

Now, all of that is a long introduction to chapter 2 and the passage that we're going to look at today. So let's turn to chapter 2 and here is my first headline that this then is a chapter about the God who reveals.

Daniel, remember, is one of this elite group of exiles taken to be part of Nebuchadnezzar's reprogramming, enrolled in his university and all things Babylonian are imposed upon him.

[19:28] Food, religion, education, social life, career, everything is Babylonian. There is a dream that is unexplained and leaves the king, we're told in verse 1, with a troubled spirit.

Do you know if you have dreams like that, do you, where you, you know, you wake up in the morning, you can't remember what happened but you remember the fear or the emotion that went with it. You can't remember why you feel sickened or afraid, you just know you've still got the feeling with you.

That's the kind of situation and verse 2, Nebuchadnezzar calls in all his dream experts and he's got quite a few to call on. Come and explain my dream.

So of course they say in verse 3, what's the dream? Ah ha, he says, you're not catching me out that quickly, I'm not going to tell you. And we don't know if it is that he just didn't remember it and couldn't tell them or maybe it is he's just very mean, we don't know.

But he does say, if you can tell me there will be great honour and if you can't tell me you'll be torn limb from limb. And it emerges as Daniel goes on that Nebuchadnezzar has got a big thing about tearing people limb from limb.

[ 20 : 42 ] It's kind of his standard being nasty phrase. And then we get to verse 11 which is the very big point where they say, look, nobody can do this.

Nobody can reveal mysteries except the gods. verse 11. But the thing about the gods is, end of verse 11, they're nowhere to be seen.

Their dwelling is not with flesh. What a revealing statement that is. It's the utter desperation of idolatry, isn't it? Of the non-Christian worldview.

Of the religious but not Christian worldview. You know, if you remove the God who speaks, you are just left with silence.

You've removed God. He's now far away and his dwelling isn't with people like us and whatever he might know, he's not telling us. And we are left totally lost like Hansel and Gretel in a scary wood.

[ 21 : 46 ] Hoping against hope that we find some leftover crumbs that will show us the way. Well, at this, verse 12, Nebuchadnezzar loses his cool.

Right, he says, verse 12, in his best Basil faulty voice. Right, that's it. Death to the wise men. They can't reveal the mystery. And of course, Daniel is one of this group of people called the wise men. So, his life is endangered as well. Verse 17. So, Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to his three friends.

He told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. And then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night.

It is so simple, isn't it? I wish I could make sense of stuff. So, I asked God, simply prayed to him and verse 19, the mystery is revealed.

[ 22 : 48 ] Here is the answer to the hopelessness of verse 11, isn't it? Nobody can show it to the king. I'm sorry, there's nobody who can help you. Certainly not the far away, silent, useless gods.

Oh yes, the God of heaven can. He's not far away, but he's speaking and revealing and being very merciful. Just ask him, he'll tell you. And that becomes this very big theme all the way through the book, that God makes things known to his people.

That there is more to be known than the what you see is what you get world. There is the reality that God reveals that you can't know just from looking, but there is an insight, an understanding, a perspective on things that comes from God only and we need to know that to live right.

He reveals things. Far away from the homeland, here in pagan Babylon, God still speaks. And because he speaks, lives are saved.

Because Daniel won't now die. Life makes sense. So second half of verse 19 onwards, praise to God because he can and does reveal a mystery.

[ 24 : 04 ] In other words, he reveals what the dream was and what it means. It was death to the wise men because they couldn't. Now it is praise to the God of heaven because he does.

So then Daniel gets shown into the king and he has a conversation with Nebuchadnezzar and the king asks in verse 26, oh, are you able to make known to me? And Nebuchadnezzar says, no, sorry, I can't.

But there is a God who does. And finally, only now in verse 31 do we get to the dream. Quite an astonishing chapter, isn't it?

But did you think that as Clive was reading it? What is the dream? What is the dream? We don't get to it, to verse 31. And finally, we now listen in to what God reveals.

And the first thing is that kingdoms come and go. So it's this weird dream of a great image, a statue, that is made up of these various layers of material.

[ 25 : 08 ] There's a head of gold, chest of silver, thighs of brass, legs of iron, feet of iron and clay. And this represents one kingdom following another.

And generally, it's the sequences interpreted to be Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, then divided nations, although there's a bit of debate about what each, about the identity of the fifth one. But the point of this is that what this is telling Nebuchadnezzar, and for that matter, not only Nebuchadnezzar, but everybody who reads this, including us, everybody who is listening to God as he reveals this to the king, here is Nebuchadnezzar being allowed contact with the controller of history.

