**Believers in Babylon Series**

**“The Kingdom of Christ”**

**Daniel 2.1-49**

**Preaching Prelude**

Last week we began our new series in the book of Daniel entitled, “Believers in Babylon – living as exiles in a strange world.” As believers in Christ we must remember that this world is not our home. We are foreigners and strangers living in exile. (IPt.1.1a, 2.11) I believe that Christians need to develop a theology of being in the world but not of it, a theology of living as an exile. And I believe the book of Daniel is one the best resources given by God to develop that type of theology.

The book of Daniel is that it is written in the time of the Babylonian Captivity (597 B.C.) when the Babylonian army under the leadership of king Nebuchadnezzar marched into Jerusalem and carried off thousands of Israelites, forcing them to walk hundreds of miles across the desert to live in Babylon. And so many of God’s people found themselves in a foreign land, living as exiles in Babylon, among a people who did not share a biblical worldview or lifestyle. I believe that God takes the historical event of the Babylonian Captivity and uses it to teach us how to live for Him as we sit in exile in our own Babylon.

Among the early exiles were Daniel and his three friends, who must have been only teenagers at the time of their deportation. These young men were chosen, along with others, to be part of a three-year intensive training program to learn the language and literature of the Babylonians to become qualified to serve in the king’s palace. Chapter one of Daniel ends with the boys graduating with honors, being ten times better than all the others in Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom. (1.18-21)

The main point of last week’s message was that God is in control no matter how messed up the world is. And because of God’s covenant love for us in Christ we can live for the glory of God as we live as exiles in this world. As we turn to chapter two this morning we will see that the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ is God’s number one priority. We will see that God orchestrates the rise and fall of kingdoms, empires, and nations to usher in the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ where He will reign forever and ever. (Rev.11.15)

Our call to worship this morning comes from I Chronicles 29.11-13:

**Call to Worship**

*Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from You; You are the Ruler of all things. In Your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give You thanks, and praise Your glorious name.* (NIV)

**Reading of Scripture**

*In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep.****2****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,****3****he said to them, “I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means.”* ***4****Then the astrologers answered the king, “May the king live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it.”* ***5****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.****6****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.”* ***7****Once more they replied, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it.”* ***8****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:****9****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.”* ***10****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.****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. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven****20****and said:*

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

***24****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.”* ***25****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.”* ***26****The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), “Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?”* ***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:* ***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.*

***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.* ***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. “The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.*

***46****Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him.****47****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.”* ***48****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.****49****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.*

**Introduction**

Last week I told you that the main message of the book of Daniel is that God is in control no matter how messed up the world is, that the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ is God’s main priority, and that believers are called to live for the glory of God as exiles in this world. In chapter one we saw Daniel’s covenant love for God sustained him as he was engaged in a three-year intensive training program to become qualified to serve in Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom.

Chapter two begins in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. (2.1a) The early years of Nebuchadnezzar conquest for world domination were very active.



Nebuchadnezzar’ army had travel westward defeating the Assyrian Empire, then traveled southward to conquer the Egyptians, gobbling up every small country in between including the Southern Kingdom of Israel. The Babylonian army marched into Jerusalem and carried off thousands of Israelites, forcing them to walk hundreds of miles across the desert to live in Babylon. And so it was that many of God’s people found themselves in a foreign land and all around them were Babylonians speaking a strange language, engaging in a strange customs, and worshiping strange gods. Daniel and his companions were part of the early group of exiles taken into captivity to be part of a three-year training program for Nebuchadnezzar’s government.

This reference to the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign is probably referring to the second year after his conquest was complete. (2.1) By this time Daniel and his friends would have completed the training program and would had been serving in Nebuchadnezzar’s personal service for a few years. (1.19) But these days of leisure were not going well with Nebuchadnezzar. Instead of enjoying peaceful nights in the beautiful city of Babylon, the king could not sleep because he was haunted by a reoccurring dream. (2.1b)

**The Magicians**

*So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed.* (2.2a)

Notice that Nebuchadnezzar summoned four types of “wisdom professors” – *magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers.* This group represents the foursome of wise men that were openly accepted in the Babylonian culture. Fortune Tellers predicting the future, Wizards casting spells, Magicians using herbs, and Astrologers looking at the stars for guidance were all acceptable sources of wisdom, insights, and revelations. And Nebuchadnezzar called in the whole circus together to hear his dream and its interpretation so that he could get back to enjoying his kingdom.

