

**“The World Seems Out Of Control, But God’s Kingdom Reigns
Forever”**

Daniel 2

Sermon Series: “The World Seems Out Of Control, But...”

Introduction: Some people become obsessed with wanting to know the future (interest in astrology is rising possibly because “having a method of making sense of what might otherwise seem chaotic and uncontrollable would be appealing,” says Stephen D. Benning, a psychologist at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; a 2016 study found that uncertainty about a negative outcome can actually be more stressful than knowing it is sure to happen, Lady Gaga planned her tour dates around astrological alignment; but I think it is actually much better to focus on Who holds the future instead of what the future holds. We will see this in this chapter as God gives Nebuchadnezzar a dream, Daniel the interpretation of the dream, and we see the fulfillment of it in history, what Danny Akin describes as “a God who is absolutely sovereign in what he knows (omniscience) and what he will do (omnipotence). This God knows the future, has a plan for the future, and will accomplish that future. This is the God of Isaiah 46:9-10, where the Bible says,

Remember what happened long ago, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and no one is like me. I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: my plan will take place, and I will do all my will.

David Jeremiah says of this, ‘You may not know what the future holds, but you know who holds the future. Since the whole world is in God’s hands, your world is in God’s hand’ (*Agents of Babylon*, 52-53).”

With this in mind, let’s walk through the story to understand the background and then learn the conviction God is imparting to us in this chapter, an action to take based on the conviction, and the connections to Christ in the story (review last week).

Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was *so* troubled that his sleep left him. 2 Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. 3 And the king said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream."

(v. 1-3) The most powerful man in the world was scared of his dreams. This would not have been uncommon in the ancient world because it was believed that the gods spoke through dreams.

4 Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation." 5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap. 6 However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation."

(v. 4-6) The king made the impossible request with death threats of telling them to tell the dream and interpretation, but this is from the hand of God because when Daniel tells the dream that verifies the accuracy of the interpretation.

7 They answered again and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation." 8 The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm: 9 if you do not make known the dream to me, *there is only* one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation." 10 The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has *ever* asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or

Chaldean. **11** *It is* a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.” **12** For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave the command to destroy all the wise *men* of Babylon. **13** So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise *men*; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill *them*. **14** Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard, who had gone out to kill the wise *men* of Babylon; **15** he answered and said to Arioch the king’s captain, “Why is the decree from the king so urgent?” Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel. **16** So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. **17** Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, **18** that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise *men* of Babylon. **19** Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

(v. 7-19) The title “God of heaven” (literally God of the heavens) is so important that it is used 5 times in the chapter. Bob Fyall points out the significance of it in Daniel’s context, when he says, “Not by horoscopes, séances and divination would enlightenment come, but from the God of heaven, a title also used in the post-Exilic books of Ezra and Nehemiah. This is not simply the tribal God of Israel but the God who rules the heavenly bodies, of which the study and attempt to manipulate lay at the heart of Babylonian religion.”

This was a dire, life threatening situation, but Daniel and his companions handled it with wisdom and prayer instead of panic.

20 Daniel answered and said: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His. **21** And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. **22** He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what *is* in the darkness,

And light dwells with Him. **23** “I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; 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 demand.”

(v. 20-23) Danny Akin writes, “What are the specifics of this theologically rich song? Daniel acknowledges seven aspects of God’s character and activity. Specifically, he praises God for his eternality (v. 20); his omniscience and omnipotence (v. 20); his sovereignty over the nations (v. 21) [and I would add the history of the world itself]; his gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding (v. 21); his revelation and knowledge (v. 22); his faithfulness to his people (v. 23); and for answering Daniel’s prayer (v. 23). In light of this magnificent picture of God’s goodness and greatness, we can exclaim with Daniel and all our brothers and sisters, “For the LORD is great and is highly praised; he is feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens” (Ps 96:4-5).

