

# **Do Not Underestimate God**

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**Daniel 2:1-49**

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Well, underestimating something can cost you dearly. I was in college and I was at my home church and they had this long hallway that went to the choir room. There were a bunch of us, I don't remember what activity was going on, but afterwards we were kind of walking down or getting into this hallway and a friend of mine challenged me to a race down this hallway. Of course, as a college-age guy, I'm not going to pass that up. We start racing and of course I won because I was faster. When I got to the finish line, I had completely believed my whole life in the adage that white men can't jump, but anyway, I leapt across the finish line and the truth is you can, if you're running that fast and you make a jump, and you can jump high enough that your forehead hits the door jamb going through the doorway.

The next thing I know I'm sprawled out on my back, a couple of young ladies are walking by to add to my humility, and I was holding my head. I came up and the two young ladies, the color drained from their face and they said, "Oh, we got to take you to the doctor." I'm like, "What?" She says, "you're bleeding." I ended up with six stitches that day and had to wear a bandage on my head for two weeks and had to explain that story 100 times. In that case, underestimating the height of a doorway and how high I could jump cost me, but it's kind of funny now. But there are things that we can underestimate that are not funny, whether it's taxes or investments, putting harmful substances in our bodies, trusting someone with your love, with your body, that can be not so funny depending on the consequences. Ultimately, underestimating God can be the difference between life and death.

Well, today in Daniel 2, this chapter helps God's people see that God must not be underestimated. Another way of saying underestimated is to distrust him, distrust who he is, his character, and his promises.

Now, why would we ever underestimate God and why in the context of Daniel 2? Well, as you know if you were here last week or you've studied Daniel before, you know what's happening in the life of the Jewish people. They were disobedient to the covenant that they were to have with God and because of this, God allowed them to be conquered by Babylon and by the notorious leader King Nebuchadnezzar. They find themselves in the book of Daniel in captivity.

Now under captivity as a part of God's justice and discipline to them for forsaking their covenant, that could lead them to believe in this situation, this difficult situation, that maybe they begin to doubt Yahweh their God, our God's name, Yahweh, they doubt Yahweh's goodness, his sovereignty, maybe his plan. Maybe they're teetering on losing hope, caving in. Maybe it's compromise, maybe it's fear and cowering in that. Well, Daniel 2 is a beacon of hope to those in captivity.

Now you're probably thinking, "Wait a minute, we're not in captivity. What does this have to do with us?" Well, that may be true that we're not in captivity, but I believe that we are feeling Babylon's breath on the back of our neck, and so we can learn much from Daniel 2 to encourage us and help us reframe our worldview and to make sure that our worldview is in line with God's truth. Our main point today as we look at this chapter is this, while in captivity, God reminds His people to not underestimate His power, goodness, sovereignty, and plan. God is at work for our good, we just sang about that a couple of songs ago, and he works even in difficult circumstances.

Difficulties and difficult circumstances and suffering can come in a variety of ways. We can reap and sow based on underestimating certain things and then we suffer, it's difficult because of it. Or maybe someone else's choices make it difficult and cause us suffering because of their bad choices and their sinful choices. Maybe it's God's discipline. Sometimes those things go hand-in-hand. You make bad choices, God disciplines those he loves, which is good news in that, but it's still difficult. Or quite simply, living in a world broken by sin can cause suffering and difficulties.

In this context though, God is sending a massive signal to his people that he is in fact in control and though they have deserved their captivity, even still God provides them with hope in the midst of it. He disciplines those he loves and those he loves are never without hope.

Last week, Pastor Darryl did an amazing job helping us understand chapter 1 and how it sets the tone for all of Daniel in framing our worldview. Each of these chapters help frame our worldview and that's a key component to what this book is about, and it helps us remain faithful in a fallen world.

Now, this is one of the longest chapters, so we're not going to quite go verse by verse in this book. We're going to maybe do the helicopter version as opposed to the airplane. Airplane, we take a tall dive look down, helicopter is a little closer, and we'll dive down a few times and see what the sweet spots are in this chapter so that we can understand how Daniel answers the Psalmist's question. The Psalmist's question in Psalm 137:4 is this, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" Daniel answers this and even demonstrates this to us.

Would you stand in honor of God's Word, as I read to you two verses, I'm not going to read the whole chapter, just the two verses that are really the white-hot center of what this chapter is all about?