As Nebuchadnezzar called these wise men together it seems that he had more wisdom than all of his wise men because he demanded that they tell him the details of the dream as well as its interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar was wise enough to know that if he told them the details of the dream then they could make up any interpretation they wanted. The Babylonians had massive amount of dream books, written by experts in interpreting every kind of dream, but these resources would be of no use if you didn’t know the dream to begin with. Nebuchadnezzar also knew that these magicians were master manipulators and he wanted to keep them honest.

Nebuchadnezzar doubles down on the pressure on the wise men promising great reward to anyone who could tell him the dream and interpret it. He also promised a torturous death for all of them if no one of could tell him his dream and what it meant. (2.5-6) After long negotiations trying to persuade Nebuchadnezzar to tell them the details of the dream, the magicians insist that *there is no one on earth who can do what the king asks!* They imply that Nebuchadnezzar is being unjust because that there has never been a king, *no matter how great or mighty, that has ever asked his wise men to answer such a thing*. And on top of that they assert that the gods couldn’t help because the gods don’t live among humans. (2.7-11) What a sad religion where gods don’t live among humans and help us! *This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. 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.*(2.12-13)

**The Man – Daniel**

As Nebuchadnezzar’s commander gathered together all the wise men of Babylon for execution. Daniel asked the guard why the king’s decree was so harsh. Remember, Daniel and his three friends would be victims of this execution as well. The officer explained to Daniel the circumstances behind his order to execute all the wise men of Babylon and Daniel immediately goes to the king and requested time so that he could interpret the dream. (2.14-16) Nebuchadnezzar grants Daniel’s request.

Daniel stands as a mediator between Nebuchadnezzar and all of the wise men. This is a perfect picture of the Gospel – A king orders the execution of notorious manipulators and spiritual fakes (like you and me), and God appoints a mediator to step in and save them from death. (ITim.2.5)

With his request granted and precious time clicking away, Daniel quickly gathers his three friends, tells them what was about to happen, and they begin to pray for God’s mercy and grace. (2.17-18) Prayer is a key to living in exile. We don’t know what words they prayed that night but I think they prayed the prayer of Jehosaphat who cried out to God, “*We don’t know what to do but our eyes are on You*.” (2Chr.20.12) Sometimes the humble acknowledgment of our insufficiency is the best prayer. As the hymn writer wrote: “Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress, Helpless, look to Thee for grace.” (Rock of Ages)

And behold, *during the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said:* *“Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are His. He changes times and seasons; He deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with Him. 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.”* (2.20-23)

Daniel’s words of adoration and praise to God tell us about his theology of living as an exile. Remember Daniel had been trained in all the wisdom of the Babylonians. (1.4) He was ten times better than all the *magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers* and extremely familiar with all their tactics and “so-called” theology. (1.20)But all of this learning didn’t change Daniel’s faith in God and his reliance on God’s Word.

Daniel firmly believed that God controls history. He praises God stating, “*He changes times and seasons; He deposes kings and raises up others.”* (2.21a) Daniel also believed that God reveals His purposes. *He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with Him.* (2.22) Lastly, Daniel believed that God gives gifts to His people to bring glory to Himself. *He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.* (2.21b) Daniel thanks God for giving him the gifts of wisdom, power, and knowledge to know Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. *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.* (2.23)

Brothers and Sisters we cannot allow this world to invade our theology – our belief about God. The Apostle Paul writes, “*See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.”* (Col.2.8) As we live in our Babylon, as exiles in a strange land, we must stay true to God’s Word, stand firm in our faith, and tell the world the truth about God and His will.