24 Therefore Daniel went 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; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation.” **25** Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, “I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation.” **26** The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?” **27** Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, “The secret which the king has demanded, the wise *men*, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. **28** But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: **29** As for you, O king, thoughts came *to* your *mind while* on your bed, *about* what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you

what will be. **30** But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for *our* sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

(v. 24-30) Daniel gave the Lord credit, and we should follow his example. We can't do anything that God doesn't allow and enable us to do. Proverbs tells us to let others praise us instead of praising ourselves.

31 “You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor *was* excellent, stood before you; and its form *was* awesome. **32** This image's head *was* of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, **33** its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. **34** You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which 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 were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. **36** “This *is* the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. **37** You, O king, *are* a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; **38** and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given *them* into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you *are* this head of gold. **39** But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. **40** And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, *that kingdom* will break in pieces and crush all the others. **41** Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. **42** And *as* the toes of the feet *were* partly of iron and partly of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. **43** As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay,

they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. **44** And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. **45** Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”

(v. 31-45) This is the actual dream and its interpretation. This is what Jon Akin aptly calls the Big E on the eye chart (visual). We don’t want to get so caught up in prophetic speculation that we miss the big picture of what God is communicating here, which I will spell out in the conviction.

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. **47** The king answered Daniel, and said, “Truly your God *is* the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.” **48** Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise *men* of Babylon. **49** Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel *sat* in the gate of the king.

(v. 46-49). We see God using Daniel to make a huge difference. David Helms writes, “Daniel’s God now shares the stage with the Babylonians’ deities. Given what we know of Nebuchadnezzar’s religiosity, this is truly amazing. The one who had been named for Babylon’s deity of wisdom, who prayed to Marduk at his coronation only one year previously, now gave space to a competing deity and even offered public words of praise to him. For the first time in Nebuchadnezzar’s life, Marduk had competition in his interior

world—all because one godly man remained poised, prayerful and willing to speak truth to power.”

There are five kingdoms pictured here, four of which we can define from the book itself (God gives Daniel a vision with the same meaning recorded later in the book and we will look at the details more later).

He’s writing history in advance, which is what prophecy is.

1st-Babylon

2nd-Medo-Persia

3rd-Greece

4th-Rome (this is the debatable one but the most common evangelical interpretation)

5th-Kingdom of God

The *ESV Study Bible* provides a helpful note in summarizing the significance of the vision of this great image God gave King Nebuchadnezzar:

“Another point being made in the dream is that each earthly kingdom has its own glory but also its own end: both have been assigned to it by God. The progression of world history is typically not upward to glory and unity but rather downward to dishonor and disunity. Thus the statue progresses from gold, to silver, to bronze, to iron, and from one head, to a chest and arms, to a belly and thighs, to feet and toes of composite iron and clay. (This list of metals shows a progressive decrease in the value and splendor of the materials but an increase in toughness and endurance.)... In contrast, God’s kingdom grows from humble beginnings to ultimate, united glory as a single kingdom that fills the whole earth forever. The stone that will break in pieces all these other four kingdoms is..Christ.”

This does not mean that Nebuchadnezzar has been converted though. We will come back to that thought. This favor doesn’t last. Opposition is coming in the next chapter.

1. Conviction: God's Kingdom reigns forever, but every earthly kingdom falls.

That is what this text teaches us as it pictures these four kingdoms and falling and the Kingdom of God standing forever. Much of the story of human history has been the story of the rise and fall of nations and empires. What do we mean by the Kingdom of God?

U2: "And kingdoms rise, and kingdoms fall, but you go on and on."

A. Jesus is King and reigns over all

(**Psalm 2:6-9**-“Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.” **7** “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, ‘You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You. **8** Ask of Me, and I will give *You* The nations *for* Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession. **9** You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ ”,

Philippians 2:9-11- Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, **10** that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, **11** and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.).

