

**Living Under the Authority of Christ, Our King,  
While Living in Earthly Kingdoms (Daniel 1-6)**  
**April 22 – May 20 2012, Week Two**  
**“Jesus, God’s Mystery Revealed to the Nations” Daniel 2**  
**April 29 2012, Study Notes**

### **Focus for Week Two**

Whatever the generation, people can live in fear of the future; life can seem out of control; the future of nations uncertain; one’s own life can seem small, random, purposeless. This leaves people anxious, fearful, even despairing; this can be true of all of us, even those of us who are Christians. As one looks at Scripture, however, God has revealed a mystery that he desires would provide us certainty, confidence, purpose, hope, and joy.

The New Testament writers speak often of this mystery revealed. For example, in Colossians 1, Paul writes, “<sup>25</sup>I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—<sup>26</sup>**the mystery** that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people.<sup>27</sup> To them God has chosen to make known **among the Gentiles** the **glorious riches of this mystery**, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.**”

What is this mystery revealed? Jesus. Through his person, one discovers the glorious riches of God; through his person, one finds God transforming one’s life from the inside out; through his person, one finds hope for the present and hope in Christ for a clear future in him.

Understanding this mystery revealed will guide us as we look at Daniel 2. Daniel only understood the mystery of Jesus in part; God has now disclosed/and made known this mystery. While Daniel saw this mystery through dreams, we have the privilege to see Jesus more fully revealed.

### **Summary of Message**

#### **1. God’s General Revelation NOT enough to face the uncertainties of life**

- a. **God has made himself known in creation (i.e. general revelation)** – see Psalm 19, 8 and 139
- b. **Three limits of general revelation**
  - 1) Human tendency: Suppress what they know of God and worship themselves or what they have created rather than God their creator; humans do this even though these “gods” are powerless to help (See Romans 1:21-23).
  - 2) God’s response: He is actively angry with humanity’s tendency (Romans 1:18-20) and “turns them over” to their foolishness (see Romans 1:24, 26, 28).
  - 3) Satan’s delight: When a person removes themselves from living under the authority of Christ, they place themselves (even unknowingly) under the authority of Satan.
    - a) The gods humans make are in themselves powerless (see Isaiah 44:6-11 & 46:1-2).
    - b) Satan blinds people in their false worship (see II Corinthians 4:3-5).
- c. **See these three limits of general revelation expressed in Daniel 2**
  - 1) Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that left him uncertain/troubled

- 2) His “guides” were helpless to help; they could not interpret the dream.
  - a) Nebuchadnezzar knows this: wants them to tell him the dream.
  - b) His “Guides know this”: they ask him 3x to tell him the dream.
  - c) Isaiah 47:8-14b speaks further about the folly of the Babylonian gods and guides.
  
- 3) Nebuchadnezzar and his guides demonstrate that Satan has blinded them.
  - a) Nebuchadnezzar forgets what he learned about God in Daniel 1.
  - b) Nebuchadnezzar’s guides see gods as distant; they forget about Daniel’s God who is near (Daniel 2:11).

**2. We, God’s children, need God’s Special Revelation desperately to have confidence to face life’s uncertainties**

- a. **God reveals himself to those who seek him regularly.**
  - 1) God’s own people had NOT sought him, so God sent them into captivity in order that they might remember his present glory and seek him again.
  - 2) Daniel and his three friends display a life of seeking him (see Daniel 1).
- b. **God reveals himself through His Word and our responsiveness to it;** Daniel’s regular diet was not dreams but God’s Word (e.g. life reflected Psalm 19).
- c. **God reveals himself through prayer;** Daniel’s prayer in 2:20-23 reflects a person who regularly prays with Scripture in mind.
- d. **God reveals himself as one seeks him in times of crisis;** Daniel’s response to Arioch and the king shows quiet confidence in God formed over years of trusting in God.

**3. As we consider Daniel’s dream in light of the coming of Jesus, we have even MORE certainty as we know Jesus, God’s mystery revealed, is the rock in the dream appointed to rule**

- a. **God rules the nations** (see 2:21 and details of dream).
- b. **God has appointed a ROCK to RULE.**
  - 1) Comes NOT from human hands
  - 2) Smashes the statue
  - 3) Becomes a mountain
  - 4) Rules forever
  - 5) Fills the whole earth
- c. **Interpretation of rock by Daniel points to Jesus.**
  - 1) God set-up a kingdom
  - 2) Never to be destroyed
  - 3) Never to be led by another ruler
  - 4) Crushes other kingdoms
- d. **New Testament fulfillment** (see I Peter 2:4-8, Colossians 1:25-27, Philippians 2:9-11, Ephesians 3:2-12)

**4. How should one respond to God’s Revelation?**

- a. Nebuchadnezzar still does not get it right even though he bows (see Daniel 2:46-49).
- b. What about us?
  - 1) To those who are not Christians
    - a) Are you bowing down to gods that are powerless to help?

- b) Could the powerlessness you feel, the burdens you carry, be the result of Satan's hold on your life?
- c) How to get started? Bow to him.
- 2) To those who are Christians
  - a) Are you developing regular habits where God reveals himself to you?
  - b) Are you seeking him in times of crisis and uncertainty?

### **For Further Study**

1. Meditate on one or more of the following Psalms (Psalm 19, 8 and 139) and consider ways God's creation AND God's word intend to reveal the glory of God.
2. Read Romans 1:18-32 and consider why creation is not sufficient to address the uncertainties of life.
3. Read again Daniel 2; as you think on this passage in light of the message, what points stand out to you and why?
4. From your reflections, what have you learned about the authority of Christ, our king, while living in earthly kingdoms?

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### **Daniel 2 (NIV 2011)**

<sup>1</sup> In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. <sup>2</sup> So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, <sup>3</sup> he said to them, “I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means.”

<sup>4</sup> Then the astrologers answered the king, “May the king live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it.”

<sup>5</sup> The king replied to the astrologers, “This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. <sup>6</sup> But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me.”

<sup>7</sup> Once more they replied, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it.”

<sup>8</sup> Then the king answered, “I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: <sup>9</sup> If you do not tell me the dream, there is only one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me.”

<sup>10</sup> The astrologers answered the king, “There is no one on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. <sup>11</sup> 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.”

<sup>12</sup> This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. <sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> He asked the king’s officer, “Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?” Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel.

<sup>16</sup> At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him.

<sup>17</sup> Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven <sup>20</sup> and said:

“Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. <sup>21</sup> He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. <sup>22</sup> He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. <sup>23</sup> 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.”

<sup>24</sup> Then Daniel went to Arioch, 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.”

<sup>25</sup> Arioch 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.”

<sup>26</sup> The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), “Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?”

<sup>27</sup> Daniel replied, “No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, <sup>28</sup> 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:

<sup>29</sup> “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. <sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> “Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. <sup>32</sup> The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup> its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> 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.

<sup>36</sup> “This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. <sup>37</sup> Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; <sup>38</sup> 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.

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

<sup>44</sup> “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. <sup>45</sup> 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.”

<sup>46</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. <sup>47</sup> 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.”

<sup>48</sup> 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 its wise men.

<sup>49</sup> Moreover, at Daniel’s request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.