Let me give you a little preface too as I read these two verses and that's this. This chapter is about Nebuchadnezzar having a nightmare that has a spiritual significance and he wants it interpreted and understand what this bad dream was all about. Daniel seeks the Lord and gets the answer for him, and this is what Daniel says to him in verse 27.

"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." That is God's Word. You may be seated.

This chapter has four parts to it. There's Nebuchadnezzar's dream, there's Daniel seeking the Lord to find the answer to the dream, Daniel revealing the answer to Nebuchadnezzar, and Nebuchadnezzar praising God when all is said and done. In each of these four parts, we're going to see ways in which we are to not underestimate God in a variety of situations that we are not to underestimate. The first one, for instance, is this. ***Do Not Underestimate the Frailty of Godless Leadership***. Let's go back to verse 1 in this chapter. This is Nebuchadnezzar's dream. This whole book of Daniel spans their captivity in Babylon, which goes from 605 BC to 536 BC, a 70-year period. At the beginning we learned last week in chapter one that Daniel was 15 years old, they were held captive, took some of these young men and put them in Babylon University. Not really, but they were put in a three-year program to be indoctrinated in the ways of Babylon. They've resisted the teaching and stayed true, and that's going to be a test throughout this whole book. 2:1 opens up about 603, 602, Daniel's now around 18 or 19, still a teenager, and it's quite amazing what God does through this teenager in the land of Babylon. Let me read to you these first three verses.

"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 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.'"

Here he is, this dream was apparently more than just he shouldn't have eaten pizza after midnight. This had a spiritual significance, one that would've been clear to him that, "There is something going on and I need to understand what this terrifying dream is all about."

Now, what we take away from this is not that, oh, this is normative, that we wake up, we have a weird dream, we've got to figure out what God meant by that dream. This is unique in God's revelation and his working through redemptive history. We've seen this a few times. They're not normative and they have to do with all of the people and God works in a way like this where he gives a dream to someone who is not a believer, like Pharaoh in the case of Genesis 40 and 41. Then God brings one of his men in to interpret that dream and understand the significance of who God is to that pagan leader and what God is going to do among his people. In Genesis 40 and 41, we have Joseph interpreting the dream for Pharaoh and it has ramifications for the people of Israel being captive in Egypt and being let go in the Exodus.

Here they find themselves again, "Oh, this is kind of like that, what happened before," except this time the dream goes to Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel is the man now who helps understand the dream and see the ramifications for God's people. That's what we find here.

Now, they would believe in pagan cultures especially, that the gods would speak to them and the gods, remember, at worst are demons, at best are lumps of gold and lumps of wood. They believe

that the gods would speak to them and so the diviners, all these four types of advisors that Daniel called were the types that would help interpret these things. You would find that the gods would speak to them through sheep liver. I have no idea what's going on there and what was a part of that process? There would be abnormal births. "Oh, it's a two-headed ox. What is the gods telling us? What are the gods telling us?" The stars, that's something today that still happens, right? Where the astrologers, not the astronomers though they did some astronomy, they were mainly astrologers and looked to the stars for signs. Then of course dreams.

While the Chaldeans step up, Chaldean is another term for Babylonian, but in this particular context, a more specific subset of those who specialized in interpretations. They had resources, scrolls and books. Someone would tell the dream, they would look to these and find an interpretation for it, and we see this happening here in verse 4. "When the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic," let's pause one second for that. It's a little nerd moment we got to step into here. It says, "In Aramaic," that's interesting. From 2:4 all the way through the end of chapter 7, it's written originally in Aramaic. Now the Old Testament, most of the Old Testament is written in Hebrew, and why is that? Because it's written for the Jewish people and that's what they spoke. What's going on here? Why is there such a big chunk here in Aramaic?

Well, Aramaic was a general language of the empire of Gentiles, and so it would cross borders much like English does today. You can go to different countries where maybe English isn't the first language, but you can find people who speak English. Well, in a similar way, Aramaic went out and so why then, starting there, does it begin a dialogue in Aramaic? Well, being that the language of the culture and the kingdom, I believe that one way to look at it is that God is wanting to make sure that this message goes beyond just the Jewish people at that time. Here we are reading it some 2,600 years later and getting a very clear picture, as we'll see.

The first words that the Chaldeans say to him, "Oh, king live forever." Kind of starts off a little ironically because we're going to find out he's not going to live forever. It kind of starts a little weird and he says, "Tell your servants the dream and we will show the interpretation." Then they could go to their books, that could go to their scrolls and figure something out and tell the king probably something that he wanted to hear.

