

DANIEL'S COUNSEL TO THE KING: PART 2 (2:25-49)

So far in this series we've learned about Daniel's *captivity*, his *convictions*, and his *climb* to leadership. And last week we began looking at Daniel's *counsel* to the king about a very unnerving dream that Nebuchadnezzar had.

In fact, chapter 2 is naturally divided into two sections. The first half is all about the king trying to find someone to tell him WHAT he dreamed (which we looked at last week), and the second half of the chapter gives the MEANING of the dream (which we're focusing on tonight). So, let's jump right in...

1. Daniel's disclaimer about the Dream.

Daniel 2:25-30 "Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: "I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation." 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?" ²⁷ Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, ²⁸ 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: ²⁹ To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. ³⁰ But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind."

Notice the contrast between Daniel and Arioch (the captain of the king's guard)...

- In verse 25, Arioch is claiming credit that he doesn't deserve. He says, "Hey king, I found a man who can explain your dream." Arioch takes credit for finding Daniel, but it was actually Daniel who went to Arioch.

- At the same time, Daniel is careful NOT to take credit that he doesn't deserve. In verses 27-28 Daniel tells the king, *"No man can reveal this mystery to you O king, BUT there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries!"*

Even though Daniel is the only one on earth who knows the answer to the king's dream, he is quick to give glory to *God*, and not himself. In fact, he gives a disclaimer in verse 30 – *"This mystery has been revealed to me, NOT because of any wisdom that I have."* Daniel's humility shows the depth of his character.

AND BY THE WAY: that one phrase – *"there is a God in heaven"* – can be a game-changer when your life gets hard and confusing. For example...

- **Maybe you've tried to make that relationship work.** You've tried to fix what is broken and you feel like there's no hope. But remember, *there is a God in heaven*, and His power starts where yours ends!
- **Maybe your plans for a future college or career has fallen apart.** You tried to make your plans, but nothing is working out like you thought it would. Remember, *there is a God in heaven*, and He knows the plans He has for you!
- **Maybe you're just disappointed with life in general.** Everything seems to be working against you. Remember, *there is a God in heaven*. He sees what you can't see, and He knows what you can't possibly know. Put your trust and hope in Christ. He won't ultimately disappoint you! ¹

2. Daniel's explanation of the dream.

Daniel 2:31-45 "You saw, O king, and behold, a great image [statue]. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. ³² The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken 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. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the

¹ This practical application section is adapted from JD Greer

whole earth.³⁶ *This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation.*³⁷ *You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory,*³⁸ *and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold.*³⁹ *Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.*⁴⁰ *And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these.*⁴¹ *And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay.*⁴² *And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle.*⁴³ *As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.*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. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,*⁴⁵ *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 to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure."*

Daniel revealed that the king had dreamed about an enormous statue. Its size and appearance were awe inspiring, making the king feel afraid and insignificant as he stood before it.² God was using this statue to describe successive empires that would come and go on the world scene. All of them are described in verse 32...

- **The head of fine gold** (vs.32) – In verse 38, Daniel says, "King, you are the head of gold." So, the head of gold represents the Babylonian Empire (626-539 B.C.), which was mightier than anything the world had ever seen – impressive even by today's standards.

One famous historian (Herodotus) visited Babylon and wrote that he had never seen such an abundance of gold. It was on the buildings, the signs – even the king's throne was made of solid gold.

² Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1335). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- **The chest and arms of silver** (vs.32) – The two body parts, the chest and arms, represent two kingdoms – the Medes from the North and Persia from the East, who united to overthrow Babylon in 539 B.C. We'll actually see that happen in Daniel 5. This empire was led by Cyrus the Great.
- **Stomach & Thighs of Bronze** (vs.32) – This third kingdom of bronze was next to appear on the world scene. This was the Greek empire that was led by Alexander the Great (331–146 B.C.).³ The Greeks pioneered the use of bronze in their helmets, chariots, shields and even their swords.

When Alexander the Great was conquering the world, he came to Babylon, and the high priest showed him this very passage that we're looking at here in Daniel. And the priest told Alexander, "This verse is talking about YOU." Alexander was amazed that the Bible had predicted the future so accurately.⁴

- **Legs of iron & feet mixed with iron and clay** (vs.33) –The Roman Empire was next on the world scene, and it crushed all the empires that had preceded it – swallowing them up and assimilating them into itself. It's known as the *Iron Legion of Rome*.

However, in verses 40-43, Daniel says this empire will be like iron mixed with clay – strong *militarily* but weak *morally*.

Even the materials in the statue point to the moral decline of human empires...

- **The materials decrease in weight** (from gold to clay). So, the statue is top-heavy, which makes it unstable. We tend to think that human civilization is strong and enduring when really it's resting on brittle feet of clay that God will bring crashing down.
- **The materials decrease in value** (from *gold*, to *silver*, to *bronze*, to *iron*, to *clay*). Human civilization is not getting "better and better." It's actually losing moral direction and growing weaker as time goes on.
- **The materials decrease in beauty** (gold, silver, bronze, iron, clay).

³ Miller, S. R. (1994). *Daniel* (Vol. 18, p. 95). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
⁴ Told by Ben Stuart in sermon entitled, "The Fate of Nations"

Each successive kingdom has its own strengths, but throughout history, the kingdoms of man will become weaker and weaker.

And Daniel even tells how these earthly kingdoms will be destroyed. The statue was struck by a seemingly insignificant Rock (not cut by human hands) and it crushed the entire statue.

Verse 35 says, "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like chaff and *the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found.*"

This Rock is the kingdom of God established by Jesus. In fact, Peter describes Jesus as the Rock/Stone that the builders rejected and He is the Stone that will crush every person or nation who refuses to submit to His rule!

Notice the features of this Rock:

- **Its origin was supernatural** – Verse 34 says this rock was not cut by human hands.

Illustration: In the OT, the altar had to be made from natural stones that were NOT cut or shaped by human hands. It pointed to the fact that no part of God's salvation would come by human effort or ability. God would do it all – beginning with the Virgin birth.

- **Its power was unlimited** – This rock didn't just bring the statue down – it crushed the entire statue into powder (like chaff) and the wind blew away all traces of man's earthly kingdoms!
- **Its impact was worldwide** – This small rock grew into a huge mountain that covered the entire earth (vs.44–45). This is what Jesus meant in Matthew 13 when He said His Kingdom would start small, like a seed, but eventually multiply and cover every part of the earth.

THINK ABOUT WHAT DANIEL IS REVEALING: Through this dream, God was telling Nebuchadnezzar about the major empires that would rise and fall throughout human history. And God was describing those kingdoms IN ORDER before any of it ever happened! Man can't do that BUT there is a God in heaven!

3. Daniel's promotion because of the dream.

Daniel 2:46-49 "Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him."⁴⁷ The king answered and said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."⁴⁸ Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.⁴⁹ Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king's court."

God was once again elevating Daniel in the royal court. And notice that Daniel didn't keep the honors for himself. He asked the king to share the promotion with his three friends (vs. 49). With every trial and test that we see Daniel face, the more we love him because of his humble attitude.

And next week, we'll be formally introduced to Daniel's three friends. In chapter three, Daniel is strangely absent from the story but his friends – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – take center stage.

So far, they have followed Daniel's lead in standing strong for the Lord. But the question is, will they remain faithful to God even when Daniel is not around? Will they stand strong when they face a fiery trial of their own? You'll have to come back next week and see!

Small Groups