

Daniel_Wk2_The Promise
Daniel 2:11-19; 27-43 NIV
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As humans, we invest a lot of our time trying to make sense of the world. From the moment we are born to the moment we die, we are in a constant state of observing and responding to the various events, circumstances, and people around us.

One of the things that I have noticed is that people are desperate to know the answer to one overarching question - or variation of it:

Why?
Why is it here?
Why did that happen?
Why did Tom Brady have to win another Super Bowl?
Why can't we all get along?
Why does God allow pain?

At its most basic level, you and I are trying to make sense of something that isn't easy to make sense of.

I mean, think about it - at some point in the last year nearly every one of us asked the question, 'why'. Whether it was about politics, health, social issues, the reality that we weren't meeting, the media, etc...we were asking some form of the question 'why'.

Now here is the thing: God made you to have a desire to discover and ask questions.

At the very same time, not all answers to all questions are something you need to know.

Why?

Because what is more important than US knowing all the answers to all the questions is us knowing the ONE who does.

Let me say that again for the people in the back: **SLIDE: It is more important that you know the ONE who holds the answers to all your questions, than for YOU to know the answers to all the questions.**

Here is why: When your desire to understand, or your ability to understand, becomes your consuming focus you will eventually replace God - with you.

Think about it: If you aren't okay entrusting God with answers and knowledge that you don't possess, what is that really saying? It's saying that you trust yourself more than you trust God. That leads us today.

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Today we continue in this series called, Thriving in Babylon, and it is a series intended to help us understand how to trust God in a world that we aren't comfortable in. In a world we struggle to navigate and understand. In a world where we must simultaneously live devoted to God while at the same time maintaining a life that is winsome and compelling. In a world where, at times, we will be forced to submit ourselves to the Lord or to submit ourselves to a lord.

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Last week we worked our way through chapter 1 and began to build a foundational understanding of this book of the Bible and its key message of HOPE.

Today, we move into chapter 2.

A couple of key insights before we go further. I think these will enable you to read and understand Daniel with greater clarity.

We are entering into a portion of this book that is filled with **imagery, Biblical hyperlinks - where one section connects to another in a significant way ON PURPOSE, and one key topic I want to address very briefly.**

The topic is this: Apocalyptic Literature.

Anyone ever heard of that before?

Anyone have a solid grasp on what that means?

Most of the time people connect Apocalyptic Literature with 'THE' apocalypse - or the end of the world.

Though it *could* mean that, in the Bible, it does not.

SLIDE: The word apocalypse comes from the Greek word, *apocalypsis*, which means 'revelation' or 'unveiling.'

In other words, Biblical apocalyptic literature is intended to reveal or unveil God's interaction with humanity.

The Book of Daniel is apocalyptic because it is a revealing of how God will move on earth...both in the near future and in the distant future.

Does this mean that Daniel is consumed with the end of the world? Nope.

Does this mean that when you and read Daniel we try to make it say something it doesn't? Nope.

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STORY TELL UP UNTIL v.19.

Explain and fill in gaps in thought.

11 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."

12 This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. **13** So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death.

14 When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. **15** He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. **16** At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him.

17 Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. **18** He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. **19** During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision.

Notice how it is the king, the most powerful man on the earth at the time who is filled with terror over the question, why.

It's a question that begs to be answered, but what we don't always account for is whether we are capable of handling the answer.

After returning to his three friends and they pray, God reveals the answer to the question why - he gives meaning to King Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

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27 Daniel replied, “No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, **28** 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 passed through your mind as you were lying in bed are these:

Daniel reminds the king that it is not he who is to be praised...it is God in heaven.

29 “As Your Majesty was lying there, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. **30** 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.

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31 “Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. **32** The head of the statue was made of pure 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 baked clay. **34** *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. 35 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.*

36 “This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. **37** Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; **38** 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 all. You are that head of gold.

39 “After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. **40** 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. **41** 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. **42** As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. **43** 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.

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b38377/> ** please insert the image (a political cartoon from 1861) on this link into a slide. Thank you.