Well, in this particular case, the king wasn't going to be fooled by any of this. He was paranoid but not gullible. He says to them, in verses 5 and 6, these words, he says, "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 the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation.'"

Wow, what a boss, huh? That is some serious business. That's not a metaphor for something. He literally means, "If you can't do this, I'm going to tear you from limb to limb." That's quite a warning. In other words, "This is serious. This is a serious dream, and I'm seriously freaked out about this."

Now, some scholars would say, "Oh, maybe he forgot the dream." No, I believe this dream is firmly etched in him. What it is he's not a fool and he knows that they're going to go to their books and come up with something, but he can't trust it. This supernatural dream requires a supernatural answer and so as a test to that, if you find the true answer to this, then you're going to know what the dream is because your sources will prove that.

Then what do they say to him? Verses 10 and 11, "The Chaldeans answered the king," the bluff called them out, "The Chaldeans answered the king and said, 'There's not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, 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.'"

Major cop out here, right? You know what? We can't answer that that way. We don't know what your dream is about. We're not gods, you're not a god, and they're over there, out there, they're not going to be in touch with us. Well, how do you think the king took that? Oh, okay. No big deal.

Nope, verse 12. "Because of this, the king was angry and very furious and commanded that all the wise men in Babylon be destroyed." Thanks, Chaldeans. Now we're all in trouble because of you and the big mouth that you had and told him that the gods can't help him. Well, then he makes this decree in verses 13-16. The guards go out, Daniel finds out what's going on because he's one of them, and so he steps in and he asks the guard, hey, can you give me a little time and not kill anybody until I get back to you, basically, in a sense.

Now, why would Daniel do this? Well, he's one of the wise men, he doesn't want to die as we'll see in just a minute, and we see in chapter 1 kind of a foretaste of this, where it says that Daniel was gifted in interpreting dreams in 1:17. He's like, I'm going to go to God. Would you give me time to do that? We'll get to there in just a minute, but here we find King Nebuchadnezzar, do not underestimate the frailty of godless leadership. At this point, we see a paranoid, insecure, distrusting, prideful, powerless king. He's frail, he's fragile, he's fickle. I like how one scholar says it, says, "How easy it is to terrify strong men who are outside of Christ."

See what we're seeing here and what the original audience would be seeing here is a reminder who Yahweh is in regard to other kings. God establishes rulers. Romans 13:1 tells us in the New Testament, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." As we'll find out, Nebuchadnezzar was instituted by God not because he was really great. God is in control of that. That doesn't mean God condones everything that kings and presidents and prime ministers do, but he uses them for his purposes.

Listen to what Proverbs 21 says. 21:1 says, "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord. He turns it wherever it will, wherever he wills." Jesus, looking at Pilate, when Pilate was interrogating him, said these words and let them gather your thoughts and minds right here.

He says, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it has been given to you from above."

This is good news. You see the great Oz of Babylon, he's shaking behind a curtain, paralyzed by a bad dream. So then the hope that we have when we see a dictator who shoots himself in a bunker as the army presses on to him, when you see a dictator hide in a hole as the army presses on to him, when you see a dictator hung by people because they're tired of his oppression, take heart. Maybe it's a little morbid but take heart. When you see a president trip down the stairs or vomit on a fellow dignitary or can't read the teleprompter, take heart. They're frail. You have big, bad Nebuchadnezzar, the conquering king, he needs a little glass of milk because he's had a nightmare. They're frail.

But guess what? Yahweh is not. He is the king of all, and this is the hope, their reminder of, yes, you've been captive by Nebuchadnezzar, he has conquered you, deserved it, but Nebuchadnezzar is just a pathetic tool in my hands. That's great confidence, right? God is encouraging his captive people, "Do not underestimate the frailty of the godless and godless leaders. That's good news for us today.

Two, ***Do Not Underestimate the Fortitude of a Humble Believer***. This is the opposite. We have the frailty of Nebuchadnezzar, now we have the fortitude of Daniel and his three friends. Fortitude simply means strength of mind that allows one to endure pain or adversity with courage. Daniel did not face this situation alone, and this is really the story of Daniel and the three buddies of his, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They have fortitude from Daniel 1 to the end of the book and what a blessing that is as we see this.

