

Some Dreams Really Do Come True

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Preacher: Paul Brennan

[0 : 0 0] Well, we're going to turn to our Bibles now and to our reading for this morning, which is in Daniel chapter 2. You've got a church Bible, one of the blue Bibles, that's page 737.

And Paul began last week a study in this extraordinary book, and we're going to read now a very extraordinary and exciting chapter. Daniel chapter 2, and we're beginning to read all about the ruler of the known world at that time. In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams. His spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king, and the king said to them, I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream. Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, O king, live forever. Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.

The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The word for me is firm. If you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. But if you show me the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore, show me the dream and its interpretation.

They answered a second time and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation. The king answered and said, I know with certainty that you're trying to gain time, because you see that the word for me is firm. 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 until the times change. Therefore, tell me the dream, and then I shall know that you can show me its interpretation. Chaldeans answered the king and said, There's not a man on earth who can meet the king's demands, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. Because of this, the king was angry, very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed.

So the decree went out. The wise men were about to be killed, and they sought Daniel and his companions to kill them. Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Ariok, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. He declared to Ariok, the king's captain, Why is the decree of the king so urgent? And then Ariok made the matter known to Daniel. And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time that he might show the interpretation to the king. And Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. And then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. And then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons. He removes kings and sets up kings.

[3 : 5 3] He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and hidden things. He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.

To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you. For you have made known to us the king's matter.

Therefore Daniel went to Ariok, whom the king had appointed to destroy, the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him, Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon. Bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation. And Ariok brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus to him, I have found the man among the exiles from Judah, a man who will make known to the king the interpretation. The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belshazzar, Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?

Daniel answered the king and said, No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers, can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. And he has made known to king Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these.

To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this. And he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be.

[5 : 42] 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.

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

The head of the image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces.

Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold all together were broken in pieces. It 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.

[6 : 48] But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This was the dream.

Now we will tell the king its interpretation. You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power and the might and the glory, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of men, the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all, you are the head of gold.

Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And there shall be a fourth kingdom strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things.

And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. And as you saw the feet and the toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom.

But some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.

[8 : 02] As you saw the iron mixed with the soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.

And in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people.

It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms, and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever. Just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold.

A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel and commanded that an offering, an incense, be offered up to him.

[9 : 12] The king answered and said to Daniel, Truly your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.

Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel made a request 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.

Amen. May God bless to us this his word. Well, please do have Daniel Chatterty open in front of you, which you've just read together. It would be good to have that there to refer to as you go along.

So Daniel Chatterty. Now, I'm not really one who remembers their dreams. I don't know about you.

[10 : 16] But I can still recall, in detail, a dream I had when I was just a young schoolboy, five or six years old. And it absolutely terrified me.

It remained with me. I can still remember how I felt the very morning after I woke up from that dream. Now, I'm not going to recall it to you. It remains with me.

But I'm sure many of you will be able to recall dreams that you've had, particularly, I suspect, the bad ones. And that is often because our dreams often reveal, don't they, some of our deepest and unspoken fears.

They tend to surface in our dreams, don't they? And we perhaps like to imagine that with a bit more wealth or a bit more power or a bit more beauty, some of those fears that often crop up in our dreams, some of those fears may subside and dissipate.

But that's really an illusion, isn't it? I remember reading an article from the chief executive of one of the world's biggest companies and how he recollects his career, his striving for the top.

[11 : 26] If only I could get there, my life would be complete. But he writes, when I got there, when I made it to the top, I realized that there was, in fact, nothing really there.

The biggest questions in life, the biggest fears I had were still there. And even one of the most powerful men that has ever lived, the king here in our passage, King Nebuchadnezzar, even he, the mighty King Nebuchadnezzar, he had bad dreams, verse one, dreams that troubled him, dreams that were bad enough to keep him from sleeping.

He couldn't sleep. And so all of us, every human being that's ever lived, must confront their fears. All of us are subject to dreams that reveal our deepest desires and fears.

And all of us, we must have answers to those fears, mustn't we? Otherwise, how do we get up in the morning? We must have answers.

Or, we do what most do now in the prosperous West, and we distract ourselves with entertainment. Netflix, the cinema, our smartphones, social media, anything to take our minds off of reality.

[12 : 46] But, reality will meet us in the end. And it may take something drastic to bring us face to face with reality. Whether it's a sudden change in our circumstances, or perhaps a dream that shakes us to our very core.

And it was a dream that shook King Nebuchadnezzar. He knew he needed answers. Now, it's a straightforward story, isn't it? It's a gripping story. The king has a troubling dream, and in true dictatorial form, he demands that his magicians and wise men may come and not only give him the interpretation of the dream, but the details of the dream itself.

It's an impossible request, isn't it? And of course, they can't do it. And so, in true dictatorial form, he sentences them all to death.

