



Key Passage: Daniel 2:20-21

Key Thought: God claims authority over all kingdoms of the world.¹

The Gospel in Daniel:²

1. Point: God is in control of his creation. He is Lord OF All.³

A. Ex: Egypt. God's activity there had the whole world in view (Ex 9:13-16)

B. Ex: Assyria. The dominant world power for a century and a half, but to the prophetic eye, a mere stick in the hands of Yahweh (Is 10:5-19).

C. Babylon. Jeremiah owed much of his unpopularity in later life precisely to his conviction that Nebuchadnezzar had been raised up by Yahweh and entrusted with world dominion. He even went so far as to call him "my servant" (Jer 27:5-7). Habakkuk was dumfounded by the same revelation (Hab 1).

D. Persia: The central theme of Isa 40-48 was the most burning topic of international alarm of the day—the sudden rise of Cyrus, king of the united Medes and Persians—was directly the work of Israel's God and no other. Such

¹ Note, key passages, key thoughts, and hook questions come from Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*.

² These notes, unless otherwise stated, are all taken (often verbatim) from Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens*.

³ Taken (mostly verbatim) from Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, p. 54.

was God's involvement with the unwitting Cyrus that he could scandalize his own people by referring to him as "my shepherd" and "my anointed one" and by picturing him as led by God's own hand in all his victories (Is 44:28-45:13)

2. Background: Daniel grew up in Babylon. He was taken in 605 BC, the first year of Jehoiakim's reign (2 Kings 24:1). Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon invaded Judah, and the king paid him off with money and hostages—including Daniel. Daniel was groomed for the king's service, even as he watched the Babylonian king destroy his homeland.

3. He wasn't alone among the exiles. Three of his friends (Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah, though given new names: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to Daniel: Belteshazzar) were also brought into the king's service. Royal command: worship the large, golden statue he set up. Refused. Tied up, thrown into the furnace. But God rescued them unharmed (Chap 3).

4. Some need more time to get the point. God forced Nebuchadnezzar to spend some time living like a wild animal. The king comes to understand there is no God greater than Daniel's God, and he is lord over all creation. In this regard, Daniel uses language that is reminiscent of Psalms (Dan 4:3, 17, 25, 32, 34-35; Ps 145:11-13). The king breaks forth into praise.

5. Then cometh the Persians. King Darius takes over and he also needs to be taught the same lesson. Daniel's fellow officials convince him to issue a decree: worship anyone (God or human) other than me, you get thrown into lion's den (chap 6). Daniel refuses to change course. Thrown into den. Rescued unharmed. Says all should "fear and reference the God of Daniel" (Daniel 6:26-27).

6. Daniel then receives a series of visions, able to see into the future. God "deposes kings and raises up others" in order to accomplish his purposes to save and redeem. No one can oppose him. God asserts his authority over one kingdom after another until his everlasting kingdom and authority are established. And a "messiah" (a term rarely used in the OT) will come in Dan 9:24-26, or "one like the son of man" who represents God's people but also God himself, coming with clouds and having authority (Dan 7:13-14).

This sets the scene.

Enter Jesus of Nazareth.

He, too, has left his homeland. He, too, like all young Jewish boys, are being groomed to either work within a crooked and corrupt form of serving the Emperor in some way or another. But he refuses. Instead, he brings something new—serving as a conduit for the Divine decree. His teaching has authority (Matt 7:29), as he forgives sins, drives out demons, heals diseases, and has command over the waves (Matt 8:27). He shows authority and power over everything. And just as in Daniel, the people don't get the message, and the powers that be try to throw him in the den or tomb. But he is rescued from the pit, unscathed (Rom 1:4). And the resurrected Lord said, "all authority

in heaven and earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18). Jesus still wields this authority (Eph 1:20-21) and one day, all will come to recognize it (Phil 2:9-11).

Heaven rules...on earth (Dan 4:26-27; Lord’s Prayer).

And we are called to carry out the mission of the kingdom. We are sent with authority (Mt 28:19-20; 1 Pet 4:11). And we face a difficult future. But we know all authority and power belong to the King of Kings. When we are caught in a fiery furnace, one like the son of man is present to comfort us (Dan 3:25).

Hook Questions:⁴

1. Are you embarrassed to speak the truth? Does your faith in God seem misplaced in the face of the apparently greater forces and influences that the world offers and values? Has God’s authority been surpassed for you by modern technology, science, or charismatic leadership? Whose authority has more effect on you in your daily life, God’s or someone else’s?
2. Do you trust your source? Do you believe God is who he has said he is? Do you believe that God has done what he has said he has done?

⁴ Taken (verbatim) from Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*, p.111.