He's being allowed to see the heavenly view of reality. When we were some years ago working for another church in London, I was preaching at the front, and as I came down at the end of the evening service from preaching, somebody said, your wife has just phoned the office, our children were younger and she was on the way back from Eastbourne where she'd been from the weekend, your wife has phoned the office to say that she's broken down in the Blackwall Tunnel.

Now we, at that time, used to use the Blackwall Tunnel a lot, and it was one of our fears, you might break down in the Blackwall Tunnel, and what would happen. I don't know what does happen if you break down.

[ 26 : 40 ] Anyway, here was the phone call, she had broken down in the Blackwall Tunnel. So I grabbed a friend, jumped in the car and we drove breakneck speed to the Blackwall Tunnel to rescue my wife.

I don't know quite what I thought I was going to do, but it felt that's what a husband should do. We got to the Blackwall Tunnel, traffic seemed to be flowing as it normally does on a Sunday evening, not. So we just parked in the middle of the road at the entrance to the Blackwall Tunnel, and I ran into a door and up some stairs and kind of, has anybody seen my wife?

And ended up in this, what was it, kind of control room really, with a man sitting there with a wall of television screens, masses of them, that show every possible view down every inch of the Blackwall Tunnel.

To finish off this illustration, that's the relevant bit. The relevant bit is, she was fine, she hadn't broken down the Blackwall Tunnel, she was the other side, A were there, got towed home, it's all fine. Come back to the control room.

This is, that is the kind of picture that Nebuchadnezzar is being given, taken into the control room of history. And God has a lot more interesting things on his television screens than the Blackwall Tunnel, every view of every kingdom at every moment of time.

[ 28 : 01 ] And here is Nebuchadnezzar, here is Daniel, here is us, being given a view of that control room that is overseeing everything, of God overseeing the kingdoms of this world.

These impressive kingdoms, or so they seem. One following another one. Each one is weaker than the previous one, not stronger, as you might expect, until the last one, which is iron, and crushes all the others.

But before we go on with the dream, just look down to verse 37. Now we will tell the king its interpretation, verse 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, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of men, the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all.

You are the head of gold. Now there's several things amazing here. One of them is, not merely does Nebuchadnezzar think he's impressive, but God does as well.

I mean, just look again at what it says. To call him the king of kings. That's not a title you'd expect to be used by God of a tyrant bully like Nebuchadnezzar.

[ 29 : 20 ] And look at those descriptions. He's being given the kingdom, the power, the might, and the glory. That sounds like Jesus. We're used to those words being spoken of Jesus, but not of a Nebuchadnezzar to say that he is the king of kings.

But more than that, this is saying that God gave him the kingdom and the power and the might and the glory. His rule is given to him by God. No wonder he ends up saying in verse 47, truly, Daniel, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings.

And a revealer of mysteries, for you've been able to reveal this mystery. In other words, over this king of kings is the lord of kings who sets up kings and kingdoms and brings them down just however he pleases, who does according to his will.

We've recently been watching The Crown on the Netflix box set. It's a sort of fictional story of the early years of Queen Elizabeth and it mixes into it some newsreel footage alongside a fictional story.

At the moment of our queen's crowning, the archbishop brings the crown to put it on her head and he prays this, bless who he beseeched thee and sanctify this thy servant, our queen, as thou dost this day set a crown of pure gold upon her head.

[ 30 : 51 ] Do you see what he's saying? As he puts it on, he says, you, God, are the one who is setting the crown of pure gold on her head. It's God who puts the crown on the head of the monarch.

Now, you may or may not like the monarchy, but you've got to admire the theology. That is right. This anti-God, pagan, King Nebuchadnezzar, wasn't outside the rule of God.

God was still on the throne. The world in which we live is a sequence of kingdoms that come one after another. A government comes, a government goes.

Sometimes the kingdoms are very strong. Just consider the might of Babylon, the might of the Persian Empire that followed it. They set themselves against God and his people.

And these states are powerful. Chapter 3 tells us that the state has got fire. Chapter 6 tells us that the state has got teeth, lion's teeth. These flames, these teeth are set to consume the faithful.

[ 31 : 59 ] And God's people, like a Daniel and his mates, will stand in front of this roar, the roar of this monster, anti-God state that is firmly set to persecute the Christian.

But God sets up kings. kings. And God removes kings. I mean, just look back to those verses that we were reading in the prayer time. Look at verse 21.

I mean, my goodness, he even changes times and seasons. The clock, the ebb and flow of politics. He is the lord of kings. That's just as true of our 91-year-old queen and Donald Trump and so-called Islamic state and their leaders.

Yet, even with them, all kings rule under him. All power in this world is a delegated power from him.