It's the obvious thing to do, isn't it? They can all go. But enter Daniel. He requests an audience with the king. He and his friends pray to God, asking for revelation of that dream, which the Lord then gives to Daniel.

And Daniel then gives the details of the dream and its interpretation to the king. And he and his friends are then promoted. It's a straightforward story, but with huge implications.

[14 : 12] Huge implications for Nebuchadnezzar. Huge implications for everyone who first read this account and for everyone who reads it in the years afterwards. For us today, huge implications.

And it's got huge implications because it deals with the biggest questions about meaning and about the outworking of all of human history. So we're going to look at this chapter in two sections and we see two great contrasts here.

Contrasts in terms of the source of meaning for life and contrasts in terms of the source of real power in this world. So first then, the source of real meaning in life.

We see in verses one to thirty the contrast between, on the one hand, the failure of human paganism contrasted with God's ultimate revelation.

So the failure of human paganism against God's ultimate revelation. So verses one to thirty. The chapter begins, as we've seen, with a mighty king Nebuchadnezzar troubled with a bad dream.

[15 : 20] And it's a dream serious enough, one that's troubled the king sufficiently, that he opens up to other people and says, I've had a bad dream. And he summons the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, the Chaldeans, verse two.

And it's abundantly clear, isn't it? The writer is at pains to make it plain that with the constant repetition in these opening dozen verses that these magicians, these enchanters, these sorcerers, the Chaldeans, these pagans are utterly unable to answer the king's request, aren't they?

Granted, it's an impossible request. If I said to any of you, tell me my dream from last night, none of you could do it. It's an impossible request. And in fact, these wise men of Babylon, they speak the truth better than they know, verse 11.

They say the king, 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.

And that is absolutely right, isn't it? They acknowledge the limits of human wisdom. They can't do what the king has asked. They can't discern the dream, let alone give its meaning.

[16 : 41] They know that divine revelation is required. They know they can't answer the deepest questions and concerns and fears of the king. Even on pain of death, they can't come up with the answers.

And that is true, isn't it, of any pagan answer to the biggest questions in life. Pagans have no real answers to the biggest questions, do they? The great philosophers, they can't answer.

They can't provide real answers to people's real questions. Science can only answer the what questions. It doesn't get to the why.

And those are the questions that really matter to people, aren't they? Why are we here? What's our purpose? And the writer is making abundantly clear here in these opening verses that the best of the very best, the very wisest of the wise in Babylon, the great world empire of the day, they have no answer.

We're being shown here just how futile pagan religion is when it comes to the questions that really matter to people. And when it came to the question that really matters to the king, pagan religion failed totally.

[17 : 58] And we're being shown, aren't we, the utter helplessness for God's people then, and for us today, the utter helplessness of paganism.

It has no ultimate answers, no ultimate hope. As one writer put it in relation to this chapter, we're being shown here that paganism is nothing but a religious cul-de-sac.

It can give no sure word from outside. Its reference points is entirely within this world. We need something from outside, don't we? And so we're not to be awed by paganism.

We're not to be tempted to listen to the great and the wise of this world. It's not to say they don't have anything useful to say, but they can't get to the ultimate answers. That's a great warning intended for us here.

For those who first read this, those exiled Israelites, don't be wooed, don't be taken in by the great religions of Babylon or Persia or whatever superpower has the day.

[19 : 01] Despite all the great trappings, all the power, the splendor of the state-sponsored religions and dogmas of the day, there is nothing there but darkness and emptiness. No answers to life's real questions.

That's the clear message of the first few verses there. But in contrast, in contrast to the darkness, we're shown here as we meet Daniel and with Daniel's God.

And in contrast to the failure of human paganism, we have here revelation from God. That verb, reveal, or words like it, to show, to declare, to tell, to make known, they are all over this chapter.

Over 30 verbs in this chapter are to do with revelation, making known. And it is not the pagan religions that are doing the making known.

They are not making the truth known to the king, are they? It's the God of Daniel who makes it known. So Daniel enters the story there in verse 13. Men, armed guards have been dispatched across the empire, across Babylon to kill all the wise men.

[20 : 16] And they arrive at Daniel's accommodation. There's a knock on the door. And Daniel tries to work out what on earth is going on.

There are men here sent to kill him. And so he poses a question to Ariok there in verse 14. He speaks with prudence and discretion to Ariok.

And he asks the captain of the king's guard, why is the decree of the king so urgent? What is going on? And hearing the story, Daniel then offers to see the king, to show him the interpretation to the king.

And the very first thing that Daniel does, he quickly goes to his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and they seek God's help. Verse 17, they pray. And their prayers are answered.