[Believe this because of the resurrection]

-Ben Cole on the queen

-Mark Sayers: “People are looking for the kingdom without the King.” (Tease out implications related to the kingdom)

B. The nature of the Kingdom is God's reign and restoration of individuals and of the world.

-God's reign: The *Revell Compact Bible Dictionary* defines kingdom as “a ruler's sphere of authority.” Charles Colson writes, “But the kingdom of God is a rule, not a realm. It is the declaration of God's absolute sovereignty, of His total order of life in this world and the next.” God's authority is both universal over the entire world and particular in the lives of those who confess Jesus as their God, Lord, and King.

-God's restoration of us as individuals and the restoration of His created world. There is a debate about whether or not Daniel 2 refers to the first or second coming of Jesus. I think it's both like two peaks with a valley in between. Jesus came to die for our sins the first time, and He is coming back the second time to rule and reign on the Earth. In between, the Church is to be a Kingdom outpost making a difference and a picture of the coming Kingdom.

The Past Aspect-God's Kingdom was present on earth when he came the first time

(**Matthew 4:17-** From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.").

The Future Aspect-Jesus will literally set up God's Kingdom on earth when He returns

(**Revelation 11:15-** Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"),

Daniel 2:44- And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. ,

7:14-Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* Which shall not be destroyed.).

The Present Aspect-Christ's rule and reign in the hearts of believers (**Colossians 1:13-14-** He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, **14** in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.).

C. The Kingdom is already here and not yet here. The Kingdom is in us so it is here, but it is not fully manifested until Jesus

comes back (the parables of Jesus). Understanding this is key to answering an important question. Why is there so much evil and why does the world seem so out of control if God is sovereign King? Christopher Morgan writes, “Jesus proclaims and brings God’s kingdom in a context of strenuous opposition-chiefly from Satan. The kingdom comes, but neither instantly nor peacefully. And it come through destroying every rule and power, through putting enemies under his feet, through putting all things in subjection to him, through conflict and conquest over the kingdom of Satan. Indeed, creation is presently subject to conflicting realties, one that’s not eternal and one that is. Evil in it’s tyranny is real and destructive, but temporary. God’s rule is universal, but still in the process of bringing evil to an end.”

2. Action: We will live to build the Kingdom of God instead of the kingdoms of man.

What are some ways we live this out practically?

A. Our ultimate allegiance to Jesus and His Kingdom. First place in our life belongs to Him and nothing or no one else. He is Lord and we are to live like it. We owe a degree of allegiance to our nation, but not the same allegiance we owe to Jesus. He is ultimate and our nation is temporary.

B. Our ultimate purpose is glorifying God through the building of His Kingdom. We know that life is not about us but about our King. We live to build His Kingdom and not our own little empires because the kingdom of God is all that will last. We are not going to waste our lives on earthly things. Augustine wrote, “That which man builds man destroys, but the city of God is built by God and cannot be destroyed by man.” Bob Roberts has written, “The kingdom of God is a radical message meant to be lived out in radical lives, which then historically and culturally have radical results.” Use our vocation to build His Kingdom.

C. We live with hope looking forward to the return of Jesus to establish His Kingdom and simultaneously live to make a difference

by praying and laboring (service and evangelism) for people to become a part of His Kingdom (Who's the next Billy Graham [Jared Wilson asking Ed Stetzer]? Jane the Uber driver

D. We can walk by faith in our sovereign King and live in peace knowing that He is in control.

(How Daniel reacted vs. how Nebuchadnezzar reacted and apply it to my covid reaction)

3. Christ Connections:

A. Jesus is the King of Kings who is coming to rule and reign (Revelation 19:11-16- Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. **12** His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. **13** He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. **14** And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. **15** Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. **16** And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.).

B. Jesus is the Rock on which to build our lives (1 Peter 2:6-8. 6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” **7** Therefore, to you who believe, *He is* precious; but to those who are disobedient, “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,” **8** and “A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense.” They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.,

Luke 6:46-49- “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? **47** Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: **48** He is like a man building

a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. **49** But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”).

Conclusion:

-Be born again into the kingdom of God

(John 3:3- Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”)

-Build your life on the rock of obedience to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords