

Houston Chinese Church  
Daniel 2:1-49 (Selected Verses)

INTRODUCTION

Image: I didn't expect the devastation caused by Hurricane Harvey.

Need: Disaster prompts us to wonder about the future.

Subject: Where do we find hope?

Text: Daniel 2:1-49

Preview: We're going to look at a problem, solution, and application from the text.

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  - A. The Babylonians could not make sense of the divine memo (2:10-11)
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Review: Even in the midst of tragedy we find hope in establishment of God's future kingdom.

Closing image: Hope does make a difference.

## MANUSCRIPT

**I didn't expect the devastation caused by Hurricane Harvey.** When I first heard about the storm, people had different opinions. Some people thought it'd pass by quickly. Others warned that it would be serious. Over the past few days, I've had the chance to survey the damage caused by Harvey. Many families had to get rid of many possessions damaged by the flood. Sofas, shelves, tables, pictures, books, and various things lay out on the curbside awaiting pick up. It's a tragedy because we never expected it to flood so badly. Some homes survived other storms - Memorial Day flood, Tax Day flood, and even Alison. But Harvey affected so many more homes including your own.

While clean up crews throw out things with water damage, they don't realize that items are not just items. They carry memories. That water logged piano is not just a black Yamaha bar piano. It's where your child learned to play her first notes of music and practiced for recitals. You remember the beautiful sounds of Mozart and Beethoven that came from that piano. Items carry precious memories. The storm has not only taken your things, but it has taken a part of your life away with it.

**Disaster prompts us to wonder about the future.** We wonder: "How are we going to make it? How will we recover all the things that we have lost? How do we get through tomorrow? Where will we sleep? When will my life turn to some semblance of normal? We just feel our hearts break as we think of what tomorrow might bring.

In the midst of tragedy, how do we develop to resolve to move on? Where do we find the strength to face the next day? More importantly, **where do we find hope?** How do we know that the future will actually bring better days? After all, hope is the anticipation that

things will get better. But how do we hope when we have lost so much? **Where do we find hope?**

To answer that question, we're going to turn to the experience of man acquainted with sorrow. The year 605 B.C. may not hold much importance in your mind. But in this particular man's life, it was an important year just as 2017 has been seared into our memory because of Harvey.

In the year 605 B.C., the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar assailed the nation of Judea and besieged the city of Jerusalem. As the walls fell to the might of the Babylonian army, they led away hundreds of captives from the royal family and skilled workers of Judea to Babylon.

Among those captives was Daniel, a fifteen year old lad. As the Babylonians led him bound in chains and shackles, I can't help but wonder what he thought. Did he think about the bread shop that he frequented on that narrow street in Jerusalem? Did he think about the home of his youth, which now lay in rubble? Did he think about his friends, with whom he once played, but couldn't be found among the chaos? Did he ponder the words of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the great prophets who foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by the hands of the Babylonians? Did he wonder if he would ever return home? Did he worry about where he was going or what he would do? Did he wonder if God had abandoned him? While I don't know what Daniel thought, I can't imagine the grief and sorrow he felt losing his home along with the other Judean exiles.

When Daniel arrived in Babylon, the leadership selected him to undergo training in the Babylonian ways. He and his friends Hannaiah, Mishael, and Azariah studied for three years before rising to influential positions. Despite Daniel's education and new work, he still thought

of home and the future. His thoughts mirrored those of the other Judean exiles. How would they endure more years of exile? From where would they derive hope?

This hope came in the form a dream. It was not a dream that came to an Israelite. But this dream came to a pagan king just like one came to Pharaoh in the days of old. It was a peculiar dream. One might even say: “odd”. That’s where we’ll find ourselves this morning - Daniel chapter 2. Daniel chapter 2. If you have trouble finding it, remember that Daniel follows the book of Ezekiel. Daniel chapter 2.

We won’t be reading the whole chapter. But I’ll highlight certain sections for us to consider. **We’re going to look at a problem, solution, and application from the text.** We’ll examine the dilemma, a resolution, and something that we can do.