Look at what he says here in verse 17. Then Daniel went, and he got the permission to go pursue an answer, and he does it the right way. "Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Meshach, and Azariah." That's the real names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, their Jewish names. These were his companions, "and he 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 in Babylon." This is a very practical prayer. We don't want to die and so we're going to ask God, help us not die and the way that you can help us not die is reveal this mystery to us so that we can tell Nebuchadnezzar what his dream was about, what his dream was and what it was about. You see this humility here appeal to God's mercy. We are dependent on it. He knows I don't deserve any of this and we are at God's mercy in this case or we're going to die.

They pursue that and he's the God of heaven. We're not searching the stars. We're searching the God who put the stars in place and named them each. This is the heartbeat here of Daniel and his three friends.

Then what happens? Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. What is mystery? We see this term show up in the Old Testament, in the New Testament. The mystery we see from a Biblical perspective is that this is God's will, formerly unknown, but revealed, and

we as believers have a privilege as God reveals his will to us. How do you know? Genesis to Revelation is God's revelation of His will, and now He has told us from Genesis to Revelation, at this point it wasn't complete, now it's complete, we understand exactly what God wants us to know about His will. Are there still mysteries? Absolutely and one day we'll get to know those too, but that's after we go and be with Him. Until then, He's told us everything we need to know.

In fact, you have Paul here in the New Testament saying, "Regard us as servants of Christ," in 1 Corinthians 4:1. "We are servants as Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God." The things that God has revealed to us that we know especially about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Well, here you have Daniel and his three friends appealing to God that He would reveal this mystery.

Then what happens? It's revealed to them and then he runs off and he tells Nebuchadnezzar right away. Nope. Look at this amazing pause. What does Daniel do? He breaks out in song in worship of God. Look at this.

"Daniel answered and he said, 'Blessed be the name of God forever and ever. The name of God is Yahweh.'" Just like every name, that name represents all that that person is. He is praising the totality of who Yahweh is, the God forever and ever, unlike Nebuchadnezzar. "Oh king, live forever." Not Nebuchadnezzar. This one. This one lives forever. "To whom belong wisdom and might." He is not frail." He changes times and seasons." Let that soak in. He doesn't just know times, He changes them. "He removes kings and sets up kings." Ah, there it is. It's a relief. "He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and hidden things, He knows what's in the darkness." That's good news, "and the light dwells with Him."

Now he turns this praise directly to God. "To you, oh God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise for you have given me wisdom in might and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."

What's the opposite of underestimating God? Estimating all that God is and worshiping Him because He's worth it. That's the opposite of not underestimating, and that's what he does. This is the song in a foreign land that Daniel teaches us, that we can still have hope if foreigners and strangers and not home yet. What a great blessing that is.

Then Daniel went to Arioch, that captain of the guard, who then took credit. Hey, Nebuchadnezzar, I found the guys that can interpret your dream, liar. Daniel was the one that went to him, but he's taking credit for it because he wants to cash in on what's going on here. Daniel, on the other hand, does not do that. I read to you verses 27 and 28, but now let's see it in context. Here 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," including me 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."

Now that's a statement right there. Something big is going on here. Latter days? You mean what's going to come, right, the future? Yes, this is a prophetic dream that he tells Nebuchadnezzar, so what you saw was prophetic and it has to do with latter days.

Now 14 times in the Old Testament, this phrase shows up and every time it denotes the closing period of the future, the end of days, the eschaton, the apocalypse. This is big. This is probably why all of this comes through in Aramaic so that everybody knows what's going to happen. This dream then spans from 600 BC to about the second coming of Jesus Christ. From that time until the end, the time that we're still waiting for is here. This pompous king then is marked by frailty, contrasting the humble servant who's marked by fortitude.

Let me ask, where do you find your fortitude, especially in dealing with difficulty? The one who does not underestimate God is the one who humbly prays and worships God, seeking the mercy of the one who gives it. Were you expecting a different answer? Something a little flashier than that? It comes back to this, humble Daniel shows us how to not underestimate God, so don't underestimate the fortitude of a humble believer.

That leads to number three. ***Do Not Underestimate the Future Promises of God.*** This is a thick section right here verses 31 through 45. We're going to see if we can at least get an understanding from a helicopter view of what's happening here in these verses.

