

There is a God in Heaven

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- [0 : 00] Well, please do take a seat. We're in the book of Daniel again, and if you just take your Bibles and open them again, I'll carry on where Charlie finished.
- Thank you so much, Charlie, for saving me to read 49 verses all by myself and everyone here from falling asleep as I do so. So verse 19 of Daniel chapter 2.
- During the night, the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said, Praise be to the name of God forever and ever. Wisdom and power are his.
- He changes times and seasons. He deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things. He knows what lies in darkness and light dwells with him.
- I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors. You have given me wisdom and power. You have made known to me what we asked of you. You have made known to us the dream of the king.
- [1 : 02] Then Daniel went to Ariok, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him.
- Ariok took Daniel to the king at once and said, I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means. The king asked Daniel, also called Belteshazzar, Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?
- Daniel replied, No wise men, enchanter, magician or diviner, can explain to the king the mystery he is asked about. But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.
- He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that pass through your mind as you were lying in bed are these. As your majesty was lying there, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mystery showed you what is going to happen.
- As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than anyone else alive, but so that your majesty may know the interpretation, and that you may understand what went through your mind.
- [2 : 14] Your majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue, an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.
- While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer.
- The wind swept them away without leaving a trace, but the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king.

Your majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory. In your hands he has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky.

Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them. Oh, you are the head of gold. After you, another kingdom will arise inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.

[3 : 27] Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, for iron breaks and smashes everything. And as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom.

Yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.

And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united any more than iron mixes with clay. In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people.

It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands, a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

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

[4 : 47] The king said to Daniel, surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery. Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him.

He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all his wise men. Moreover, at Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego chief ministers over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

Let's pray. Father God, we read in this passage that you're the revealer of mysteries. Father, you're the God who makes plain what otherwise we could not see.

So we invite you now to come by your spirit to make this word alive, to speak to us, to inform us more of yourself, that we might leave here trusting wholeheartedly in him, your son, the glorious one who will reign forever.

So bless us and help us, we pray in his glorious name. Amen. So we're in Daniel chapter 2 and we call this, there is a God in heaven. And I wonder what would be different if you knew the future?

[6 : 07] What would be different if you knew the future, if you knew perhaps exactly what would happen next month or next year? Well, I dare say if we knew the future, lots of us might have put money on Leicester City and could have a lovely summer holiday with our winnings.

We would make shrewder investments, better and more confident choices. We would know which hires and advanced hires to take, which university courses to pursue.

We would know who to marry, where to buy a house and which fashions to adopt to stay on point. We would know whether to Brexit or not.

We would be confident whether Nicola and her SNP were the people to lead us for the next five years. Knowing the future would alleviate all risk.

We wouldn't be gambling on what is to happen. Many people here, actually, their job involves predicting what the future will look like.

[7 : 17] So we have economists who are trying to predict whether things will go up or things will go down. We have people here who are writing government policy to future-proof Scotland and to improve society.

We even have actuaries who work crunching data to work out risk, whether you're a person for whom the insurance company, the pension company will win and the insurance company will win.

Knowing the future would enable us to make informed decisions. Even in our modern scientific world, people will try anything to get the inside track on the future.

I read this week that 25% of Britons regularly read horoscopes. And of that, 8%, the horoscope informs the decisions that they make.

There is a booming industry in psychics and mystics and tarot reading and crystals and fortune-telling. For example, this guy, Jonathan Kaner, who actually died on Tuesday.

[8 : 29] He was the UK's leading astrologer, earning £4 million a year, predicting people's horoscopes and what their futures would hold.

We even consult people like Paul the Octopus to try and predict the scores. I thought Paul the Octopus might get a chip because he's obviously predicting England would lose.

And I thought that might appeal to some of you. As well as Paul the Octopus, we have Flopsy the kangaroo, Shaheen the camel, Madame Shiva the guinea pig, and Big Head the sea turtle, all claiming psychic ability in predicting future sporting results.

Well, our fascination with the future is nothing new. And in fact, is the very subject of Daniel chapter 2. And so the big theme of Daniel chapter 2 is this.

God is the revealer of mystery, the conductor of history, and the founder of eternity. As repetition is the mother of education, perhaps we could all say that together, God is...

[9 : 40] You need to join in properly. So half-hearted this morning. God is the revealer of mystery, the conductor of history, the founder of eternity.

That's what we see here. And the first thing we see in our Daniel chapter 2 is that there is a restless ruler. Verse 1, Nebuchadnezzar wakes up in a sweat because for another night running, he's been woken up by the strangest dream.

