

Daniel 2:26-49 A vision for all...

Read Daniel 2

God gives this vision not only to King Nebuchadnezzar but also to the exiles. To each group the vision will have its unique message and invite a unique response. In this study we will look at what the message of the vision would be to each and explore what application it might have for us.

Part 1: The intended message for King Nebuchadnezzar.

1. (26-30) What theological convictions lie behind how Daniel sets up his revealing of the mystery to the King?

No human being can give the interpretation of dreams or foretell what is to come. It is not by human wisdom but by God's revealing.

2. (31-45) What theological convictions are central to Daniel's interpretation of the dream? How is this related to the theological convictions you uncovered in the last question?

It is God and God alone who oversees the rise and fall of kings and kingdoms and nations and governments and leaders.

Hint: This conviction will more than likely give rise to some discussion of whether or not this is true, or how we are to relate to our leaders in light of this conviction. This would be a very appropriate tangent but could get you into the weeds in a hurry. Here are some thoughts to guide your discussion...

The bible does indeed teach us to honour, respect, and obey our earthly leaders for the only authority they have has been given to them by God (see Romans 13) However obedience to God is primary – so if the state asks us to do something counter to the commands of God resistance is indeed expected.

Just because God is sovereign does not mean that what we do with the power that God has given us is automatically God's will – remember again from our first week that Daniel invites us to live into a mystery – Yes God is sovereign – but – yes we are responsible.

Daniel's set up is related to this message. Just as no human being can interpret dreams only God can reveal – not my wisdom but God's revealing – you O King did not become King God made you King – it was

not your wisdom, power, cunning that made you King it was God's sovereignty.

What God gives, God can and will take away – After you will come...

3. (36-38) *Read Genesis 1:26-31.* How are Daniels words to the King reflective of this passage? What message to the king sits under this use of Genesis 1?

The words spoken over the King are the words spoken over all of humanity. God gives us this honour and authority that we would have dominion over the earth.

That word dominion has been disastrously misused to justify our exploitation of creation for consumer gain – but the word biblically meant to rule in God's stead – to be God's representative. Just as God provides lovingly for creation – food, beauty, health, safety, learning, and enjoyment of his presence – our work is to reflect his work – to act, speak, be and serve in ways that undergird the full flourishing of all.

The message to the King is – how are you using the authority you have been given to undergird the full flourishing of all?

4. (46-49) *Skim Daniel 3.* What do you think the message of the vision to the King is? Does he receive the message rightly and respond appropriately?

The message to the King was to bring humility – an acknowledgement that all things come from God – and with those things come the responsibility to use them for the sake of the full flourishing of all.

He in a way comes to understand that God has given as he adds Yahweh to his Pantheon of God's – but it is mingled with his praise of Daniel for interpreting the dream even where Daniel made clear it wasn't his doing.

He takes part of the message – I am the Golden head – but rejects that he will be forgotten and that his kingdom will come to an end – by building a golden statue and inviting his subjects to bow down and worship him.

5. How would you apply this message to your own life? How does it change the way you think, feel, act?

Everything that I have has been given by God – how am I using it for the full flourishing of all?

Everything that is not rooted in the living God will come to an end – everything that I root my sense of self / worth / purpose / value in other than God will inevitably have an “after this” moment – which should spark in us the question - is there a foundation that will last, that will go on, that is secure – indeed there is – the grace, love, and character of the living God – in whom we have infinite worth – in whom we have steadfast love – in whom we have an eternal future.

Part 2: The intended message for the Exiles.

6. (38-43) What is heaven’s perspective on earthly kingdoms? What human toll does this reality have? (Think specifically of the experience of the exiles – but beyond that to the more contemporary tolls)

Like precious metal there is glory and beauty in human civilization but it is a diminishing glory.

Power and ferocity will increase over time – but unity will crumble.

The thirst for power and conquest remain the same.

Depending on which human toll you explore your conversation will go in differing directions. Perhaps explore matters of racial injustice, the unjust treatment of our elderly, the unjust working conditions of migrant workers, our ongoing treatment of indigenous people would be good places to speak of how this is related to heaven’s perspective on earthly kingdoms.

7. (44-45) What hope does the vision give to the exiles?

All earthly kingdoms will come to an end.

Earthly kingdoms will be judged by God.

Eventually they will completely be wiped from the earth so that even the memory of them will be gone.

God will set up a Kingdom utterly different from earthly kingdoms. A kingdom of love, justice, peace, and full flourishing for all.

8. (46-49) What do you think the message of the vision to the exiles is?
Do they receive the message rightly and respond appropriately?

God is building a kingdom even in Babylon. An earthly and material kingdom which invites engagement. They step into leadership positions in Babylon animated by that very hope. A hope that presses toward justice, love, equality, peace, flourishing for all. A hope that looks forward to Messiah's coming to make everything new.

9. How would you apply this message to your own life? How does it change the way you think, feel, act?

God is building a kingdom even during Covid 19 in Canada. It invites me to invest in the things that will last forever – peace, love, justice and equality.

When I see the horrors, injustice, and oppression of earthly kingdoms I can have hope that God will bring judgment – hope that they will one day be wiped from the face of the earth.

10. Read Luke 20:9-18. How is Jesus the fulfillment of the hope of this passage?

He is the son that the stewards (earthly powers) kill – however their killing of the son actually brings about their downfall.

The cross is where the weakness of the pebble crushes earthly kingdoms.

His resurrection spells the end of the powers of sin, death, and hell – promising an entirely new future for creation.