

Lake Cities Community Church  
July 13, 2008  
Pastor Craig Schill  
Book of Daniel

**“Back to the Future”**  
Daniel 2:31-49

One year when I was working in HR at the community college - we set our annual training theme to address change. Each year we selected a different theme based on the challenges we were facing and clearly change-management training was needed this year. Enrollment was growing and new staff and faculty were being added. Also, we were moving out of an old storefront into a multi-million dollar brand new campus. Change was in the air – *and even good change can be hard change*. So we saturated the employees with change training. We brought in an acting group from Chicago to give skits on change, we played games about change and we bought a program called “Who moved My Cheese” – which is a parable about change.

We did all this because we knew that at the core - most people don't like change – even if it is good change. The reason is -- that *change means an uncertain future*. When things are predictable and stable – I can feel in control and comfortable – but introduce serious change and the future becomes cloudy – uncertain.

How do you react to change? How you do respond to uncertainty? These are timely questions, I think, because we are going through change as a church, and it is not necessary perceived as positive change. We are leaving a facility that we have grown to love and we face the daunting task of set-up and tear-down once again. Over the next six weeks, we will face our fourth and fifth moves as a church. I've not read a church-planting book that recommends moving every six months as a successful strategy for establishing a new

church. I don't want to sound negative – but to sound realistic. Those are the facts – how you respond to them? How will we respond as a church – with an uncertain future?

**Review:** Well as it happens with God's providential care – our passage today is going to tell us something about the future and who is in control of the future. We continue our study this morning in the book of Daniel – chapters 1-6. Turn, please, to chapter two.

Last week, you may recall, Nebuchadnezzar woke up from a bad dream – He called in his wise men – and made an *impossible request* – not only did he want an interpretation, but the actual dream itself! If a wise man could predict the future – certainly he could reconstruct the past. But it was of course an *impossible request* – and just as the King is about to kill all his wise men, Daniel is brought into the story claiming to know a God who can reveal such mysteries. Our story this morning has three parts - The Dream, The Interpretation of the Dream and the King's response to the dream.

### **The Dream (2:31-35)**

**“You, O King, were looking and behold there was a single great statue; that statue was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you – and its appearance was awesome!”**

If we can imagine at this point Nebuchadnezzar is on the edge of his throne – his mouth slightly open – Whether he had forgotten the dream, or knew the dream clearly – he was thinking one thing: *“Yes! That was the dream!”* And so He listens – No interruption from him or the narrator of the story for 14 straight verses Daniel is going to speak about the dream and its interpretation. There are times, aren't there, when we just need to close our mouths and listen when God speaks to us. James tells us – be quick to listen – slow to speak.

The dream was of a statue - and what a statue it was. The Hebrew text oozing with adjectives. A *great* statue. *Extra-ordinary* appearance - it was *awesome* - literally frightening, startling. Not frightening like a horror-movie scary - but in its overwhelming appearance. I've never been to the take off of the Space Shuttle, but I am told it is awesome and the power and the noise and the fire invoke awe and amazement. And that is the way this statue was to Nebuchadnezzar. The pictures we have by modern artists can be helpful in showing the how the statue was constructed - but certainly they fall short in communicating its superlative impact on the King.

The statue - we are told (32-33) - is made of different materials. The head is made of gold, chest and arms and silver - belly and thighs of bronze and its feet of iron and clay - mixed. Not Texas clay like you would dig up in your backyard - but hardened clay. Like pottery, fragile. You may notice that there does appear to be a decreasing value in materials from gold to clay / iron.

Next (34) we have a stone cut out, without hands (In contrast to the statue, that we assume was made by skilled workers). This stone is of super-natural origin. It is quarried without hands - it is super-natural. Many artist's renderings picture it as a boulder - but we don't know what it looked like. We do know the stone goes into attack mode. It strikes the statue at the point of weakness - the feet of clay and iron - then all four elements are crushed at the same time, until they are like chaff on the threshing floor - dust blown away by the wind. Having finished demolition - the stone grows into a great mountain that covers the whole earth.

**Question:** What was it about this dream that woke Nebuchadnezzar out of bed and troubled his heart? Was it the startling, awesome statue? More likely - it was the complete

annihilation of the statue. This great and beautiful statue was crushed into fine powder by a single stone. And perhaps as Nebuchadnezzar thought about the meaning of the dream – like you and I – he assumed the worse case scenario – which would be that *he* was the statue and that the rock was his enemies were about to crush him and destroy him. Well, that was the dream – now we move to the interpretation of the dream – verses 36-45.

