

CULTURE SHOCK

The Dream Job

Daniel 2

Wouldn't you love to have a real "dream job?" You know; the kind of job where you get to set your own hours and you make awesome pay and you get long paid vacations and incredible benefits and bonuses. Yeah! Well, Daniel did not have that kind of job. (You probably don't either!) His dream job was a different thing altogether! It all started when Daniel and his three friends finally graduated from that Babylonian college and began working in the mailroom at the King's palace. They left college with high hopes, but then were relegated to the forgotten corners of the kingdom where they were destined to do menial work. All of this came to be in spite of the fact that the King had seen tremendous potential in them at the beginning. But that was about to change when the king had a really bad dream. His dream led to Daniel's real DREAM JOB. **Daniel 2:1-13 NLT**

1 One night during the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had such disturbing dreams that he couldn't sleep. 2 He called in his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers, and he demanded that they tell him what he had dreamed. As they stood before the king, 3 he said, "I have had a dream that deeply troubles me, and I must know what it means." 4 Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "Long live the king! Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means." 5 But the king said to the astrologers, "I am serious about this. If you don't tell me what my dream was and what it means, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be turned into heaps of rubble! 6 But if you tell me what I dreamed and what the dream means, I will give you many wonderful gifts and honors. Just tell me the dream and what it means!" 7 They said again, "Please, Your Majesty. Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means." 8 The king replied, "I know what you are doing! You're stalling for time because you know I am serious when I say, 9 'If you don't tell me the dream, you are doomed.' So you have conspired to tell me lies, hoping I will change my mind. But tell me the dream, and then I'll know that you can tell me what it means." 10 The astrologers replied to the king, "No one on earth can tell the king his dream! And no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer! 11 The king's demand is impossible. No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people." 12 The king was furious when he heard this, and he ordered that all the wise men of Babylon be executed. 13 And because of the king's decree, men were sent to find and kill Daniel and his friends.

This was a really bad dream. It cost the king his sleep. Daniel actually wrote that the dream "struck the King's spirit!" It was a thunderbolt in the night! He called in all of the advisers and astrologers in his kingdom (except for Daniel and his friends!) and asked them to do something quite difficult: tell him what his dream was and then interpret it. They all freaked out! [It is interesting to note that, beginning with the wise guy's response to the king in verse 4 and going till the end of chapter 7, the book of Daniel is written in Aramaic (the language of the Babylonians) rather than in Hebrew. This is a very unique literary method, and it illustrates Daniel's advanced education and training.] At any rate, the request of the king was no ordinary request, and **their response actually showed that they had no real faith or spiritual power at all.** They dissed their own occupation with their remarks in verses 10 and 11! It should also be known that this dream was given to King Nebuchadnezzar in the second full year of his reign. He had inherited this kingdom

from his father, and was quite suspicious of the loyalty and ability of those advisers that he had inherited along with the kingdom. This is why he was so quick to be enraged at them when he thought that they were just “buying time” until he was overthrown (“hoping I will change . . .”) by another king (**Vs. 9**). When they admitted that they could not tell him the dream or the interpretation, he went into rage and ordered his Chief Bodyguard, Arioch, to kill all of the wise men in Babylon. This was a bad day for everyone!

Arioch (whose name means “Lion-like”) came to the house of Daniel in order to kill him and his 3 friends because they were on the Wise Guy list (at the bottom!). They were not even aware that the king had decided to “downsize” the company on that particular day, nor WHY he had chosen to do so. So, Daniel sought to know what was really going on. **Daniel 2:14-15 NLT**

14 When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, came to kill them, Daniel handled the situation with wisdom and discretion. 15 He asked Arioch, "Why has the king issued such a harsh decree?" So Arioch told him all that had happened.

I love those verses. Once again, they reveal the gracious wisdom of Daniel as he responds to adverse circumstances and intimidating (Lion-like?) people. He does not freak out! He does not scream, “This isn’t FAIR!” His “come back” was not a cynical condemnation of an arrogant boss. His response is depicted as reasonable and tasteful (pleasantly so!). It made this executioner bodyguard WANT to listen. Do you know how to do that? Can you respond to unfair decisions with grace and tact? You might be surprised at the doors it could open. **Colossians 4:5-6 NLT**

5 Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.

I remember one time when I received very distressing news about something that is very precious to me: Deer hunting! I was told that I could not come and hunt on land that a friend had allowed me to hunt on for about 5 years with my boys. I was devastated. I made the decision to write a letter and give those landowners a piece of my mind! I told them just how much I appreciated all of the years that they let me hunt there and how much it meant to my boys and me. I also told them that we would continue to pray for them and their business. And I let it go. The next year, those men decided to let us hunt on their land again as often as we want. My response did not create turmoil. It alleviated it. I am grateful that I did not act according to my emotions back then! I tried to respond like Daniel on that day.

