

## The Answer to the Mystery.

We love a good mystery. Mystery stories, books, shows, movies, especially real-life mysteries. The best mysteries confuse and stump us, they’re obscure or missing key details and then comes the best part, the reveal, the revelation of the mystery.

**[Slide Prompt:** *A slide containing a picture of the Rosetta Stone, possible from [the British Museum’s website.](#)]*

Like the ancient mystery of the Egyptian hieroglyphs. For about 1400 years after the practice of writing hieroglyphs died out, people forgot what they meant and scholars attempted and failed to interpret Egyptian hieroglyphs until at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century an artifact called the Rosetta Stone was located and within about 30 years it helped scholars solve the mystery of hieroglyphs.<sup>1</sup> There was a secret revealed by the stone, the revelation was that each picture in hieroglyphs did not have a meaning, but it had a sound. Hieroglyphs weren’t words they were letters.

The chapter we’re studying tonight, Daniel 2, is about mystery and it’s about revelation. In fact, I promise you that by the end of our study, I will have the privilege of revealing to you the greatest secret in the Bible.

Excited?

In Tony’s introduction we saw this is a book is written by the prophet Daniel and focuses on God’s sovereignty He explained some people try and challenge the historical accuracy of the book and author but he also explained quite clearly why those challenges are wrong. We will be confident this book is truthfully written by Daniel. That will be important tonight because we’re going to talk about some prophecy that is incredibly specific and accurate about future details. Knowing the accuracy of this prophecy told beforehand is important for our understanding of God’s sovereignty in these things.

Then in the first chapter, Andrew walked us through the introduction to the person Daniel. How he was a young man from a noble Judean family but as part of Babylon’s capture of Judah he was taken away and forced into the court of Babylon, beginning his three-year training period. In that chapter we saw Daniel’s character and devotion to Lord shine through. When presented with the opportunity to conform to Babylonian culture and abandon the commands of God, he instead “resolved not to defile himself” and trusted in the Lord’s provision. Take special note of verse 17 from chapter 1: “As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” This becomes incredibly important in chapter 2 where the interpretation of dreams is a big deal! Usually you and I think

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<sup>1</sup> (How Egyptian hieroglyphs were decoded, a timeline to decipherment | British Museum n.d.)

The Answer to the Mystery - Daniel 2 – Preacher’s Guild – Daniel Armstrong – Manuscript about this type of magic as fake or demonic, but to some degree we can’t avoid, Daniel was legitimately gifted by God in the interpretation of dreams. Not a demonic practice in this case, but a Holy gifting.

Our chapter today focuses on a dream given to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar:

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*In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him.*

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This chapter is dated in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, so early on in his rule.

Nebuchadnezzar took the throne very shortly after his first siege against Jerusalem, the same one where Daniel was captured.<sup>2</sup> This means Nebuchadnezzar has been king and Daniel has been in training both for about 2-3 years during this chapter. If you’ve read through Daniel before and pictured this wizened bearded prophet, you need to erase that from your mind. Daniel was likely either still in school or a fresh graduate, and that becomes really important to the chapter.

Nebuchadnezzar has this dream and it’s so disturbing that he’s troubled and can’t sleep.

**[Slide Prompt:** *First outline point]*

### **The King hears from God but doesn’t understand (v.1-13)**

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*<sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> And the king said to them, “I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream.” <sup>4</sup> Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, <sup>3</sup> “O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.” <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and*

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<sup>2</sup> Nebuchadnezzar inherited the throne from his father, Nabopolassar a few months after his first siege of Jerusalem. Babylonian calendars would count this ascension year as the final year of Nabopolassar and the following year as the first year of Nebuchadnezzar. This means chapter 2 takes place sometime after Nebuchadnezzar has completed 2 years of his reign during his third. (Miller 1994, 44, 76)

<sup>3</sup> This book switches from the normal Hebrew language to Aramaic here in verse 4, where we just read it says “they replied to the king in Aramaic.” Starting from the wise men’s reply until chapter 7 is all in Aramaic. It’s likely that the “in Aramaic” isn’t supposed to be a description of the wise men’s response but a parenthetical note about the language switch. Why does the language switch? What does it mean? The short answer is that we have some theories but we’re not really sure. Chapters 2-7 focus on topics more relevant globally while 1 and 8-12 focus on topics much more relevant for Jews, it could be that Daniel switches the language to something more friendly to international readers.

*rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation.”<sup>7</sup> They answered a second time and said, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation.”<sup>8</sup> 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—<sup>9</sup> 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.”<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.”*

*<sup>12</sup> Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed.<sup>13</sup> So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.*

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The king is so disturbed by this dream, he brings together his various factions of wise men and asks for an interpretation, which they're happy to indulge. This isn't anything unusual for these men, some study of ancient Babylon has actually turned up some documents that seem to be manuals of dream interpretation, with instructions on what certain aspects of dreams should mean.<sup>4</sup> Suddenly this request goes from ordinary to extraordinary when the king demands they not only interpret the dream but they must divine the original dream in the first place. Then to amp up the stakes even higher, the king gives an ultimatum that they either accomplish this task and receive rewards and great honor or they fail and the entire lot of them are executed immediately.

Three things are very clear immediately, this dream really bothered Nebuchadnezzar, he is adept at making extreme and rash decisions and also, he's not a big fan of these magicians and wise men. He's skeptical, he doesn't trust that they actually receive any special divine wisdom in their interpretations and so to prove they're capable of the miraculous, he requires a miracle.

The wise men immediately realize this is insane. They point out very astutely, and (ironically) very wisely, that what the king asks requires a god, a divine being capable of knowing the impossible. That is exactly why the king has issued this challenge, these men claim to be able to commune with the divine and understand the

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<sup>4</sup> (Miller 1994, 80)

The Answer to the Mystery - Daniel 2 – Preacher’s Guild – Daniel Armstrong – Manuscript mysteries of the world, but here the truth comes out, they don’t know any gods.<sup>5</sup> To them, the gods are unreachable because they are in heaven and we are on earth, the dwelling of gods is not with flesh.

Up to this point, our prophet Daniel has been nowhere to be seen, which makes a lot of sense when you consider he’s either just before or just after his graduation from training. I work in IT, when the CEO gets mad about a tech outage, you don’t send the intern or the new guy. Daniel doesn’t even know this is going on until “oopsie” someone is looking for you to kill you.

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*Daniel 2:14–18 (ESV) — 14 Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. 15 He declared to Arioch, the king’s captain, “Why is the decree of the king so urgent?” Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. 16 And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king. 17 Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, 18 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.*

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Let’s stop for a moment, because it’s easy for us to read the Bible knowing the ending, or thinking of these people as characters instead of real people. Put yourself for just a moment in the shoes of Daniel. You’re a captive in a foreign land, forced into this royal court, and now right at the end of your training you’re suddenly and unexpectedly greeted by a literal executioner knocking on your door. You are looking death in the face. There is no trial or jury awaiting you, there is no defense you can give, there is a strong armored man at your door telling you it is his job to kill you because the king is angry.

Be honest with yourself, what would your gut reaction be? Do you fall down in despair, terror, pleading and begging? Do you feel denial? Do you go into self-defense or violence or fleeing? Daniel doesn’t have any sort of concealed carry license to make him feel safer. Daniel doesn’t react in any of these ways, but instead God has gifted with wisdom so he responds with prudence and discretion. He doesn’t have a gut reaction to the situation, he carefully and thoughtfully responds, and God grants him favor so the executioner, Arioch, is willing to hear him out on his request.

Notice that Daniel schedules an appearance before the king, promising to provide an interpretation and yet God has not given him any interpretation. That is an immense amount of confidence coming from this fresh graduate becomes he knows that God has gifted him in dream interpretation. His confidence is not misplaced,

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<sup>5</sup> (Miller 1994, 83)

The Answer to the Mystery - Daniel 2 – Preacher’s Guild – Daniel Armstrong – Manuscript because his confidence is not in himself but in God. Then, rather than his confidence leading him to pride, he humbly goes home, gathers all his God-worshiping friends together and tells them “We need to pray, badly. We need God’s mercy to reveal to us this mystery so we don’t get destroyed.”

There are a lot of reasons to aspire to be like Daniel, (it’s been an easy comparison for me to make in my life) but this is definitely an area where I fall short. Faced with trial I struggle to react first with confidence in God, and even when I somehow manage to do that correctly, there is no way I’m going to remain properly humble. My pride in my own ability immediately takes over, and I start problem solving. If I was in Daniel’s shoes, you’d see me in front of a giant white board diagraming the problem to my three friends because analyzing and thinking through a problem are my go-to tools.

