



gracefellowship

Daniel: Thriving in Exile
October 4, 2020
God: Revealer of Mysteries

:: Daniel 2:1-13

1 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.

Have you ever had a dream- or a recurring dream- that really upset you? When I was a kid I had a recurring dream that I was trapped in a haunted house and was being chased by all sorts of scary things! It was awful, and the worst part was I couldn't control having it.

King Nebuchadnezzar, early in his reign, began having dreams, or more accurately, the same dream over and over and the dream troubled him. Either because he would have the dream but couldn't remember it, or because he didn't understand it. The King called in his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to help him with the dream, but King Nebuchadnezzar took a peculiar approach to his request for help. He wanted them to both tell him the dream and then interpret what the meaning of the dream was.

The wise men of the kingdom keep going back and forth with the King saying, "Tell us what you dreamed and we will interpret it for you." But Nebuchadnezzar was firmly set on having them tell him what he dreamed and what it meant.

Possible Reasons why he made this demand:

- They were left over members of his father's cabinet and he didn't trust them and was looking for an excuse to get rid of them.
- He felt they were plotting against him and there was a conspiracy against his leadership.

Nebuchadnezzar shows how ruthless he is as he unveils his threat to kill them.
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.

This was consistent with Nebuchadnezzar's character. He could be incredibly ruthless. Last week we talked about how three different times he sieged Jerusalem because the men he left in charge as king over the city kept rebelling against him. The final king he dealt with was Zedekiah. We are told in 2 Kings 25 when Zedekiah revolted against King Nebuchadnezzar that he was captured in battle, his sons were brought before him and killed, then Nebuchadnezzar put his eyes out so the last thing he saw was the death of his kids.

Look at the response to the demand of the king by the astrologers:

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."

These guys are actually correct in their response to the king- no one on earth can do what he is asking! But then they start to think about their gods- this was a polytheistic culture, they worshiped a myriad of gods- and their thought is, "the

gods might be able to reveal your dream...but they don't live among humans, so we can't really ask them." That's a pretty sad description of the power of your gods if you ask me! They never even bother to pray to their gods. They seem to assume the inability of their gods to hear or act on their behalf because they are not engaged with the affairs of mankind.

What these men didn't know is that the one true God does live among humans! The God of the Hebrews had personally come down from heaven to live with his people. He led them through the wilderness by cloud during the day and fire by night. He met with Moses on Mt. Sinai to give His people the Law. He came to dwell in the tabernacle at the center of their camp as they travelled through the wilderness to the Promised Land. He had inhabited the Temple in Jerusalem before departing because of the sin and wickedness of His people.

But the gods of the Babylonians were unavailable and no answer to the meaning of the king's dream was being given, so he gave the order to have all the "wise men" killed.

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.

Daniel spoke with wisdom and tact: This was a moment of crisis! I don't know if anyone has ever knocked on your door and told you they were there to execute you, but I imagine that's a pretty scary situation! Yet, Daniel doesn't panic. He operates with wisdom and tact by asking a question: "Why...such a harsh decree?"

A crisis doesn't make a person; a crisis reveals a person's character!

We will all go through crisis moments in life. If you want to know who you really are look at how you respond when the world starts crashing down on you or your loved ones. In this crisis moment Daniel was able to keep his composure and think quickly about how to help in the circumstances. Remember, at the end of chapter one we were told Daniel had the God-given gift of understanding all kinds of dreams and visions. Daniel went to the king and asked for time to interpret the dream. Daniel knows that the king still wants the meaning of the dream. If he kills everyone it doesn't help him solve the problem of the dream. King Nebuchadnezzar agrees to let Daniel try, although we aren't told how long he has. There is a sense of urgency in Daniel, so it must not have been very long! Look at the next verses.

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.

The role of his friends:

There is significance in Daniel asking his friends who share his godly convictions to pray along with him. Their necks are on the line as well! It's a pleasure when we get to share one another's burdens in prayer. Many of you reach out to me and ask me to pray with you through some issue or event in your life and I always consider it a blessing to do that. There is value and power in brothers and sisters lifting our voices together in prayer to God. And in this case, God comes through just as these young men ask. Look at the next section.

19 During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven

This is an important thing for us to get today. Many of us pray to God for things and when He comes through for us we never return and say thank you! We act as if we deserved it and God just did His job. It reminds me of the story in the NT when Jesus came upon 10 lepers. He healed them all and they all went away excited, but one turned around and came back to say thank you to Jesus! We need to learn to be people who recognize the goodness of God in answering our prayers and returning to say thank you.

20 and [Daniel] 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."

There are a lot of important theological truths in that prayer we could linger on, but I want you to simply see that Daniel doesn't claim any credit for the dream being revealed. He focuses on the fact that God is full of wisdom and power. God changes times and seasons. God puts kings on thrones and raises up other kings at the appropriate time. In a word, God is Sovereign!

Daniel doesn't take credit for what God does. Only God could have done this. Think back to the magicians and astrologers telling the king that no one alive can do what he asks and the gods are even distant and can't make the king's dream known. Now see Daniel in one night pray to God and have the dream revealed!