### **The Interpretation (2:36-45)**

As we move to interpretation (36-45) – stay with me – it can get a little technical. First, there are two and only two clear points– first is that Nebuchadnezzar is the head of gold – verse 36-38. Daniel lavishes praise on the King: “You O King are the king of kings, (but even in the praise – he is theologically grounded and explains...) to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory...” verse 38 – “you are the head of gold.” If Nebuchadnezzar was worried about his part in the dream – his fears are allayed. Hey it is all good – Good news for the King! You are not the feet of clay or the legs of iron, the belly of bronze or the chest of silver – gold standard – you are #1! God has allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to be the head of gold.

The second clear point is that the stone - which grows into a mountain - represents God’s Kingdom (44) “The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people...it will endure forever.” Nebuchadnezzar is the king of kings *for a limited time* –and his kingdom has *limited scope*. But God is the king of kings forever – he will set up a kingdom that will become universal and last forever.

Those are the two clear points – any further interpretation of the dream goes beyond what Daniel has provided – and therefore moves into an area that is not certain.

Grey areas – that are disputed by theologians. Shall we go there? Put your dogma at the door – we will go there for a few moments.

One area of debate concerns the timing of the Kingdom - when does this rock attack and set up its dominion? Some will say, God's kingdom is here, now! The stone came and that was Christ's birth and he brought a spiritual kingdom – in the hearts of men and women. But as you read the paper or watch the news – God's kingdom seems to fall somewhat short of a mountain covering the whole earth. Other will say – you're right – it is not here, because the rock is the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming – when Jesus comes back in power – then the Kingdom will be set up. But what about all that NT teaching about the Kingdom and seeking God's Kingdom now? Here I do what I often do in theology – say yes to both. Yes – the Kingdom has arrived. Jesus is "King" not in title alone – but over a real kingdom – built on the foundation of Christ the rock and cornerstone – the kingdom expands through the church. But it is not yet what it will one day be – God has not played all his cards yet – Jesus will come back and the Kingdom will be fully established at that time. Yes the Kingdom is here- but it does not yet have full dominion over the earth.

How about the silver chest and arms (39) and the bronze belly and the legs of iron and feet of clay and iron? Many take them as being the Medes & Persians, the Greeks and the Roman Empire. The kingdoms that follow Babylon. Even my NASB Bible has put headers to that effect, and that may be the case – but we are not told – I have put more information on the back on your handout – if you are interested in further study on this.

The main point Daniel is communicating to Nebuchadnezzar and to you and I is that **God controls the future**. Daniel said (45): "The great God has made known to the King what will take place in the future."

## The Response (2:46-49)

Now that we have the dream and its interpretation – let’s look at Nebuchadnezzar’s response. “King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel – and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense.” The greatest King in the world – takes a position of submission before a Jewish exile. And while it may appear he is worshipping Daniel, the next verse shows us his mind is focused on Daniel’s God: “Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of Kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.” It is sad though, that Daniel’s God – does not become Nebuchadnezzar’s God – that is the tragedy of this passage.

But Daniel is promoted over the whole province of Babylon, and is understandably put in charge of all the wise men. But with one more act of class and godliness, Daniel does not forget his friends – but made a request – asks permission that they also be given positions of administration. Like last week – Daniel gives proper credit. It was all four who prayed for God to intervene – Daniel was just the spokesperson – all four were involved in the spiritual victory. Next week we will learn move of Daniel’s three friends as they have their own encounter with another great statue!

### Application:

As we move to application – I want to revisit all the change we are going to face as a church. The message to us from Daniel chapter two is this: **Trust in God – He has everything under control.** He knows the future! Our job is to be the church – to worship him wherever we are at. To grow spiritually and learn the lessons God is teaching us – to

love one another. To share Christ's love with the world. That is what defines a church and not the four walls it meets in.

I'm not say a facility is unimportant, but that we can rest in God because He controls the future, and he knows our needs. Just as he knew the times of those kingdoms, he knows where we are on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 - If God is in control of the future - if it is his hands on the steering wheel I can trust him and not worry. Peter says, "Cast all your anxiety on Him because he cares for you." Daniel might add - "Cast all your anxiety on Him - because He governs the universe."

You might find it humorous that about a year ago, I took out a free subscription on a magazine called ***Church Facilities***. And I looked at it this week and saw an article called "Portable Church Advice." Perfect - that is us! Maybe God put that in there just to encourage me this week? And then I knew that he did. The article may perhaps even be prophetic. It at least made me chuckle! Listen to this -- the article reads:

*"The possible settings for a portable church these days are quite colorful. You might find a church just about anywhere - schools, movie theatres, bowling alleys, malls, even in fast food restaurants."*

Trust in the Lord my friends - our next stop may be a McDonald's play place! And even if it is - **We can have confidence in a God who controls the future.**