First, let’s take a look at the problem. **God’s message is a mystery to unbelievers.** People don’t know what God is trying to say. They have no understanding of what God is telling them. It seems to be veiled. **God’s message is a mystery to unbelievers.**

God’s message seems shrouded in mystery. The Babylonians had trouble trying to figure out what God was saying. **The Babylonians could not make sense of this divine memo.**

How did God send this memo? How did God give the message? God sent it to the king of Babylon - Nebuchadnezzar through a dream. In Ancient times, many believed that the divine would communicate with humanity through these dreams. But the problem for Nebuchadnezzar was that he couldn’t understand what the dream meant. He calls up all the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers aka the Chaldeans to recount the dream and give its interpretation.

Nebuchadnezzar is firm that these “wise men” tell him exactly what the dream was and its interpretation. Now why did Nebuchadnezzar ask these “wise men” - his cabinet - to recount the dream? He didn’t trust them to interpret the dream correctly. If they heard the dream, then they could make up whatever interpretation that they wanted. But if these “wise men” could recount the dream and give its interpretation, then the Nebuchadnezzar could trust their message. They demonstrated that the same person who gave him the dream recounted it to his advisors to retell and interpret it.

We do this sometimes. We get an e-mail or text from someone. Instead of asking the sender what he meant, we ask our friend or spouse to interpret it. Sometimes, they may interpret it correctly. Other times, they may be interpreting it the way that you want. This girl texted me tonight asked if we could get coffee: what do you think it means? Your friends may say: “She’s into you.” But unless you get the interpretation from the sender, you’ll never know. You have to get the message and interpretation from the source.

But there was a problem. **The Chaldeans could not help their king recount their dream.** If they didn’t know what the dream was, then they couldn’t come up with an interpretation. **They couldn’t give an interpretation of it either.**

Read along with me in verse 10: *“The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is 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 king asked the Chaldeans for the impossible. No human being could recount another person’s dream and give its’ interpretation.

The Chaldeans did know one thing though. **It required divine revelation.** To do this impossible task, it would require a miracle. Verse 11 says: *“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 the flesh.”* In other words, only God could tell the king his dream and give its interpretation. But the wise men looked around and couldn't find a god dwelling in the flesh. They didn't know anyone who could do this.

The Chaldeans couldn't make sense of this divine dream. For many people in the present world, they can't make sense of God's message. It's not a dream. But it's a message of a broken world. This world is a megaphone trying to get people's attention: God is calling. But their ears are deaf to creation's cry: "Don't you see your need for God". **People can't make sense of a broken world.**

**The world seems to proceed toward chaos.** Many recognize this. One understanding of entropy is that everything proceeds to destruction. If anything is left alone for a long enough time, then it will decay. Bread left alone develops mold. Cars that are left unmaintained rust and become scrap metal. Clothes left without proper protection become food for moths. We live in a world of natural disasters that seem to destroy so much of that which we build. Tornadoes tear through homes. Earthquakes tear apart the ground. Rain causes water levels to rise. We live a world that seems to be on the verge of self-destructing.

**People continue to look for solutions.** Some believe that it's Karma. The reason why disaster befalls me is because I did something really bad. Since I got angry at my co-worker, I got into an accident. Some international newspapers have said that Texas experienced hurricane harvey because of its conservatism. People try to explain that the world is tit for tat. You get what you dish out. The world reciprocates your behavior. But if that's the case then bad should always happen to me because I behave more wickedly than good.

But for God's people, we recognize that the existence of a broken world creates within us a longing for another a world. We wish for the day when there will be no more suffering, grief, or pain. This world is broken because of sin. It won't be that way forever. Something better is coming. Even more importantly, the king is returning to make things right. So let's turn to the solution of the text.

**God reveals the message of his kingdom to his people.** As those who consider ourselves Christ-followers, we know of the kingdom. We have received the memo that God's kingdom is coming. Our church has already spoken about this kingdom during the past few months in the sermon on the mount series. **God reveals the message of his kingdom to his people.**

This revelation occurs not only in the present, but it also occurred in the past. After Nebuchadnezzar hears that the "wise men" cannot recount his dream, he gives the order for all of them to be killed. He sends his chief-executioner - Arioch - to round up all the wise men for execution. But Daniel stops Arioch from carrying out the order by asking the king for a delay. During this stay of execution, Daniel and his friends - Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah gather together to pray. Daniel receives the contents of the dream and its interpretation in a night vision. Daniel and his friends rejoice and say a praise to the Lord. Why? Why do they rejoice?