Now that Daniel knows the dream and its interpretation, Daniel quickly ran to the officer and said, *“Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him.”* (2.24) When Daniel came before the king Nebuchadnezzar asked, *“Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?”* (2.26) *Daniel replied, “No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come.* (2.27-28)

**The Messenger of the Dream**

Daniel makes it clear that the messenger of the dream and its interpretation is God.

Nebuchadnezzar: “Can you tell me what I saw and explain it . . .?” Daniel: “No! But God can!” I want you to see that Daniel explains that God was the One who was causing Nebuchadnezzar to have this reoccurring dream. Daniel said in verse 28, “*He* (God) *has shown King Nebuchadnezzar”* and again in verse 45*, “The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future.”*This is the man who had deported Daniel and his friends from their country, destroyed Jerusalem, and desecrated the Temple. How could God possibly talk to a man like that? Daniel could have felt resentment towards Nebuchadnezzar but instead of sulking Daniel praises God for making Himself known to this pagan king. Brothers and sisters if we are going to succeed as exiles in a strange land we better put our trust in the Holy Spirit to speak to our unchristian friends, family members, employers, and associates. Instead of thinking “that person is too far gone” we need to have faith believing that God is going to speak His Word to the worst among us and that His Word will not return void. (Is.55.11) Daniel said, *“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. 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.* (2.29-30)

**The Mystery Revealed**

Daniel makes is clear that he was no greater than any other man but God had chosen him to be an instrument of grace and to explain the Word of God to him. This is our role as exiles. We live in a society where morality and spirituality are view vastly different from what we find in God’s Word. Many people lack understanding about God’s Word, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and a Christian world and life view. The world thinks of us as being weirdos but we must accept that God has placed us in our Babylon to be the instruments of His grace and to explain the Word of God. Don’t squander the opportunities that God gives you in your Babylon.

Daniel explains that in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream he saw a great single statue, which was large, extraordinarily remarkable, and awesome in appearance. *The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,**its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.* (2.32-33)

**The Mystery Revealed**

Then Daniel reveals the mystery of the great statue. He begins by telling Nebuchadnezzar that the Babylonian Empire is the head of gold.



Daniel continues telling Nebuchadnezzar that after him will arise another kingdom. Even though that kingdom will be inferior to Babylonia it will rise and rule over the earth. Scholars agree that the kingdom of silver was the Persian Empire. Then there will be a third kingdom of bronze that will rule over the earth. This is the Greek Empire. Then the forth kingdom will be as strong as iron and it will shatter all other kingdoms. Scholars agree that the kingdom of iron was the Roman Empire. Then there will be the divided nations made partly from iron and partly from clay. These nations will not adhere to one another, as iron does not adhere with clay. Scholars differ as to exactly who this last empire is but it is safe to conclude that these are the nations of the world since the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the dream isn’t over. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that as he continued to look upon this great single statue, with its extraordinary splendor, and awesome appearance the scene changes to a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and it strikes like a meteor out of heaven and crushes the feet of iron and clay causing the statue to collapse into a pile of rubble.

**The Meteor from Heaven**

The wind blows all the dust partials of the statue away so that not a trace of it was found. The stone that struck the statue becomes a great mountain that fills the earth. This is the established of the Kingdom of Christ at Christ’ second coming when the earth passes away and the Lord creates a new heaven and a new earth. (Rev.21.1)

So many Christians have been obsessed with trying to identify the clay feet and the ten toes of the Divided Nations. They are so obsessed that they have missed the main point of the dream. God has sent a meteor from heaven in the person of His Son and His Kingdom will reign forever and ever! Christ’s first coming, His life, death, and resurrection, can be described as an explosion onto the world stage.