Daniel then goes in, God has revealed to him what the dream was about, and it had to do with this metal monster that Nebuchadnezzar saw. It had a gold head, it had silver chest and arms, a bronze midsection, iron legs and feet, a mixture of iron and clay. It was frightening to him. It sounds frightening. Then Daniel goes into the interpretation of this, says, This was the dream, and this is crucial to understand the whole dream, and we see something similar pop up in Daniel 7, and we'll address that when we get there too. They're definitely parallel type of passages that you'll see and we learn something about both of them from each other, but we're just going to stay here today and see what this says to us about this.

Verse 36, "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," in other words, King Nebuchadnezzar, Yahweh is responsible for you being king, not you, "wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens making you rule over them all, you are the head of gold." That's key to understand. He, Nebuchadnezzar and the empire of Babylon is represented by this gold head. That helps us understand what these other pieces are about and who these other pieces are.

Then he says this in verse 39, "Another kingdom inferior to you shall rise after you," that's the silver one, "and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth." One verse for the silver and the bronze. This shows to us a little bit of what God thinks of human history. That silver and that bronze, we spend a lot of time in world history talking about them. God? One verse. Keep that in mind too about these frail kings, and that's what you see here in this.



These next two are brushed by quickly, they're inferior, yet they subdue the previous in succession, the arms and the chests silver. Most scholars would say that represents the Medo-Persian Empire, Cyrus comes in and defeats Babylon in 539 B.C. Then the Medo-Persians rule for 208 years from 539 to 331 BC. Then Alexander the Great comes on the scene and the Greek armies and they conquer, they dominate, and the Greek Empire reigns from 331 to 146 B.C. and Alexander the Great is the great conquering hero. It says about him, "Alexander the Great stood at the breadth of his domain and wept for there were no more worlds to conquer." Hans Gruber, Die Hard. If you know, you know.

Verse 40, you have the legs of iron and then the feet of iron and clay, they come in, in verse 40, and they crush these kingdoms. Who is this? This is Rome, the great mighty Roman Empire that lasts from to the 146 BC to the fourth or fifth century AD, depending on how you look after the kingdom divided and the last vestige of the great Roman Empire is no more.

Now wait a minute. It goes from gold to iron and clay, that's decreasing in value, stronger, but each of these kingdoms, we spend a little more time in world history class because they're greater. He says they're inferior. Why? Because God has a different value system than we do. They're decreasing in value. Yes, they're stronger, but they are worse. They get bad to worse. Yes, we're getting better at technology, better at a lot of things, but it's not getting better. It's getting worse, and this is what we see here in this value system that's taking place.

Then we get a little more advice from 41 through 43, a little more detail about the feet, a divided kingdom. You've got 10 toes, a mixture of iron and clay. Daniel 7 kind of helps us a little bit on the 10 toes things, but what you have then is legs of iron and feet of iron and clay. It seems like two separate parts, definitely related, but maybe not quite at the same time. Now that's important because of what I skipped over if you were paying attention.

Let's go back to verse 34 and 35. This is part of the dream. As you looked in this metal monster, then something happened. "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 into pieces and pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold all together were broken in pieces and 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. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

What is going on here? This stone that was cut out not by human hands. This is a divine stone. Let's look at what it says in the interpretation section verses 44 and 45. "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." No one comes after, there's no other kingdom. It stops the succession. "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."

Whoa. What is going on here? Who is this? Does this sound, a kingdom that will never end. Where have I read that before? Oh, Gabriel came to Mary and said, "You are going to be giving birth to a child. You shall name him Jesus and Jesus will reign over the house of Jacob forever and His kingdom there will be of no end." Isaiah 9:6-7, "For unto us a child is born and His kingdom will never end." 1 Peter 2:4-8 describe Jesus as a living stone, rejected, but chosen and precious to God. "The builders rejected the stone, but it's become the cornerstone, the foundation upon which the church has been built, a stumbling stone, and a rock of offense."

Well, who is this? It's Jesus. This is a prophecy of the Messiah coming. This is actually good news to God's people at this time. They're in captivity. They're going to see in this unfold far and near, near and far because Messiah comes. But have there been a succession of kingdoms since He came? Yes. When He came, the Roman Empire was not destroyed. It took several centuries and what we see there is quite a literal, when He comes, He comes in such a way that it wipes out, it blows away all the kingdoms that have come before, and a supernatural kingdom literally comes to planet earth.