**Only God has the answer.** Only God could help Daniel and his friends know what the dream was and give its interpretation. We see that in his prayer. First, **Daniel's blessing focuses on God, who answers prayer.** Read with me in verse 20: *"Daniel answered and said: Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and*

*knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with him.”* Note that Daniel recognizes that only God guides the fate of the future. He’s the one in charge of change the seasons from fall to winter to spring to summer. He knows how many trees will go from green to brown. He knows how many snowflakes will fall to the ground. He makes rain fall and stop. He’s also the one who appoints kings. He sets rulers and governments in seats of power. He appoints presidents, senators, representatives, and judges. He removes them as well. God is sovereign. He controls all things things. He oversees all things. Hence, God has the answer.

Next, **Daniel thanks God for his answer.** Daniel expresses gratitude to God for answering. Verse 22 says: *“To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might and have made know to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king’s matter.”* Daniel recognizes that wisdom and knowledge comes from the Lord. So Daniel thanks him for his provision.

If in times of trouble Daniel asked God for answers, then **believers should look to God for answers.** Instead of looking for answers to the deepest struggle of your soul in the latest self-help book or online resource. Look for those answers from God, who has reveals so much of his will in Bible. Moreover, God allows you to assail him with your frustration and struggles and questions. If you don’t believe me, then read the book of Psalms. When the grief, sorrow, and loss overwhelm you, cry out to God.

While God alone has the answers, he uses his people to communicate his message. **God reveals his message through his people.** He uses his people to relay the memo. The life they



live serve as a witness to this message. His people tell others about the news. **God reveals his message through his people.**

In our text's case, **God uses Daniel to recount the dream and give its interpretation.**

Read with me in verse 26: "The King declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation." Daniel answered the king and said, *"No wise men, enchanter, 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. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these."*

Daniel goes on to recount the contents of the dream. There is this beautiful statue consisting of five different materials: Gold for the Head, silver for the chest and arms, bronze for the torso, iron for the legs, and a mix of clay and iron for the feet. Each of these materials represent different empires: Gold represents the Babylonian empire. The silver represents the Medo-Persian empire. The bronze represents the kingdom of Greece led by Alexander the Great. The iron represents the Roman empire. The mix of clay and iron represents some future empire that is still yet to come.

Likewise, **God sends believers as his messengers.** Believers exist in the world to tell others about the reason for this broken world and the hope that we have in Christ. In fact, we have been given a commission to be his messengers. When your neighbors have cleaned up their homes and have time to grieve, you are there to serve as messengers of compassion and love to them as well. Christians, you have been appointed and sent out to tell people of the world that is to come.

What is the centerpiece of this message? **The message centers on the coming kingdom.** The news that we bring to people focuses on a kingdom. It is a place and time when God reigns. What characterizes this kingdom?

First, **God's kingdom destroys all human kingdoms.** Remember the dream of the king. Let's return to it because we only talked about the statue. But there is also a stone. Read with me in verse 34: *"As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image of its feet of iron and clay, and broke them into pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broke 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."*

Note the contrast between the statue and this stone. A statue requires chiseling and a lot of man-hours to make. But this stone has no chisel applied to it. No hammering. Nothing. This shows the divine nature of God's kingdom.

Moreover, this one stone demolishes the entire statue into dust. The text says that the pieces *"became like chaff of the summer threshing floors and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found."* No trace of these human empires will be left.

What is this stone? I think the question ought to be phrased: "Who is this stone?" This is a type representing Jesus Christ. For he is the cornerstone of our faith. Moreover, he is the one who conquered sin through his death and resurrection. By this act, he has inaugurated this kingdom, but we await its full fulfillment. This verse predicts his return in his second coming to establish the kingdom.