God was going to use Daniel in his first year on the job, and his life was going to be on the line as he did that job! How would you respond under such pressure? I am afraid that most of us crater when we simply think we are going to lose our jobs.

When we see that pink slip headed our way, we lose our faith. We get angry with God. **We act like Babylonian Wise Guys instead of like God-fearing EXILES!** Maybe we need to rethink our responses. Here is what Daniel did: **Daniel 2:16-18 NLT**

16 Daniel went at once to see the king and requested more time to tell the king what the dream meant. 17 Then Daniel went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened. 18 He urged them to ask the God of heaven to show them his mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not be executed along with the other wise men of Babylon.

Daniel immediately asked that the king be given word that he would like to be given a set amount of time to discern the dream and its meaning. **This is different from the “wise guys” because Daniel did not try to talk the King out of his unreasonable demand, but simply asked for a designated amount of time to DO what the king had requested.** After this, he went home to meet with his friends and to meet with GOD! That in itself tells us much about the faith and character of Daniel. He believed in God’s power and wisdom enough to go out on a limb and promise that he could give the king what he needed. He also was humble enough to find his friends and get them to fast and pray with him that God would show compassion on them and give them access to and understanding of this secret dream. I think it is important for us to see that Daniel “went home” and told his friends about what had happened. They were “homies!” **These men of faith hung together. Again, I plead with you to make sure that your closest friends are people of great faith and character! You do not want to be a companion of fools when trouble comes your way.** And trouble WILL come your way from time to time. **Do you have the kind of friends who know how to “get a hold of God” when they need to on your behalf?** Now would be a good time to get those friends to fast and pray with you if you are facing a desperate situation. Or, you could just get with your faithless friends and moan about your tragic, unfair situation and how hopeless it all is! Daniel’s friends were not like that. These 3 guys did not waste any time. Their lives were on the line as well, so they entered into this faith drama right along with Daniel. They leaned into God’s mercy and compassion to deliver them, and God would not fail them in this hour. And they trusted their friend when he said that God had given him the details of the dream and its interpretation! God is faithful! He will not fail you either. When God answered, Daniel praised! **Daniel 2:19-23 NLT**

19 That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven. 20 He said, "Praise the name of God forever and ever, for he has all wisdom and power. 21 He controls the course of world events; he removes kings and sets up other kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the scholars. 22 He reveals deep and mysterious things and knows what lies hidden in darkness, though he is surrounded by light. 23 I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors, for

you have given me wisdom and strength. You have told me what we asked of you and revealed to us what the king demanded."

God is so good! I love that Daniel did not rush off immediately to tell the King what God had shown him. He stopped and began to praise and worship God for his love and wisdom and mercy. He talks ABOUT God and he talks TO God. He overflows with a heart of gratitude and humility. **Even at this young age, he understands the truth that God gives wisdom to those who will hear it, and he keeps on giving wisdom as long as they have a heart to receive it!** He also acknowledges that God has responded to the prayers of all four of them, and not just to him. He may be the one who received the answer, but it was an answer to a question that he and his friends were asking of God. I love his humility. **This passage gives us a very clear picture of the incredibly WISE PERSPECTIVE of this 18 or 19-year-old Jewish boy. He was firmly convinced that God is SOVEREIGN over all people and events, even when his servants are the slaves of a pagan king in a foreign land. That is faith.**

Once his praise service was ended, Daniel went immediately to Arioch and instructed him NOT to kill all of the wise men. I love that decisive mercy. He also asked to be taken to the king so that he can tell him about his dream and its interpretation. In classic fashion, Arioch tries to take credit for "finding" the exile that can interpret the dream! No matter. Daniel's meeting with the king is a prime picture of bold believing. **Daniel 2:26-27 NLT**

26 The king said to Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar), "Is this true? Can you tell me what my dream was and what it means?" 27 Daniel replied, "There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can reveal the king's secret."

Daniel wanted the king to know for certain that the other wise guys were right about the limitations of MEN; but he also wanted to make it clear that they were completely WRONG about the limitations of God. He is not an unapproachable God who has no interactions with the children of men. In fact, he would one day reveal himself in his incarnation as the God who "became flesh and dwelt among men!" This gave Daniel the proper framework to reveal the One, True God to the king. **Daniel 2:28-30 NLT**

28 But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future. Now I will tell you your dream and the visions you saw as you lay on your bed. 29 "While Your Majesty was sleeping, you dreamed about coming events. He who reveals secrets has shown you what is going to happen. 30 And it is not because I am wiser than anyone else that I know the secret of your dream, but because God wants you to understand what was in your heart.