This king is the mightiest king of the ruling nation of the earth. And yet he cannot capture a good night's sleep. He's plagued by this weird dream.

And so verse 2, he summons the department of futurology from the University of Babylon. He calls in the magicians, the divination experts, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the astrologers.

These people are massively experienced. They'd be the highest earners in Babylon. They had consulted Nebuchadnezzar in the past on where to invade, and when to invade, and what to build, and what to do.

[10 : 54] They are the people, he thinks, to decode this vexing vision. However, when they appear before Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar's moved the goalposts.

Because they say, tell us your dream and we'll give you the interpretation. And Nebuchadnezzar says, no, you tell me the dream and give me the interpretation. If you've really got a direct line to the gods, then telling me what I dreamt should not be too difficult for you.

And he says, there's a carrot and a stick. If you get it wrong, I will kill you and reduce your household to rubble. If you get it right, there'll be gifts and honor and a place at the king's table.

Whatever you say about Nebuchadnezzar, you cannot accuse him of being half-hearted. He's an all-or-nothing kind of guy. Verse 7, the gathered professionals try to pull a fast one.

Tell us the dream and we'll give you the interpretation. And Nebuchadnezzar says, no, you tell me the dream and give me the interpretation. And it seems that the carrot is quickly gone and all that's left is the stick.

[12 : 20] Well, verse 10, the astrologers come clean. There is no one on earth who can do what the king asks. No king, however great and mighty as ever, are such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer.

What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods and they do not live among humans. They've kind of been rumbled. They've been saying, Nebuchadnezzar, if you want to know the future, we're the guys.

And now, they say, actually, we've kind of been making it up all along. Well, Nebuchadnezzar has heard enough, shaking with rage, almost like someone who hasn't got enough sleep over the past few weeks.

he flies off the handle and says, all the wise people are going to die. We're going to enact genocide. And if you claim to have special knowledge from the gods, you're obviously lying.

You're obviously leading me up the golden path and I'll have your head. And just to heighten the tension, verse 13, we realize that Daniel and his friends, who are still training at the Babylon University, their names are on the execution warrant.

[13 : 37] Verse 14 is intriguing. We hear of this guy, Ariok, who is the one who's told, you've got to carry out the execution. And so what does Daniel do?

He goes to find the executioner. That's weird. It's like turkeys voting for Christmas. He'd be the last person you'd want to go and see as the guy with the hood on and the axe in his hand.

And Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. Well, if ever you're going to be polite, it's going to be to the guy who's likely to chop off your head.

Yet again, continuing the pattern established in Daniel 1. Daniel says, I'll interpret the dream before he knows what the dream is about.

Do you see that? Verse 16. At this time, Daniel went into the king and asked for an appointment so that he might interpret the dream for him.

[14 : 40] Daniel's just heard what the problem is. He doesn't know what the solution is. He's saying, God, I need you to intervene in this situation or else we're all going to be dead. And the timescale is not a 10-day experiment concerning their stomachs.

It is a one-day stay of execution to stop their necks being sliced. Brave on two counts.

God, you need to intervene. God, you need to give us wisdom. So Daniel goes home to his small group.

He gathers his friends and he says, we need to pray. This prayer meeting is actually a matter of life and death. That if God doesn't intervene, we will not see tomorrow night.

But Daniel also is a staunch monotheist. He knows Isaiah. These are some of his favorite scriptures. Isaiah 43. Bring out the people who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf.

[15 : 51] Gather the nations together. Assemble the people of the world. Which of the idols has ever foretold the future? Which could predict what will happen tomorrow?

Where are the witnesses of such predictions who can verify that they spoke the truth? A little later in Isaiah 46, particularly addressing the gods of Babylon. Remember the things I have done in the past for I alone am God.

I am God and there is none like me. Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass for I do whatever I wish.

Daniel knows his God and he has confidence in his God that if this dream is really from God then it is his God who will be able to interpret it. If Nebuchadnezzar really did have a dream from God then it is only Daniel's God he will be able to reveal it and interpret it.

And so isn't that a lesson for us that the more we know about God the more we will depend on him the more we'll trust him the more we'll say God I don't understand but I need your wisdom I need your help I need you to guide me through this because left to my own foolishness it will only go bad.

[17:10] Daniel's knowledge of God gives him confidence in God's presence and help in this situation. After a restless ruler we see a prayerful plea.

Daniel gathers his small group he explains the situation if we're unsuccessful we're dead. Verse 19 during the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision.

Suddenly the tension that's been building since Daniel 2 verse 5 has suddenly been lifted. This great mystery that plagued the king that caused him to fly into a genocidal rage has a chance of being stayed and not being enacted.

And so wouldn't you do what Daniel did in verse 20 he praises the God of heaven. Praise be to the name of God forever and ever wisdom and power are his.

He changes times and seasons he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.

[18:30] A prayer about the sovereignty of God the wisdom of God the power of God the mercy of God the grace of God the fact that their God intervenes in history he doesn't just wind it up and retreat to the edge of the universe to look on but he's involved and he cares.

For Daniel's first readers this would be very encouraging the people reading this in exile the people whose whole lives have been spent under the heel of a foreign oppressor and to hear that it is their God who deposes kings and raises them up gives them great hope that it won't always be like this that this is in the end they won't be Babylon captives forever and ever but the standing behind the despotic Nebuchadnezzar is the God of the universe who governs everything according to his sovereign will in accordance with his sovereign plan the God who gives wisdom to the wise the God who is ready to give us help knowledge in order that we might live skillfully in the world Daniel and his friends pray earnestly for wisdom and living in our confusing world in our world that has become unanchored from faith in the

God of the Bible the one thing we need above everything is wisdom how to live skillfully in this world if you look at the 25 extended prayers of Paul in the epistles 16 of those prayers involve would you give us wisdom and knowledge would you be with us and guide us as we get through this confusing situation what we'll see as we go on in Daniel the two things that mark his life are wisdom and holiness he lives skillfully and he lives differently and what starts out in chapter one as a bit of assimilation will by the end become total persecution meaning that he has to go into the lion's den because his life is marked by wisdom and holiness I love verse 25 made me smile all week Ariok took Daniel to the king at once and said I have found a man among the exiles he did not find

Daniel Daniel found him but he would like a little slice of the pie if blessing is going to be distributed well the next 23 verses of Daniel chapter 2 involve this vision and what it means and so what we see is a fragile future Daniel is very clear that in stark contrast to the failed futurology department his wisdom and revelation does not originate in himself it's not because he's better or wiser it's because the God who is all wise has given him understanding Daniel then describes what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamt he speaks of this colossal dazzling statue made of five different materials from head to foot then in graphic detail describes the rock cut out not by human hands that rolls and strikes the statue smashing it reducing it to powder that is then blown in the wind like on a threshing floor this rock is then the only thing left and it grows into a giant mountain no wonder it's a troubling dream today

Nebuchadnezzar would be told to stop snacking on cheese before bedtime but there's something way more in this from verses 36 to 45 Daniel then interprets the dream Nebuchadnezzar would have loved hearing the first part a description of Nebuchadnezzar's dominion and power all topped off by the declaration Nebuchadnezzar you're the golden head who wouldn't like to hear that you have the pinnacle and most precious kingdom Nebuchadnezzar is loving Daniel but verse 39 would be scary to declare to a despotic ruler after you Babylon won't last forever it would have been hard to fathom if you were on the streets of Babylon in this great civilization with its impenetrable walls and enormous skyscrapers if you were a

[23 : 24] Babylonian citizen you would think we're here to stay but Daniel is quite clear after you after you another kingdom will come this time of silver slightly less precious and after that will come another kingdom this one of bronze and then one of steel that will be really hard and will crush everything in its wake then that kingdom will be split apart in this kingdom made of clay and iron lots and lots of ink is built trying to interpret which kingdom is which the general consensus is that Babylon is gold I guess we know that after that Medo-Persia is silver Greece under Alexander the Great is the bronze belly and thighs and the iron legs are Rome however the vision is not primarily about specificity but wisdom knowledge and revelation challenging

Nebuchadnezzar's view of his Babylonian gods that they're just making it up as they go along they're writing history as it goes along they're literally playing dice Daniel says no outside of creation there is an omnipotent omniscient God a God who is conducting intervening and unveiling history under his sovereign control according to his sovereign will Nebuchadnezzar is now confronted with the real God and the only God verse 45 the great God has shown the king what will take place in the future the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy because the God who gave it now gives the interpretation well Daniel has won the jackpot verse 46 Nebuchadnezzar the most powerful man in the world falls down before him and paid him honour and ordered him that an offering and incense be presented to him the declaration from the king the king whose chief god was