Remember when we face a trail that if we lack confidence in God, we become fearful and timid. Then if we manage confidence in God but lack humility our confidence becomes pride because we forget our constant and desperate need for God in every circumstance. Remember that the beginning of all wisdom is Fear of the Lord. It’s humility before the King. Daniel gives us an excellent example when he sets his appointment with the king, promises an interpretation, then goes home and desperately prays for mercy.

Daniel and his friends pray because they know that while the wise men were correct that only God in heaven knows the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, they were wrong when they said God does not dwell among flesh. Hopefully, if you’re sitting in this church today then this isn’t news for you, but just in case this isn’t clear, the God of the universe, the creator of all things, the judge over all living and dead, is not far away up in heaven but He decided to take on flesh and come live among us as the man Jesus and dwell among us.

**[Slide Prompt: Cross-reference verse]**

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*John 1:14 (ESV) — 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

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Daniel had only fleeting ideas about God among men, those stories of Adam and Moses or promises of the kingdom, yet we know the Lord who lived and died as a man and then who gave us His very Spirit to abide inside of us. We sing his songs of Emmanuel every Christmas time to celebrate God dwelling among flesh.

Just like Daniel did, let’s face our trials with confidence in God, not ourselves, with humility, not pride and with a relationship with the infinite God that chooses to dwell among men. Another great example for us to follow appears next, God responds to Daniel’s request and he bursts out in praise.

**[Slide Prompt:** *second outline point*]

### The prophet seeks God and finds answers (v.14-23)

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**Daniel 2:19–23 (ESV)** — **19** Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. **20** 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.”

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This prayer gives us a sneak peek into the kind of things Daniel learned from God’s revelation. These will make more sense we look at what the content of the dream actually is! “He changes times and seasons, he removes kings and sets up kings.” Daniel even praises the very fact that God is the one who stores up secrets of wisdom and He is the one who can and does reveal them.

He is so excited by God’s revelation, as he should be, that goes back to his executioner and tells him he’s ready to meet with the king.

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**Daniel 2:24–30 (ESV)** — **24** Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, 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; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation.” **25** Then Arioch 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.” **26** 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.”

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First this captain, Arioch, hears Daniel is ready with an interpretation and rushes him in to see the king. The fact that this guy was willing to give Daniel some extra time when he asked and the fact that he's so eager to bring him before the king here would imply that he realizes the king's anger and command to slaughter these wise men is a bit extreme and he's not eager to carry out the sentence.

Notice here his introduction of Daniel to the king. We're reminded here that despite how amazing a name it is, Daniel does not go by the name Daniel, but instead he's introduced by the name Belteshazzar. On occasion I have also tried to introduce myself as Belteshazzar and so far, no one has got the joke. We really have to pay attention when the book decides to use one name or another. There's meaning there. This doesn't just apply to chapter 2, you likely think of Daniel's friends by their Babylonian names used in chapter 3. All these boys' Hebrew names point glory back to the one true God of Israel somehow, while their Babylonian names all have the names of various Babylonian gods in them, so they're likely honoring those gods somehow. Pay attention for the rest of this Daniel study and you'll see these names help you understand the mindset of the people using them. Here we see that Arioch and Nebuchadnezzar do not yet see Daniel as the prophet of the one true living God of Israel, but simply some young Babylonian captive who's good at interpreting dreams.

Daniel stands before the most powerful man in the world who has already ordered his death and when the king asks if he can interpret the dream, he says "no." He says "I have no ability to do that, but let me tell you about a God in heaven who can." When we talk to the people around us in our own society and try to tell them about "A God in heaven." They generally know we're referring to an almighty, creator Christian God of the Bible, even if they don't agree with us. Yet in Babylon, no one would be surprised to be talking about "a God in heaven," they would simply want to know which one you were referring to? Daniel's first task here is not actually to explain the dream to the king but to introduce Nebuchadnezzar to the God who gave him the dream. Like Paul at Mars Hill, Daniel must reach past the culture around him to introduce God to the king.