Daniel told the king that he had been thinking about the future of his kingdom and what would happen in the days to come. He was worried about HIS kingdom and how long it would last. There may also have been stirrings within him about his eternal future as well. Daniel made sure that the king knew that he did not know the secret of the dream because he was some super-wise guy, but because God WANTED the king to know what was to come and how Babylon fit within the big picture of nations and history. More importantly, God was showing him and all who would hear of this dream that he has already determined what will happen in the world in order to bring humanity to their God-ordained destiny. He is the Sovereign God! **This dream in fact revealed how God was going to work during the period that became known as the "TIMES OF THE GENTILES."** The nation of Israel was in captivity for the next 70 years, but God was going to cause key nations to rise up in the next 2,000 + years in order to fulfill his divine plan to SAVE both Jews and Gentiles, and ultimately to JUDGE all those who do not turn to him in faith. Here is the great dream that King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed: **Daniel 2:31-35 NLT**

31 "In your vision, Your Majesty, you saw standing before you a huge, shining statue of a man. It was a frightening sight. 32 The head of the statue was made of fine gold. Its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs were bronze, 33 its legs were iron, and its feet were a combination of iron and baked clay. 34 As you watched, a rock was cut from a mountain, but not by human hands. It struck the feet of iron and clay, smashing them to bits. 35 The whole statue was crushed into small pieces of iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold. Then the wind blew them away without a trace, like chaff on a threshing floor. But the rock that knocked the statue down became a great mountain that covered the whole earth.

We will look at the details of this dream later on in the series as we see it again in chapter 7 in another form. In a nutshell, the dream pictured FOUR GREAT NATIONS that would arise in succession over the next few thousand years. God was literally giving them a detailed glimpse into the future. Modern scholars have argued fiercely over this book because of the clear prophetic picture that Daniel draws. Those who have no faith just cannot believe that this could have been written before the 2nd Century B.C. But detailed analysis of ancient texts discovered in modern times affirms that it was! At any rate, the dream is about a giant statue that has a head of Gold (Babylonian Empire), a torso and arms of silver (Medo-Persian Empire), a belly and thighs of bronze (Greek Empire), and legs and feet of iron and a mixture of iron and clay (Roman Empire). This is exactly how history has played out. It is also amazing that the Roman Empire was never conquered, but simply died out before 1,000 A.D. It is poised to be RESURRECTED in the last days. Daniel's later prophecies deal with that in greater detail as well. We should note that Daniel told the king in verses 37-38 that God is the one that gave the king his kingdom for a time. This was a real slap to his spirit of superiority! Furthermore, his kingdom was only one in a succession of kingdoms. The king needed a reality check!

The might of those kingdoms was pictured by the mere size of the statue; so much so that it terrified the King. But that statue was no match for the stone that was cut from a mountain without human hands and which struck the statue on the feet and pulverized it. That stone is none other than Christ himself! Jesus said this of himself in **Matthew 21:42-44 HCSB**

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This came from the Lord and is wonderful in our eyes? **43** Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing its fruit. **44** Whoever falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whoever it falls, it will grind him to powder!"

Jesus is the Mighty Rock, and when he returns in the last days, he will crush the revived Roman Empire and destroy it completely to bring all things to their divinely ordained end. It is truly amazing that nations and kingdoms that exist today are positioned perfectly to see this revived empire come to life. It may not be the European Union per se, but that is precisely how it is pictured in Daniel! I believe that the return of Christ is much closer than we think. If you come to Christ, you will be broken over your sin. But if you reject him (as the pagan nations most certainly will), then you will be ground to powder!

Once Daniel had given the King the dream and its interpretation, the king fell on his face before Daniel and began to worship him. He was overcome. Daniel made it clear that it was GOD who must receive the praise and glory for this revelation. All truth about God must come as REVELATION. We know about God only because God chooses to reveal himself. At any rate, this is how the 2nd chapter of Daniel ends:

Daniel 2:46-49 NLT

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar threw himself down before Daniel and worshiped him, and he commanded his people to offer sacrifices and burn sweet incense before him. **47** The king said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret." **48** Then the king appointed Daniel to a high position and gave him many valuable gifts. He made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, as well as chief over all his wise men. **49** At Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be in charge of all the affairs of the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained in the king's court.

This second chapter of Daniel paves the way for the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and their experience in the fiery furnace. We looked at that in detail in our series Amazing Stories in November of last year. Get that message and listen to it this week if you will. We will jump to chapter 4 in our message next week.

I want to finish this message by giving to you a simple “SO WHAT?” for you to consider. **If Daniel and his friends faced the potential loss of their livelihood and their lives with such great courage and faith, how should YOU respond to lesser losses in your own life? I submit that you can face any potential trouble or disaster with grace and lasting hope if you will filter it through the sovereignty of our merciful God.** He has not failed you. He has not forsaken you. **He may be breaking you of lesser motives and teaching you how to trust him.** Along the way, he will also use your story to teach others the same thing. Your dream job may not be what you thought it was in the first place! **You can be a part of what the Sovereign Lord is doing in all of the earth, beginning with what is happening in your home and in your workplace.** Do you have the perspective of Daniel today? If not, WHAT is keeping you from developing that perspective in your own heart right now? You had better find out!

Let's pray.