You can't switch from, it's a symbol that is literally fulfilled in these four kingdoms, and then it becomes metaphoric, oh, he reigns in our hearts. He's coming, folks. This is the good news that he's telling the people, "You know what? Nebuchadnezzar's going to blow away like the chaff. Cyrus, blown away like the chaff. Alexander the Great, blown away like the chaff. You can go down the list of all those Roman Empires blown away like the chaff. They're gone. But there's a king coming who will not blow away but be the one who reigns forever." That is our hope. That is the hope that we have while we look around in our crazy world.

You see, this is God's message to His people. We don't want to get tripped up and what are the 10 toes? You notice the title of the sermon is not "The 10 Toes of Daniel 2." Okay? We can look at that, it's there for a reason and we can look deep into that. If we had more time, we could look a little deeper into that, but again, go back to the helicopter. This is the hope that God is giving to the people who are under this type of captivity. "Hey, this is what's going to happen. You're going to be dominated for a while, it's going to be a part of God's will, but one day it will come to an end with God Himself establishing a kingdom from another world here that'll wipe away all other kingdoms." For them right now, your captivity is a part of His plan. Why? I don't know. But I do know this, that some Magi show up to Jesus' doorstep a couple of years after He was born having followed a star, and they knew Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

How in the world did those Persians know how to get there and who they were coming after? I believe you see the echoes of Daniel into the lives of those wise men at the time of Jesus. Yes, here's for us. Yes, vote. Yes, run for office. Yes, do what we can to ensure freedom for the sake of the Gospel. But do you live with the end in mind? Do not underestimate God's future promises.

That leads us to number four. ***Do Not Underestimate the Facade of False Worship.*** A facade is a fake front piece, like if you ever watch where they film Westerns. The outside looks great, but

then there's really nothing on the other side of the front. This is what we see here with how Nebuchadnezzar responded to this situation.

"The King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel," in verse 46, "And commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. The king answered and said to Daniel, 'Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings and the revealer of mysteries for you have been able to reveal this mystery.'" Then the king gave Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego a promotion and lots of goodies, and they had influence, which as a side note shows that even after this happened, they stayed and created great influence in this pagan world.

That could be a whole other sermon, I'm guessing, but don't worry, we're not going to go there. We're going to look at this and what happens here, this is amazing. What does Nebuchadnezzar do in this situation? Is he worshiping Daniel? No, because Daniel wouldn't have tolerated it. He would've stopped it, but he's the agent of Yahweh. Remember, Yahweh is the one who said, do not make a graven image of me, so there's no graven images to pull out so that this pagan king can bow down to it. Daniel represents God to Nebuchadnezzar, and he blesses him because of it.

Then he says these words, "Truly your God is God of gods and Lord of lords and revealer of mysteries. For you have been able to reveal this mystery." Nebuchadnezzar gets saved. This is great news, right? No, because some of you read chapter 3, haven't you? Next week you're going to learn about chapter 3 because Nebuchadnezzar after saying all this goes full pagan on everybody. He builds a statue out in the wilderness to be worshiped.

What do we make of this? He says the right things and that's true. But you notice the difference between how Nebuchadnezzar worshiped and how Daniel worshiped? Nebuchadnezzar worshiped in part and it was really kind of selfish. Remember too, that Nebuchadnezzar is a polytheist. He makes room for lots of gods, so why not one more? Let's throw Yahweh in the mix. "In fact, I'll put him on top of the heap." But don't be fooled yet.

Now, later in life, we might see that Nebuchadnezzar actually does get saved, but that's for another pastor on another day when we get to that chapter. Here, we need to be suspicious and be reminded that there's a difference between the worship that's taking place here. He worships God in part, especially the part where he benefited, Daniel, the name of Yahweh, and fullness, all that Yahweh is, not just the one who got him out of a jam.

What do we make of this? How do we take this away, this divine stone? I kind of wonder too, in all of his excitement that maybe Nebuchadnezzar stopped listening after verse 38. He got to the part where Daniel said, "You're the head of gold," and everything else was, "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," because he excited and wanted to ... He certainly got the interpretation of it, but I don't think he's paying attention the fact that he's going to be like chaff blown away and that his kingdom will come to an end by this stone.

What do we do? How does his praise differ from Daniel here and what do we make of this? Well, I think we have to be clear in this to not underestimate the facade of false worship, especially when it comes to leadership. We're quick to get excited when we see a rock star or an

actor or an athlete who gets saved, and we're not rooting against that. But what happens a lot of times? It's kind of short-lived, it's not real. There's a chapter 3 that follows it, doesn't it? I'm not talking about genuine Christians who stumble and trip. That's not what's going on here with, oh, come on, give a Nebuchadnezzar break. He's a new Christian. He doesn't know not to build a big statue in the wilderness. That's not what's taking place. He's showing his true fruits.