**[Slide Prompt: third outline point ]**

### **The prophet introduces God to the king (v.24-30)**

Daniel explains two things about God to the king. First, he explains that God is the revealer of mysteries, He is the one who knows everything you don't know. Second, he explains that when Nebuchadnezzar was lying awake at night wondering what would come in the world after he was gone, this God has chosen to reach down from heaven and reveal the answer to this mystery to the king.

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Daniel very specifically says here that God gave this dream for the benefit of Nebuchadnezzar’s understanding, so why would God choose to reveal this information in this hidden way through a dream that requires an interpreter like Daniel? There are three things I can see that God is accomplishing through this dream.

Firstly, without this introduction by Daniel, the king would never get this introduction. He would receive the information, sure, but he wouldn’t know the God in heaven that reveals mysteries.

Secondly, if God had just dropped this revelation straight in Nebuchadnezzar’s noggin, you and I would be out of luck. Daniel as God’s prophet had the privilege and responsibility of recording this dream so that you and I can benefit from it.

Thirdly, when you look at how this God in heaven that reveals mysteries does things, He always chooses to reveal Himself through His people. From His promises to Adam, to Noah, to Moses, to David to the Prophets, to the Apostles of the church, God has called out a certain group of people from the earth to be His representatives and when He has something to reveal to the world He decides to use His people. We know that Daniel has already been gifted with the interpretation of dreams, but this is unique being given the dream as well as the interpretation, this is the beginning of Daniel’s calling as a prophet of God.

So what is this dream that has Nebuchadnezzar so scared?

**[Slide Prompt: fourth outline point]**

**The prophet reveals God’s mystery to the king (v.31-45) [15 min?]**

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***Daniel 2:31–35 (ESV) — 31** “You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. **32** The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, **33** its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. **34** As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. **35** Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.*

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This dream starts with this great image, like an idol or a statue described in the shape of a man. The image is described as mighty, frightening, bright. Whatever you’re thinking in your head is probably not big or bright

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enough. I went looking for an artist rendition to display for you but each one I found inspired feelings of comedy more than of awe. We’ll use the theater of the mind. In a future chapter, Nebuchadnezzar decides to build himself a large statue and chooses to make it 90 feet tall, so maybe it was similar to that or maybe it was bigger and he couldn’t replicate something like that? The statue has four sections made up of 5 different materials and then a rock falls off a mountain without any human cutting the stone and strikes the statue specifically at its feet. Now the lack of anyone cutting reinforces the picture of uncut stone used all over the Bible to represent something that God has made without human intervention or effort, just like the uncut stones Israelites were commanded to use for their altars.

The impact of this stone destroys the statue, but in a spectacular. If I had a big statue up here on stage with me right now and crushed the feet with a stone, what would happen? The statue would just kind of topple over and break up. But this statue in the dream doesn’t just topple, it splits into tiny pieces that blow away on the wind! This statue doesn’t just break, it is obliterated. The whole dream is supernatural so this “blowing away like chaff” could just be some unexpected part of the dream, but I prefer to think this is like when you watch what happens on an episode of MythBusters when they shoot a really big bullet at that gooey ballistic gel and the bullet doesn’t just pass through the material, it’s moving so fast and carrying so much energy that on impact the gel expands and explodes outwards. I don’t think Daniel had any other words to explain the rapid speed and impact force that this stone has other than describing the instant obliteration of the statue completely from the toes up.

Lastly this uncut stone starts to grow and expand and become the biggest mountain you’ve ever seen that fills the entire world. I don’t know if you’ve ever gotten a chance to get away from this flat desert of San Antonio and go somewhere where there are actual mountains. I’ve only gotten the chance a couple times, but a mountain is so infinitely larger and grander than a statue. From countless miles away, it towers in the distance, then when you go near it expands to fill your entire view. You cannot look up at a giant mountain and not feel small and insignificant, and those are regular mountains that don’t fill the entire earth. Take every little shred of awe or fear that this giant shining, terrifying statue causes and throw it out of your mind because this mountain has all of that awe and terror infinitely more.

Are you starting to see why Nebuchadnezzar might have been a little freaked out when you realize that he understood dreams to have meanings but didn’t know what the meaning was. He just watched this man statue get obliterated in front of him. He probably suspects something bad is coming his way.

But Daniel offers what is likely a different interpretation than the king suspected.