Image description: "In February 1861 Washington was alarmed by rumors that secessionists planned to seize the city and make it the capital of the Confederacy. The print may have been produced in that context, or during Lincoln's call to arms and rather anxious military build-up of the capital in April. Here, General in Chief of the Army Winfield Scott, who engineered the Washington defense, is portrayed as a fierce bulldog. He stands guard defiantly over a large cut of beef representing Washington, as a greyhound wearing a broad-brimmed planter's hat and wrapped in a Confederate flag (Confederate president Jefferson Davis) slinks away to the left. Beyond the greyhound are bales of cotton, a bone, and an animal skull. A small snake coils threateningly in the grass. A palmetto tree, emblem of secessionist leader South Carolina, rises in the distance. On the right, behind the bulldog, are barrels of "mess pork," beans, beef, sacks of money, and a large cannon. The stars and stripes fly over them."

44 "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. 45 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.

How's everyone doing?

That's a lot to digest isn't it?

Your question might be: Why? Why is this here and why does it matter?

Here's where Daniel becomes both challenging and encouraging.

This book is challenging to read because of its rich imagery and poetic structure. But it's also encouraging because if we can maintain an aerial view of what is happening we see something truly apocalyptic - an unveiling of God's plan to interact on earth in a transformational way.

Vv. 34-35 & 44 are the keys to unlocking this chapter and ultimately this entire book.

Here's what I want you to know:

All throughout history to the point we are reading about in Daniel, and all throughout history from Daniel until now, we see a pattern in play.

The pattern is this: When human beings fail to acknowledge God - not merely with a head nod - but with full devotion and fear; they turn their attention from finding worth and value and completeness in him and instead they begin to find it by subduing and destroying one another.

You've seen this pattern play out.

Maybe you've seen it play out in your family as you discover a history of violence and abuse.

Maybe you've watched and studied it through history books and the news.

Maybe you see it in yourself in moments of internal anarchy against the Spirit of God.

And this is source of great distress. It should be. It is, I think, one of the single greatest and most effective ways that hell works to destroy people and thwart the plans of God.

But the promise is this: God is at work apart from our involvement to create a new kingdom through a new human who will not bow down to violence, abuse, or manipulation. This new kingdom will be indestructible because it will not depend on human authority or rule, but instead it will rest entirely upon the will, favor, and power of God.

This new kingdom will destroy the deadly grip of shady and sinful people and their kingdoms, and provide a better way...new way.

What could this possibly be talking about?

Well, it's talking about Jesus.

In fact, Jesus himself uses similar language when he is teaching in parables and he talks about how the Kingdom of Heaven - this new Kingdom - is like a mustard seed that man took and planted in his field. Though it started out so small it eventually becomes the largest of all garden plants, a tree so that birds can come and perch in its branches.

Do you see the similarity?

Listen, I know that there is a lot happening in our world that is driving people to all kinds of strange conclusions. People are craving a sense of control and so we do our best to rearrange Scripture to meet our own understanding of the world. We often won't settle our minds by focusing on the peaceful truth of God's plan being worked out.

I want to challenge you with a concluding take away - something to do:

This week, whenever you hear of something happening in your world that begins to create fear and insecurity, instead of first turning to Google or inward toward yourself, declare who you are trusting.

I got the scary news about my health - before I turn to Dr. Google - I'm turning to the Great Physician.

I heard something unsettling about what's happening in a foreign country - and before I buy more ammo - I turn to my ROCK, Jesus, who will ultimately restore righteousness and justice on earth.

I watched another YouTube video that has me all worked up - and before I look for another video - I'm setting my mind upon the truth's and promises of God.

In Daniel we find hope because Daniel isn't just about some heroic Hebrews, it's about the Promise of Jesus and the Promise of ALL THINGS being under Him and accountable to Him.

And so this week, trust that all the things you wrestle with, all the injustices you observe, all of the unrighteousness alive in people...God is at work - bringing justice and righteousness.

Start there.

We'll take another step deeper next week - but this week - trust God with the things that are giving you the most trouble...and then REST IN HIM.