We do this sometimes with leaders too and this helps us navigate an election year, doesn't it? This is going to sting a little bit possibly, but hang in there all right? You see, with good intentions, we think Nebuchadnezzar is in, and we hope that, we certainly pray for that. But we can easily be fooled and we have been. I have been. I remember we had a born-again president in the '70s, and he nearly ruined the country, and he went full liberal in his theology at the end of his days. Another one claimed to have been had a born-again experience, but his wife practiced astrology and necromancy. Another saying in his hometown church choir but we've come to find out he's quite the pervert.

There's another one who claimed to be led to Christ by Billy Graham himself, and he spent his eight years in war and mediocrity. One stood on the stage of Rick Warren's church claiming Christ, yet later discovered to be a Marxist and personally and culturally embracing homosexuality. There's one who stood in front of a church holding a Bible, and you can buy a version of that Bible with his name on it. But the Bible doctrines in that Bible don't seem to match his life. There's one who claims to be Catholic, and yet somehow espouses Romans 1 as a leadership tactic.

We're left holding our noses when we vote. Should we vote? Absolutely. Are some of these better than others? Absolutely. But we need to bring them down a notch. Remember, these will be among the chaff that blows away. Do I hope that some of these is genuinely saved and will get saved? Yes. But remember, sometimes Nebuchadnezzar bows down and worships Yahweh for the impression he might lead rather than the genuineness of his heart. We can see that and we hope for that but wait to see if there's a chapter 3 before we start being fooled by this.

Now, this is not some sort of holy cynicism, but remember, this is a worldview shift. Christian, I'm giving you something greater than a better president. Your king is coming. He is coming, and it'll be forever. The goal isn't today to make everyone mad about insulting your favorite president and then send you off to your lunch meal, but the truth can sting, but it always sets us free, and truth reframes our worldview. We don't want to underestimate God and the precious promises that we have, to not underestimate the frailty of the godless, to not underestimate the fortitude of a humble believer, to not underestimate the future promises of our God, to not underestimate the facade of praise from the godless.

One of my favorite Old Testament scholars is Dale Ralph Davis, and he writes this story. He shares this story and his commentary on Daniel, I want to share it with you. "The Roman and Christian hating Emperor Julian who reigned from 332 to 363 AD was mortally wounded in a war with the Persians. While Julian's expedition was in progress, one of Julian's followers asked a Christian in Antioch what the carpenter's son was doing while this was happening."

"Well, the Christian replied, 'The maker of the world who you call the carpenter's son, is employed in making a coffin for the emperor.'" Within days, news came to Antioch of Julian's death, and that is where Daniel 2 leaves us. Jesus has a coffin for every empire and emperor. The only true security is in the kingdom of the carpenter's son."

So for some, Christ goes to prepare a place for you for others, a coffin. Another way to say it is this stone, uncut by human hands, is coming to destroy all the kingdoms of the world. Will you be worshiping like Nebuchadnezzar or worshiping like Daniel? Because that same solid rock that's coming to crash is the solid rock upon which our salvation is based. Which rock do you want?

If you don't know Christ as the one that you can stand on, come to Him today by faith, believe in Him, repent of your sins and find salvation for your souls and worship the way Daniel did. If you do worship like Daniel and know Yahweh like he did, then remember this. The sky is not falling. I don't care what happens this year. Know that your mighty king is coming. If you truly believe that, walk out of here not angry, but with fortitude to not cower, compromise, or curtsy in the face of whichever Nebuchadnezzar shows up. Not this election year, not in 2028, not in 2032 if we still get to vote. Trust Him, worship Him, and don't dare underestimate your God. He's coming. Let's pray.

Our Father, you are truly in heaven, and we definitely pray that your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Lord, I pray for our country. You tell us to pray for our leaders, and we pray. We pray that true salvation would come to them, that you would place people who know the true gospel, to speak the true gospel to them, and that they would truly be saved and that you would change their lives, and Lord, that you would continue to help us have the freedom that we've been so blessed to have, so that the gospel may continue on our own shores and around the world. Lord, raise up men and women to lead and to glorify you and to be like Daniel and to be like the three friends who have impact on a kingdom, for your glory and for our good. Lord, we pray that you would encourage us today and that you would come quickly. Amen.