If your god can't do the impossible, you have the wrong God!

Our God is limitless! There is nothing that is impossible for Him! You can ask Him for big things! That doesn't mean He has to do what you ask- God isn't on a service contract with us to fix everything in our lives that isn't working properly. Not everything we ask of God is within His will for our lives. So, sometimes God may not answer your prayers the way you want Him to. But God is capable of anything, so don't be afraid to ask. We are going to talk about this idea more in-depth next week. Let's get back to the text.

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:

Before we look at the dream I just want to point out again that Daniel gives all glory to God. He affirms what the other wise men had said- no man is capable of doing what the king asked- but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries! So let's take a look at the things God reveals! If you don't know the story and haven't read this before there is a lot of anticipation that has been building up! As the readers we are supposed to find ourselves experiencing the same tension as King Nebuchadnezzar. And now God is going to show us what the king dreamed.

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. (Future events)

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.

There are times in the Bible when God gives someone a dream and they are able to change circumstances or make preparations for what is coming. This isn't the case here- the future has been firmly established by God, He just makes the vision known so the king can understand and so we can know the sovereignty of God over earthly events.

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.”

This last thing Daniel says may be the most important thing we are supposed to get from this today. You'll notice that he talks about Nebuchadnezzar as the king of kings and then he describes other kingdoms/nations that will follow him, all with lesser power than his kingdom. But then there is a rock cut out, but not of human hands. All these other kingdoms are led by humans, but this rock is from God and it smashes and destroys all the other kingdoms to the point that they become like chaff, or dust, and the wind blows them away.

This dream isn't about the statue! It's easy for us to focus on the statue and the kingdoms it represents. Today I'm going to follow the pattern Daniel left us and not try to explain the kingdoms. We will get to that later in the book, but for now, Daniel doesn't put priority on the kingdom represented by the statue.

Here's why: The dream wasn't about the statue! The dream was about the rock! Daniel even says, "This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain..." The rock is the Kingdom of God. This is the Kingdom God has established to endure for all eternity. Here's the big thought behind this vision that God wants us to hear:

Don't get too attached to your kingdoms! Only one Kingdom has staying power!

God's eternal Kingdom is coming and nothing can stop it! In the NT once asked His disciples who people said He was. After they shared what people said about Jesus, He asked, who do you say I am? Peter answered that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Then Jesus affirmed Peter and said, "...on this rock (the confession of Jesus as Messiah) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades cannot overcome it." (Matthew 16:18)

The Kingdom of Jesus is advancing in this world as we continue to share the gospel and invite people to embrace a relationship with Jesus built on saving faith. There is only one safe place to invest your life- the eternal Kingdom of God. It alone has staying power where every other nation and empire has and will crumble like dust and be blown away by the winds of history.

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.

More than likely this doesn't mean King Nebuchadnezzar has trusted in YHWH, but he has placed God at the top of the pantheon of gods he served. And in Daniel he recognized someone who had the power of God on him.

Nebuchadnezzar honored Daniel with power and authority. And look what Daniel's first act is in his new role: he appoints his friends who prayed for him to

positions of authority in Babylon. Four Jewish young men have been handed positions of great influence in Babylon. They are still in exile, but because they maintained a commitment to God they find themselves flourishing through their circumstances.

I believe God gives a platform of influence to those who resolve to make His name known and give glory to Him.

In the scope of eternity your country of origin doesn't matter. Your political leanings don't matter. Your profession doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is your eternal citizenship. Is your life firmly built on the rock? Do you know what would happen to you if you took your last breath today? Don't leave here today without nailing down what you believe about your eternal destination. Knowing what kingdom you belong to will impact how you live out your days on this earth. If you have questions about these things I would love to talk with you before you leave today.

- Connection Card
- Online Audience (Connect Tab on website ...Connection Card)

- Pray

Life Group Discussion Questions:

Ice Breaker: Have you ever had a weird dream you couldn't stop thinking about or a recurring dream? What was it like?

Follow up with your group if you asked this question last week: "What is one action step you think God is asking you to take this week to follow Him, be changed by Him or be on mission with Him?"

Set up the passage: We are in Daniel 2 this week. The king makes a pretty unreasonable request of his advisors that sets up a show down between their abilities and Daniel's abilities; between their gods and Daniel's God. When you have an impossible situation in front of you, you better serve a God who can do the impossible!

Read Daniel 2 together as a group.

Discussion Questions:

1. What stands out to you most from this story?
2. What do you think of the king's demand of his advisors to tell him the dream and interpret it for him?

3. What do we learn about the character of Daniel from this story? (A good follow up question may be: Why is that important?)
4. How does this story impact how you view God?
5. Why do you think Daniel puts the emphasis on the rock rather than the statue?
6. How should your status in God's Kingdom impact the way you live daily as citizens of this nation?
7. What is one action step you think God is asking you to take this week to follow Him, be changed by Him or be on mission with Him?

Pray together as a group before you dismiss. This may be an opportunity to break up in groups of men and women if you choose.