Second, **God's kingdom establishes itself over all the earth.** Read with me in the later half of verse 35: *"But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the*

*whole earth.*" Notice how the stone didn't become just a small mountain in some specific locale. But it fills the whole earth. Moreover, kings dwelled on mountains. Palaces on mountains were associated with power and wealth. Jerusalem sits on top of a hill. Mountains also has great spiritual significance. Often times, people would meet with God on the mountain. Remember Moses going up Mt. Sinai, Elijah, the transfiguration of Jesus occurs in the mountain. Jesus Christ will also return to the Mount of Olives.

So what's the application? What are we supposed to do in light of knowing that God has revealed the message of his kingdom to us?

**Find hope in the coming of God's future kingdom.** Anticipate the coming of God's kingdom. Allow the knowledge of the coming of God's future kingdom give you confidence and strength. **Find hope in the coming of God's future kingdom.**

Why? Why should we find hope in the coming of God's future kingdom. What about it should make us expect it?

First, **God's kingdom will last forever.** Read with me in verse 44: *"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 weapon brought against God's kingdom will harm it. No missile, bullet, or shell can damage the kingdom of God. It shall never be destroyed. Disaster can currently destroy our homes. But in God's kingdom we will have a home that will stand forever. Moreover, there will not be a people that will rise against it. No group shall have sufficient power or influence to overcome it. It shall not be left to another people.

Second, **God's kingdom will overcome the world.** Verse 44 continues: *"It shall break to pieces in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever."*

Injustice, poverty, and inequality shall end because God will overcome the world and institute a new kingdom. In this kingdom, there will be justice, equality, and peace. It will be place of no more grief or mourning. It will be something unlike anything we have ever seen.

Third, **God's kingdom will come.** It's not just a kingdom that you hear about in the pages of a fairy tale story. But this will happen just as you know tomorrow will come. Just as you know the sun will rise, God's kingdom will come. You can count on it. Verse 45 says: *"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. A great God has made known the the king what shall be after this. This dream is certain, and its interpretation sure."* Daniel tells king Nebuchadnezzar that this isn't just merely a dream that dissipates when you awake. This kingdom will come.

This message of the coming of God's kingdom should have comforted the Judean exiles in Babylon. As they worked in a foreign land for foreign bosses, they could look forward with expectation - deliverance. This will not be the status quo. There is a change coming. Meanwhile, the Judeans were to be faithful in following God even in the midst of their loss. As people treated them as second class citizens and the conquered. They could go about their daily business with the anticipation that their king will make all things right. Babylon was not their home. It is not their permanent home. It is just a place that is passing.

How much more do we as Christians have hope to anticipate the coming of God's kingdom? We have a savior - Jesus Christ, who gave his life on a cross rejected by the world, so that we could be redeemed. Not only could we be redeemed, we could have a new life as

demonstrated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have been given more than just a vision of the future. We have received a deposit of it in the Holy Spirit. The kingdom is coming.

Although we may have suffered much loss, we recognize that we are merely sojourners in this world. We are passerbys. Our tickets have been punched and our passports stamped. We anticipate the coming of the kingdom. Hence, we have hope.

For those of you, who have yet to place their faith in Jesus Christ, it is not too late. Receive the same hope that we have in Christ and his kingdom by believing that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins and rose again on the third day.

So we've talked about a problem, solution, and application from this text. The problem is that God's message is a mystery to unbelievers. The solution is that God reveals the message of his kingdom to his people. The application: Find hope in the coming of God's future kingdom. **Even in the midst of tragedy, we find hope in the establishment of God's kingdom.**

Does hope really make a difference? Does it really affect our outlook on tomorrow? Does it give us the strength to endure? **Hope does make a difference.**

A number of years ago researchers performed an experiment to see the effect hope has on those undergoing hardship. Two sets of laboratory rats were placed in separate tubs of water. The researchers left one set in the water and found that within an hour they had all drowned. The other rats were periodically lifted out of the water and then returned. When that happened, the second set of rats swam for over 24 hours. Why? Not because they were given a rest, but because they suddenly had hope!

Those animals somehow hoped that if they could stay afloat just a little longer, someone would reach down and rescue them. If hope holds such power for unthinking rodents,

how much greater should its effect be on our lives especially if we know that God's kingdom is coming.