Marduk the chief of the Babylonian pantheon and Nebuchadnezzar says surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries for you were able to reveal this mystery what a declaration from a pagan king as one who lives a holy and wise life helps him in his hour of need Daniel gets promoted lavish with gifts everyone in his small groups get a bump in pay and a bump in status as well and a death sentence has been replaced by promotion to high ranking diplomats looking back to what Daniel saw we now see with great clarity the end of the vision the Lord Jesus would identify himself clearly in geological terms he would refer to himself again and again as a rock as a stone a stone not made by human hands that destroys and supersedes all earthly kingdoms that have gone before he would say in

Matthew 21 have you never read in the scriptures the stone the builders rejected has become the corner stone the Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces anyone on whom it falls will be crushed it is the kingdom of this Jesus that will eventually supersede and dominate all other kingdoms it is as Jesus describes in the parable of the mustard seed something that starts small but in the end will grow and dominate just as Daniel encouraged exiles in Babylon that this wasn't the end of the story so Jesus himself encourages us fear not little flock for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom a great truth that earthly kingdoms will rise and fall there'll be

Nebuchadnezzar's and Alexander the Greats and Caesar's that will come and go but in the end there will be one who rules and rules absolutely over absolutely everything for absolutely ever and his name will be Jesus the one who identifies himself as the stone not cut out by human hands so the big theme of Daniel chapter 2 is that God is the revealer of mystery the conductor of history and the founder of eternity and so what can we take away well the truth is that we can trust this God this God who was in control is still in control he hasn't taken a backward step he hasn't moved to a hammock to wear slippers he is still the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end he has history under his control if he says I've got eternity worked out then I think we can trust him with tomorrow if we know this

[29 : 00] God then the sleepless night that plagues Nebuchadnezzar need not be our experience that as we lie down to sleep our God is in control and when the alarm clock goes off that's just his message to us saying I had it all sorted even when you were asleep and so whatever's worrying us whatever we're anxious about know that this God is in control and he's able to give us wisdom to get through secondly I think it gives us great hope that if there's one thing we see in this passage it is that it won't always be like this so whatever you're struggling with illness stress bereavement strife injustice anguish infirmity then know that this God in the end will bring a kingdom where none of those things are present and that gives us great hope as we suffer now knowing that we'll be with him then in a kingdom that will never be destroyed where the righteous judge of all the earth worships rightly and where the prince of peace is in absolute control and ushers in his kingdom of peace and thirdly we see some urgency what

Nebuchadnezzar saw Daniel confirmed and Jesus fulfilled that in the end there will be one kingdom and the only thing that will remain are citizens of that kingdom with this king Jesus there is nothing more important than being a citizen of this kingdom because everything else will be destroyed and blown away in the wind like dust and therefore we all have a choice we can either build our lives on this rock the Lord Jesus or we can stumble over him and be crushed by him in the end to be on God's mountain forever with God and with all his people there is no greater joy and what we know in this life is just the national anthem before the kickoff of eternal life don't be left out don't be absolutely nailed by this rock as Jesus inaugurates his kingdom forever and so our

God is the revealer of mystery the conductor of history and the founder of eternity Shelley Percy the great English poet wrote a poem I met a traveler from an antique land who said two vast and trunkless legs of stone stand in the desert near them on the sand half sunk a shattered visage lies whose frown and wrinkled lip a sneer of cold command tell that it's sculpture sculptor well those passions read which yet survive stamped on these lifeless things the hand that mocked them and the heart that fed and on the pedestal these words appear my name is Ozymandias king of kings look on my works ye mighty and despair nothing beside remains round the decay of that colossal wreck boundless and bare the lone and level sands stretch far away a monument to a bygone time where this guy

Ozymandias thought that he was the lord of all he surveyed and yet later on a traveller comes and all that's left is this broken statue let's be clear whatever pedestal we're building our lives on or whatever statue we're making for ourselves unless our lives are linked to this Jesus it will just be a monument in the sand that people mock and ridicule in the end let's pray together father we praise you because you're the god forever and ever who has a complete monopoly on wisdom and power father you change times and seasons you depose kings and you raise others up and so lord we pray you give wisdom to those who are wise and knowledge to those who are discerning father you would continue to reveal deep and hidden things about your son thank you that you know what lies in darkness and thank you that light dwells with you father thank you that that ultimate light has shone in the person of your son and so lord may we live our lives in that light and you might be glorified in us and through us as we live lives of wisdom and holiness in response to your grace bless us we pray in Jesus name amen ah