No other event in world history has caused change in the world for over two millenniums like the coming of Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel. Christ was born in a lonely manger but through His humble obedience God the Father has highly exalted Him so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven, and on earth, and under earth. (Phil.2.6-11)

The mystery revealed to Nebuchadnezzar is that God orchestrates the rise and fall of kingdoms, empires, and nations so to usher in the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ where He will reign forever and ever. (Rev.11.15) As the Prophet Isaiah tells us, *The Lord brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.**No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than He blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.* (Is.40.23-24)

In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream God identifies the four empires first Babylon, then Persia, then Greece, then Rome, and finally the divided nations. God was describing to Nebuchadnezzar world history from his day to the modern age. But it is the Kingdom of Christ, visualized as a rock cut out the mountain without human hands that will crush all of these earthly kingdoms that takes center stage. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar, “*In those days the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed*.” (2.44-45) God’s focus was on the rise of the Kingdom of Christ and not on the rise of Israel. The establishment of the Kingdom of Christ has always been God’s number one priority. Israel was just a means to accomplish God’s redemptive purposes through Christ.

Remember I told you last week that even though the Bible is in concert with world history, the main objective of Scripture is to record history as it relates to the redemptive purposes of God. Clearly God’s dream to Nebuchadnezzar shows that the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ is God’s number one priority. The dream shows that God orchestrates the rise and fall of kingdoms, empires, and nations so to usher in the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ where He will reign forever and ever. (Rev.11.15)

If believers are going to live for the glory of God as exiles in a strange land we must have faith knowing that even though the nations are in uproar, and peoples devise vain things, and kings take their stand against the Lord and His Anointed, God has installed His King upon Zion, His holy mountain and His kingdom will have no end. (Ps.2.1-6) As the world seems to be in chaos and nations are divided against one another, the people of God giggle knowing that the end will come when Jesus Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, will deliver up the kingdoms of this world to the God and Father. At that time, Christ will abolish all rule, authority, and power and He will reign! (ICor.15.24-25)

As we sit in exile here must know that this world is not our home and the nations of this world don’t control our destiny. Our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come from heaven and establish His Kingdom. (Phil.3.20) As we wait for Christ’s return our desire must be for a better country, that is a heavenly one. (Heb.11.16) We must have faith to live as aliens, in a foreign land, looking for a city whose foundations, architect, and builder is God. (Heb.11.9-10) As we live as exiles we must be looking for a new heaven and a new earth. We must be looking for that holy city coming down out of heaven where God dwells among His people. (Rev.21.1-3) As Christians even through we live in Babylon we are citizens of Christ’s Kingdom and we know that we know that one day we will dwell in Christ’s eternal Kingdom forever and ever. Amen!

After Nebuchadnezzar heard the dream and its interpretation he fell on his face and said, *“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.”* He promoted Daniel ruler over all of Babylon and his three friends as administrators over the entire province. These promotions made Daniel and his three friends overseers in the golden government of Babylon but their allegiance was to the Rock from heaven – the Kingdom of Christ!

**Closing Thoughts**

Daniel chapter two gives us great insight as to how to live as exiles in a strange land.

1. Prayer is essential as we seek to discover God’s Word and Will as we live in exile.
2. We must see to it that we are not taken captive through hollow philosophies and human religions. We must stay true to God’s Word, stand firm in our faith, and tell the world the truth about God and His will.
3. We must trust that the Holy Spirit will speak to our unchristian friends, family members, employers, and associates and that His Word will not return void.
4. We cannot squander the opportunities God has given us to be the instruments of His grace and to explain His God to the Babylonians in our lives.
5. As we sit in exile here must know that this world is not our home and the nations of this world don’t control our destiny. Our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await our Savior the came from heaven and establish His Kingdom on earth.

Daniel and his friends knew what story they were living in. They were living as exiles in Babylon, one of the world’s greatest empires. But living in Babylon did not defined them because their citizenship was in heaven – in the Kingdom of Christ. Even though they sat in Babylon they knew that through Christ, the One yet to come, they had been raised up with Him, and seated with Him in the heavenly places. (Eph.2.6)

What story are you living in? Are you living in the story of this world or the Kingdom of Christ? If you are living in the story of this world then you are doomed to crumble. The statue of your life has feet of clay and will not stand the test of time. Make the Kingdom of Christ your story this morning so that you will live in His Kingdom forever.

**Call to Prayer**

*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* (Mt.6.33)

**Benediction**

*To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.*