God reveals to Daniel the dream that has haunted the king. There in verse 19, Daniel is revealed the mystery. But before we rush to the throne room, before we are taken to King Nebuchadnezzar to see how the matter is resolved, we're forced to slow down, to take in Daniel's song, his great praise to the God who reveals.

[21 : 35] Look there at verse 20, blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and season.

He removes kings and sets up kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and hidden things.

He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with him. To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and insight.

You have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known the king's matter. Daniel praises the God who can reveal, the God who alone is sovereign, the one who changes times and seasons, the one who removes kings, who sets up kings.

He is able to make known. He alone is able to reveal deep and hidden things. And he's done it for Daniel. what all the pagan bigwigs in the city of Babylon couldn't, the God of Daniel could.

[22 : 48] He is made known to Daniel the king's matter. And so Daniel now goes to the king there in verse 25. And the king poses the question again, the question that has no satisfactory answer from all the wise men in Babylon.

Are you Daniel, are you able to make known to me the dream I've had? Can you make known to me the interpretation? And Daniel's response, it sums up the key point of the first half of the chapter I think.

Look at verse 27. Daniel answered the king and he said, no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked. But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.

Daniel says to the king, look, all these pagan religions, these great wise men, they have failed you spectacularly. But the God of heaven, the only God, he is able.

He can make known to you the dream. He can make known what will be in the latter days. In other words, he can make known to you what is to come.

[24 : 06] This God, King Nebuchadnezzar, this God alone can show you where everything is headed. And it's not that he reveals everything, that is not the claim of the Bible, but enough is revealed.

He doesn't reveal everything, but he does reveal sufficiently. And that is a reality that all people in all places at all times must come to terms with.

No matter the sophistication of a culture, culture, and Babylon was the center of culture in the known world at the time. No matter the sophistication of a culture, no matter how advanced a society may think itself is, no matter the wealth and the riches, the universities, the revelation we all need has only one source.

And it isn't found in pagan religions, it's not found in the great philosophers of the day, but only in the God who made the cosmos.

Only in him do we find the revelation we all need. Verse 27 has it, doesn't it? No wise men, enchanters, magicians, can show the king the mystery that he's asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.

[25 : 23] In other words, the key that opens up the mysteries of life, that resolves its conflicts and contradictions, it all lies in the words of God, that he has spoken, that he has made known to mankind.

And what that word is, we'll now see. We've seen in the first half the fact of God's revelation. He alone is the source of meaning and revelation, but we see in the second half of the chapter, the contents of that revelation, and it's huge.

this is massive, what we see here. The subject of this dream is enormous. So secondly then, we see the source of real power in this world.

And the contrast here from verse 31 to the end is the contrast between the fragility of human power against God's unending reign.

The fragility of human power against God's unending reign. So there's Daniel. He's gone to see King Nebuchadnezzar. He's there in the throne room and the moment's come. He's promised he can tell the king the dream and he does it.

[26 : 35] He tells the king about his dream, about this great image made from gold and silver and bronze and iron and clay. And it's an image that is brought crashing down, having been struck by a stone that's cut out by no human hand.

That once great edifice in his dream is shattered. The pieces are blown away like chaff in the wind. And the stone that came in and destroyed that statue, well it grows, it grows, and it grows, and it fills the whole earth.

This great mountain fills the whole earth. That's the king's dream. And Daniel goes on to explain the meaning. He gives us the interpretation of that dream.

What was it all about? And it's a dream as we read about the passing nature of the kingdom of this world and the enduring kingdom of God.

It's massive. All of human history is contained in this dream. It's a dream about the fragility of human power.

[27 : 43] Fragile in the shadow of God's unending reign, his everlasting kingdom over the whole world. Now the image, the great image the king saw in his dream, we're told that it represents four great kingdoms, four empires.

And King Nebuchadnezzar is, at the end of verse 38, we're told that he is the head of gold, the great Babylonian kingdom. But after him will arise another kingdom represented by the silver, and then another represented by the bronze, and then another represented by the clay and the iron.

And it's during that last kingdom, that kingdom which is a mixture of iron and clay, during that kingdom, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, one that will last forever.

Now most have taken these four kingdoms to be first, the Babylonians, followed by the Persians, then the Greeks, and then the Romans. And it was during the Roman Empire, wasn't it, that God began to set up his kingdom through the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the picture we've been given here. And what a blow to man's pride in general, and King Nebuchadnezzar in particular, the interpretation of this dream is.

[29 : 07] The great Nebuchadnezzar, the one who we read in chapter 4, as he looks out across this city of Babylon, he says to himself, is not this, Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty.

That was his assessment of himself, proud, unstoppable Nebuchadnezzar. And I wonder if he thought, as Daniel told him the dream, I wonder if he thought he was that stone.

He was the stone that came crushing in from outside, destroying all others before him, now establishing an enduring kingdom. What a shock when Daniel's interpretation came out. You, Nebuchadnezzar, you're not the stone, you are the head of gold.