***Daniel 2:36–43 (ESV) — 36** “This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. **37** You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, **38** and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. **39** Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. **40** And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. **41** And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. **42** And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. **43** As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.*

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Each section of the statue, Daniel says, is representative of a kingdom of men ruling over the earth, starting with Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. Daniel tells the king that this God who reveals mysteries is sovereign over the whole world and has chosen to give Nebuchadnezzar the title of “king of kings,” that he would have power and might and glory over all men, and beasts and birds of the entire world. The king here is the golden head at the start of this statue. This is astounding to think about, one man capable of ruling the world not through even his own power but because it was ordained that way by God. Of course, we have to note that King Nebuchadnezzar did not choose to exert his authority such that Babylon actually encompassed the entire world, yet he was given strength by God to take what he wished and rule anywhere he chose to.

This is great news for the king, and probably a relief to know that this God responsible for his dream is not wanting him crushed like the statue but has actually gifted him his kingdom. But this dream isn't about the kingdom Nebuchadnezzar has right now, it's about the things that come after him, and that's where the dream goes.

Verse 39 is short, simple and packed with meaning. This gets to the root of what was keeping Nebuchadnezzar up late at night, what comes after him? God's answer is that the king's legacy will not last. Babylon will fall and be replaced; it just won't be during Nebuchadnezzar's time! In one verse, 23 words in English, we get the interpretation of the next two sections of the statue, they are two more kingdoms that come after Babylon and eventually go their way. Daniel offers no further details here, but there is a lot more said about these four kingdoms in later chapters of Daniel, plus you and I have the benefit of history to be able to see how this prophecy played out.

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After Nebuchadnezzar's reign, eventually his lineage was deposed when the kingdom of the Medo Persians led by Cyrus the great conquered Babylon. That actually happens in Daniel's lifetime and we'll see that transition in later chapters of this same study. Nebuchadnezzar's authority is absolute and worldwide and given by God but if God is the one who gives, He is also just as capable at taking away. Nebuchadnezzar was so concerned with his legacy and what would come after and here he's being told that Babylon will not even last a single generation after God is done with him.

In the same verse the third kingdom comes and goes with barely a mention. Historically we know that the Medo Persian empire was eventually overthrown by Alexander the great and his Greek forces. Each of these empires were mighty and impressive in their own right, so what does Daniel mean here that each successive kingdom is inferior to the one before? Well keep in mind what made Nebuchadnezzar's reign so unique that he was represented by the most valuable metal, gold. Daniel says the value came from his absolute authority and rule. That would tell us that the less valuable metals like silver and bronze must start to represent less absolute, centralized and total authority in their rules. This lines up with both future scripture about the Medo Persians as well as history's account of these rulers. While Nebuchadnezzar was absolutely in authority and could do whatever he pleased, Medo Persian rulers were bound by previous decrees. A later king could not undo a decree of an earlier king, and a king could not even undo one of his own previous decrees. This limitation of authority becomes a major plot point later in chapter 6 of this same book and is also relevant to the book of Esther.

But the first three kingdoms mentioned are not the focus of the dream today, it's the last two that are. The fourth kingdom breaks the previous patterns; it is made up of two mixing materials and it is described as a divided kingdom rather than a kingdom that rules the whole earth like the previous ones. It's a kingdom that has both the strength of iron and the brittleness of clay and it changes and mixes and mashes around and it's much harder to define. History tells us clearly which kingdom overthrew the Greek empire; it was the Roman empire. But unlike the previous empires we've looked at, the Roman empire didn't really have a clean specific end just like Daniel describes this fourth section, it instead broke up and mixed up and became east and west and transformed into the Holy Roman Empire then out of that the Roman Catholic Church until the actual kingdom dissolved into many of the European and Mediterranean nations we have today.

Really, Daniel's description does a perfect job describing what comes after the Greek empire but it leaves us without a clear-cut name or term for this fourth kingdom. Usually, Bible scholars label the fourth kingdom as "Rome", but it lasts from the end of the Greek empire all the way until the end of the statue. The next kingdom that comes is the great rock, which we'll talk about in a second. When my Father taught through this chapter

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during his study in Revelation, he tried the title “Imperialistic-Democratic Alliance,” but I don’t really know if that rolls off the tongue super well, so I’m probably going to just keep referring to it as the fourth kingdom. It’s not supposed to be clearly defined, that’s described clearly in the text, it’s supposed to be a mixing mish-mash of nations that break and crumble and reform.