However, king of kings-ish they become, they are under the authority of the lord of kings.

He is the one who gives them their position. And these kingdoms come and go by the determination, the decision at the arbitrary whim of the one true God by his fiat.

[ 33 : 18 ] But now look what comes after this sequence and look where the sequence ends. Verse 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.

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.

God reveals to Nebuchadnezzar, to Daniel, to us that he will set up his forever kingdom. kingdom.

This is the picture here, a subsequent kingdom, a forever and ever kingdom that will end all other kingdoms, break them up and then itself stand forever.

Look at verse 44 where it's explained. In those days of the kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed nor shall the kingdom be left to another. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end and it shall stand forever just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold.

This is the great God making known to this king Nebuchadnezzar what lies ahead for him, for every kingdom and for all this world. In this dream God is making clear that he is saying to every power and authority on earth you will lose.

[ 35 : 05 ] To the most invincible leader in the world to Nebuchadnezzar and Nero and Robert Mugabe and King Jong-un you will lose.

To the evil forces that are manipulating them and their regime you will lose. David Cameron has now joined the list of has-beens along with Tony Blair and John Major and all those other prime ministers who we probably ought to recognise but are now relegated to just being quiz questions on the inside cover of the Christmas edition of Radio Times.

And the same thing will happen sooner or later to Theresa May and to Jeremy and to Donald Trump he'll be the same as Hillary in four or eight years time and the opinion makers and the newspaper editors and the BBC and IS.

It will happen to IS just as happened to Al-Qaeda. It didn't quite happen to Al-Qaeda but they seem to have gone. And the Russian warplanes they will be like the Luftwaffe who in turn now are as powerful as Caesar and his horse-drawn chariots.

Every kingdom and its might will pass. For down the hill there is a mighty stone rolling, a mammoth wrecking rock.

[ 36 : 39 ] For has not God given to Jesus the only name that will outlast time, the name that is superior and better and triumphant over every other name, a name before which every knee, every knee will bow.

He's not just King Jesus. He's the King of Kings, the Lord of Kings of Kings, the Lord of Lords, King of Nebuchadnezzar. How ridiculous that anybody would try and stand on the hill and stop the rock that is rolling towards them.

Who would dare do that to Jesus? Who would dare treat him with contempt? This Jesus that will reign, this son of man, this son of Joseph, this ordinary bloke, this carpenter makes coffins for kingdoms.

For the future that we know that God has made plain to us and the Bible explains again and again so we can hardly miss it, the future is the open secret that is now open for everybody to know. The future is not orange. And of course, half the people in this room don't even know that recognize that slogan. There's another empire that's come and gone.

[ 38 : 04 ] The future is a throne on which Jesus is seated. And whatever tomorrow may bring, whatever our horoscope may dangle in front of us, the truth is that all the kingdoms of this world, however monstrous they may be, all peoples and nations and languages should serve him for to him has been given an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and glory and a kingdom that shall not be destroyed.

To him be praise and glory forever. And therefore, Daniel says, be wise.

Don't be a der-brain. Live your life with this reality. For this is real, not immediately observable, but certainly now revealed reality.

Now please get the point here. We don't know what tomorrow is going to bring. We don't know what surprises will come. But we do know the end of the story. There is a huge wrecking rock rolling down the hillside.

There is one like a son of man who demonstrated awesome authority when he walked on planet Earth. whose kingdom will fill the entire Earth.

[ 39 : 33 ] Look, I've read to the end of this book and plot spoiler alert for those who haven't, it does end well for God's people. It really is a happy ending, a happily ever after for God's people.

Those who side with the king whose kingdom will fill the whole Earth. We know that all ills will be healed and all that is mixedy muddled will be resolved.

We know our long-term future. We know our final goal. We know our destiny. We know Jesus is the king who will be reigning over everything. God has revealed that to his people.

That is the real reality. He's told us about the wheelbarrow so that we can see that there's more than the box of sawdust.

Now how does this help us tomorrow? It helps us to know which basket to put our eggs in. Because the thing is, you see, you can gain everything, can't you?

[ 40 : 38 ] You can be the greatest in this world or even just great in this world. You can accumulate trophies and certificates and a CV as long as a novel.

But all of that will be broken in pieces and become like chaff carried away in the world so that not a trace of them can be found.

Understanding this, believing this reality is real, it enables us to do what we saw last week in chapter one, doesn't it? To say no to food from the king's table. To not be cowed by the flames and the teeth.

To not be frightened by those who oppose us. It makes it possible to stand as a Christian in the public space. It makes it possible to be willing to follow Jesus rather than spending all of our life staring at a box of sawdust and thinking that it's terribly significant.

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