And after you, and after you, after you, there is an after you, even for the great king Nebuchadnezzar.

There is an after you for every great world power, for every great superpower, there will be an after you. The once great British empire, now the laughingstock of Europe, the great unstoppable European union, there will be an after you after the EU.

[30 : 28] For every powerful leader, there will be an after you. For Nebuchadnezzar, for Caesar, for Hitler, for Stalin, for Barack Obama, for Donald Trump, for every great business leader, there is an after you.

Steve Jobs, Tim Cook, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, for each one of you here in this room, there will be an after you.

Human power is so fragile, isn't it? So fleeting, so limited. And that's the point here, isn't it? Even the greatest of empires, even there in the end, they will be footnotes in history, won't they?

Well, they won't even be that, according to this chapter. They will be chaff in the wind, blown away like dust, scattered. But this isn't just a commentary on human power and human empire.

It's about something far bigger. It's about the everlasting kingdom that God will establish. It's about the plan, the destiny of all of human history.

[31 : 43] And for the people of God who would first read this, this promised kingdom is a long way off. For those who first read this, perhaps that aspect of gold, Babylon, was already gone, but the Persian empire was still in existence.

There's still a long way to go before they get to that stone coming in and crushing all the others. So the God's people who first read this, all this was a long way off. Empires would rise and fall before God would begin to establish his kingdom through the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what for them was future is now for us partly past. We look back on the decisive event that they look forward to.

That stone cut not from human hands, entering into human time and space, shattering the empires of the world, that moment has happened. And the kingdom that God promises to build here, it is in total contrast to the kingdoms of this world.

Notice what we're told there about the kingdom that God will set up. Verse 44, let me read that. And in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people.

[33 : 05] It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever. forever. This kingdom is indestructible.

It shall never be destroyed. It's final. This kingdom shall not be left to another people. There is no after you for this kingdom, and it's supernatural.

It's a stone cut from a mountain by no human hand. And with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, that stone cut from a mountain by no human hand, entered the world.

And he, through his life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, he established the foundations of what will be an everlasting kingdom. The central founding, central moment has taken place.

The stone is struck, and the process that will result in a great mountain that fills the whole earth is underway as we speak. And it will be complete on the day that Christ returns.

[34 : 10] And so when the Lord Jesus Christ, the risen Lord Jesus Christ, he spent 40 days with his apostles, and when they asked him about this kingdom, they said, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

And he said to them, it is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

That is the process by which this kingdom, this everlasting kingdom is being built. And that remains the task for God's people today. Those words from Acts chapter 1, that is still our task, witnessing to the fact that the stone has now struck.

that the kingdoms of this world are fading. They will not last. We're to testify to that, and we're to testify to the fact that there is a kingdom that does endure, one that Jesus is building right now through his church.

It is indestructible. It is final. It is supernatural. And I hope that's encouraging to you. What we are part of as a small gathering here in Glasgow, we are part of a worldwide kingdom that will last forever.

[35 : 43] That's a bearing, doesn't it, on our priorities. Are we building for this mountain that will endure forever? Or are we building for the empires that will be blown away like the chaff in the winds?

And there will come a day when all will be made to acknowledge the reality of the everlasting kingdom of God. there will be a day when the mountain will be visible to all.

All will have to say then that the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and Christ. And he shall reign forever and ever. I like the way that D'Araff Davis sums up the message of Daniel chapter 2.

He talks about Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth, that stone, Jesus, that carpenter from Nazareth, he has a coffin for every empire and emperor.

And the only true security is in the kingdom of that carpenter, Jesus Christ, because that kingdom, it will endure forever and ever. forever. So when in the dead of night you're awake from a dream that has revealed again your deepest fears, or when you find yourself cut off from the internet for more than ten minutes and actually have to deal with the deepest thoughts of our minds rather than silence them with entertainment, when those realities must be faced, as they will for all of us at one point, remember the absolute failure of paganism to answer the biggest questions of life.

[37 : 26] Rather, look to the one true source, the only source of revelation, and listen to the content of that revelation. the empires of this world amount to dust.

The empire that each of us manages to construct in this life will amount to chaff being blown away in the wind unless we're building for this eternal kingdom.

That will endure. So join yourself to the only empire that lasts. That is the message of Daniel chapter 2.

Well, let's pray before we sing, shall we? Our Father God, we thank you so much that you are a God who reveals that you have made known, you've made known your plan for history.

And so would you help us to be a people that listen to your revelation, that we wouldn't be tempted to go with the empires that we see and listen to them, but rather help us to align ourselves to commit to, to give all for the kingdom that will endure forever and ever.

[38 : 50] Help us to be a people that have learned the lesson of Daniel chapter 2. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.