Lastly, Daniel describes the uncut rock as a new, eternal kingdom from God that will bring all other kingdoms to a crushing end and stand eternally, forever. This is, obviously, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, our eternal future that awaits us. This is the very hope that you and I as Christ followers live for. The real promise land.

If Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar stand at the beginning of this statue, in Babylon, at the head, where do you and I stand. Well, we’re after the end of the Greek empire, and we’re still waiting for Jesus to return and for the eternal kingdom to be set up, then you and I must be camping out somewhere in this fourth kingdom period. There is one common view I feel the need to point out, which is the idea some have that perhaps this kingdom of God represents the church that is on the earth right now. People with this viewpoint argue that Rome really was the fourth kingdom and that when Jesus rose from his Roman execution on the cross and sent out his church to spread His gospel that He was beginning the kingdom at that point and that the church continues to grow and expand and fill the world.

There are a number of reasons why this understanding doesn’t fit the Biblical text, but I’ll mention only two of them quickly.<sup>6</sup> The first reason is that verse 44 explicitly says that this kingdom of God breaks to pieces all the earthly kingdoms that came before, (remember, obliteration!) and Christ’s church certainly did not crush and end the Roman empire, yet whenever the Bible describes Christ’s second coming to the earth, it feels a lot more like that crushing rock obliterating the kingdoms of earth. The second reason actually comes from the details given in the parallel chapter to this one. Another of Daniel’s visions in chapter 7 parallels these four statue sections with four beasts describing the same kingdoms, only in that vision the fourth beast is described with some very specific details about what this fourth kingdom looks like before it is replaced by God’s kingdom and it can only be describing Jesus’s second coming that has yet to happen.

Daniel concludes this wonderful, awe inspiring and frightening dream by saying “The dream is certain and its interpretation sure.” Whatever God is capable of granting Nebuchadnezzar the power and authority to rule the whole world for a temporary time, must be powerful and sovereign enough to determine these future prophetic events and ultimately that means the glorious and eternal kingdom promised at the end of this

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<sup>6</sup> (Miller 1994, 100-101)

The Answer to the Mystery - Daniel 2 – Preacher’s Guild – Daniel Armstrong – Manuscript dream will absolutely come to pass by God’s sovereignty. Every knee will bow before the king, and it won’t be king Nebuchadnezzar.

It’s always fun to dive into this prophetic interpretation, but what really is the point? Can I stand here and tell you from Daniel chapter 2, when exactly Jesus is going to come back and set up this kingdom? Yes, actually! I told you I had a grand mystery to reveal, did you forget? Jesus is coming back at the end of the fourth kingdom? No, I’m joking that’s not the mystery I was talking about. It’s true though!

First, let’s understand what the point of this dream was for king Nebuchadnezzar. He wanted to know what was going to happen after he was gone. What would his kingdom and his legacy look like, and now he knows exactly that. God has shown this king, that his kingdom and his legacy exist only because this sovereign God who reveals mysteries has given it to him and he also knows that it will pass away, and so will all the other kingdoms that follow except for the kingdom of God that comes and lasts forever. What Nebuchadnezzar has built and will build during his reign will all become nothing and be replaced, but God’s kingdom will never be replaced. For a nation that built one of the seven ancient wonders of the world that is a very powerful and important lesson that God is teaching Nebuchadnezzar.

Next, what does this dream mean for Daniel? The boy who saw his promised land stripped away from him. God has clearly shown that Daniel and the rest of the people of Israel are here in Babylon because of God’s sovereign will for them to be there. His authority and sovereignty have not lapsed. Look back at the praise Daniel offered in his prayer again. “God, you change times and seasons and set up kings and remove kings and I thank you and praise you.” Daniel knows God is in charge of what’s happening. So, what all can Daniel do about that in the meantime? Exactly what he’s doing, faithfully introducing God and delivering his message to the king.

What happens with these two?

**[Slide Prompt: fourth outline point]**

### **The King worships the Lord (v.46-49)**

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***Daniel 2:46–49 (ESV) — 46** Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. **47** The king answered and said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.” **48** Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of*

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*Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king's court.*

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The king gives this homage and incense, and it says it's "to" Daniel but based on the praise the king gives God in the next verse, it's unlikely he's confused to who he should worship, it's likely language that supposed to mean he's giving gifts and praise to Daniel so that Daniel can then take those to the Lord. It can be tempting to see praise of God and want to attribute this to some saving faith on behalf of Nebuchadnezzar. But we can't shortcut the story. Daniel chapters 3 and 4 have a lot more to say about Nebuchadnezzar's journey to understand who God really is, right now he only knows that out of all the pantheon of gods that the king worships, he's discovered a new one and he's pretty happy about it.

Daniel is also rewarded like the king promised in his initial threat. Consider once again, Daniel is the new guy. He has just shot up from the intern to the senior vice president underneath the king. Along the way, Daniel makes sure that his faithful friends also get promotions. This seems almost too crazy for the king to do to the wise men, but remember this same king was just moments away from slaughtering them all so crazy decisions kind of fit his normal habits.

We've talked about Nebuchadnezzar, we've talked about Daniel, but what does this dream mean for you and for me?

**[Slide Prompt: first application point]**

**Like the king, our legacy is temporary**

Looking at the king as our example, you and I certainly don't hold authority and rule over the entire world like he did, but we certainly have some areas of authority that God has gifted us with while we're on this earth. Whether you know Jesus personally or not, we would all do well to remember that our authority over our jobs, our money, our families, even over our own bodies and lives, that is all temporary. The only things we can do that last are the things we do to enter and advance the eternal kingdom of God.

**[Slide Prompt: second application point]**

**Like Daniel, stand firm on God's promises**

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Looking at Daniel as our example, we can clearly see that God is sovereign over everything. If God is sovereign over each dream in our head at night, if he can determine the exact nations that rise and fall and be correct about every one, then can't we also be certain that this dream and its interpretation are true? That Jesus Christ is coming back to reign over His kingdom like He promised us? Yes, we can stand firm on that.

But listen to this church. Daniel didn't just receive the answer to a mystery. No, he received a task also, to introduce the king to God and to explain that mystery. You and I have greater secrets to even greater mysteries and a greater task to share those mysteries right in front of us, but we just don't realize it. We can so easily get caught up in interpreting the historical symbology of Daniel 2 that we miss the main point, to introduce others to God. Turn with me to 1 Peter 1:8-12 if you will and look at this.

**[Slide Prompt: Scripture cross-reference]**

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*1 Peter 1:8–12 (ESV) — 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

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This is the most important thing all night, church. Here's the answer to the greatest mystery in scripture that I promised you. How can the holy, just and righteous God provide salvation to sinful, unworthy, guilty people? The answer is by faith in Jesus Christ our sacrifice.

If any part of you is feeling like I cheated you somehow, like I didn't really reveal any great mystery, then you're missing the point. A mystery that you already know the answer to is no less a grand mystery. Many of us would love nothing more than to go home tonight and for God to speak directly into our dreams with some grand vision of mystery. 1st Peter just told us that if the prophet Daniel were alive today, he would trade every dream he had to be sitting in one of these chairs hearing about Jesus, to have the Holy Spirit of God indwell him and to go home and pour over every word of the New Testament. That Bible explains the mysteries of the God of the

The Answer to the Mystery - Daniel 2 – Preacher's Guild – Daniel Armstrong – Manuscript universe and his plans for salvation. We don't know how good we have it. How many of us beg God to reveal Himself to us but the Bibles He gave us collect dust.

Because you have been given the answer to this mystery, you also have been given a job to do. Does this sound familiar? "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them all that I have commanded you." There are countless people around you every day that are missing this most important answer to this most important mystery and it is your job to introduce them to the God who reveals mysteries and to explain how they too can be saved by faith.

**[Slide Prompt: third application point]**

**Like Daniel, share God's mysteries**

If you're looking for a place to start, Anthony who leads our missions ministry will happily teach you how to do this and he's even taking a group downtown one week from this Saturday.

Let's be more like Daniel in this respect church, all of us.

As we reach the end of chapter 2, the king has been introduced to the Lord of Lords and been told his kingdom is a temporary gift. Daniel and his friends have instantly risen the ranks of the wise men throughout the kingdom. Surely the king will learn humility before God's sovereignty and all these young men have a comfortable and easy life in front of them...

You should probably come back next week so Mitch can tell you if you're right or not. Let's pray, church.