

“Daniel Interprets the King’s Dream”

Daniel 2:1-49

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Opening Prayer

If you have been blessed to be in church for any length of time, especially as a youth, you have heard about Daniel. Last week’s message on his refusing the king’s food is one of several that highlight this great man of God, and give us wisdom into how we are to conduct ourselves. Next week we will look at Daniel’s three friends as they face the fiery furnace, a well-known account. The week after we will look at Daniel in the lion’s den. Today we are examining one of several examples of Daniel’s interpretation of dreams as given by God alone. It is a wonderful account in its own right, but it does in fact apply directly to us today in three ways. It shows us how the Lord makes a way for His people, Daniel’s commentary shows how we are to approach gifts given to us by the Lord, and Daniel’s dream interpretation connects to Jesus’s everlasting kingdom of which we are a part.

Daniel chapter two picks up where the first chapter left off. Daniel and his friends have been appointed to high places in the king’s court, but they are not yet at the top. They are still in their three-year period of examination and “education.” More broadly they are a part of a myriad of advisors and wise men and conjurers and sooth-sayers that King Nebuchadnezzar has as a part of his cabinet. It is in the second year of his reign, when he has this dream that troubles his spirit. It is a vision from the Lord, about what is to happen in the future, but Nebuchadnezzar cannot explain it. He calls in many of his various advisors, and he demands that they interpret the dream, going so far as to say to them “The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap. But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore, declare the dream and its interpretation.” Nebuchadnezzar, who was so perturbed and struck by the dream as to bring in all of his advisors, shrewdly puts them to the test to see if they are legitimate. He makes them not only give the interpretation of the dream, but explain the dream itself to him. “If you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree

for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore, tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation.” The advisors to King Nebuchadnezzar are stuck... for they know that they cannot accurately declare the dream or its interpretation.

A quick aside for us today, have you ever watched one of those shows where somebody supposedly talks to dead spirits or predicts the future or whatever? They are all quacks and fakes, and it is readily obvious to anybody who puts them to the test like Nebuchadnezzar did. Notice when they start to talk as if they know a loved one from beyond the grave, they begin with a broad name like Jim or Carrie, and ask if anyone in the audience was close to a Jim or Carrie who has passed on. Then, when someone or a few pipe up, they narrow it down a bit further, asking if they died of heart disease or cancer or an incurable illness. Then they will go on and say things that are broad like “They want to let you know how proud of you they are...” It is all thievery and chicanery, but it plays on someone’s heart strings and sounds almost legitimate, so they con people into believing them and giving them money. If someone was legitimately able to interpret dreams or speak to the dead or whatever, then they should be able to give answers right away without having to fish. For Nebuchadnezzar, he had a similar problem. All of these advisors that filled his kingdom were full of it, and he suspected as much. Wisely he puts them to this test, for only someone with actual power could give and interpret his dream. The advisors themselves admit this too. “There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this... moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh.” Beloved, that response is truthful. Only God can give and interpret such things as this.

Nebuchadnezzar is filled with rage at their admission that they cannot interpret the dream, that they have lied to him about powers and abilities. He immediately gives orders that every wise man in the empire is to be killed. Following orders, the king’s guard looks for Daniel and his friends to fulfill the king’s demand. These four, who were noted as being ten times wiser than any of the king’s other advisors, had already survived one such test when they chose to eat vegetables instead of falling into the kingdom’s idolatry. This is their second major test, one that most definitely has their lives on the line. When the captain of the guard

comes to them, they ask why they are to be killed. (They weren't there when the other wise men were with the king, probably because they were still in training.) At the request of Daniel, they ask for and are granted time to pray to seek God's compassion in answering the king's request so that they might not be destroyed too. Daniel has the mystery revealed to him in a vision, and praises the Lord for the salvation that has been given. "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him... To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and power; even now You have made known to me what we have requested of You, for You have made known to us the king's matter."

Daniel goes to the king, and when asked if he has the answer, Daniel replies. "As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king. However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed. But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind." Beloved, Daniel gives all of the glory directly to God, which is something you and I should do as well.

We as humans love to revel in what we perceive as our own power. Daniel here is given an immense gift, but instead of using it in a way that brings himself glory, he declares the truth. Everything good and wonderful comes from God. It is a good example for us to follow. All of you have wonderful gifts given to you by Him. Perhaps you are a good leader, or maybe you have physical giftings in strength, or perhaps you have a wonderfully mechanical mind, or maybe you have a great capacity for knowledge, or maybe you are naturally sociable and well-liked... whatever the case may be, that is a gift from God. Please, give Him the glory. It doesn't diminish your accomplishments, it doesn't take away from your ministry, and it doesn't make you weak. It does increase our faith and promotes it to others to tell the truth... all glory to God. Going back to Daniel, he tells the king what God has revealed.

The dream King Nebuchadnezzar had, was a vision from God about the future to come. There is a giant statue, with a head of gold and arms/chest of silver and

waist of bronze and legs of iron. The feet are a mixture of clay and iron, the only real weak point. A stone cut by supernatural means comes and strikes the feet, and the whole statue is obliterated and crushed to dust. The stone then became a mountain that fills the whole earth. The interpretation, which is given to Daniel, is about kingdoms to come. The Babylonians are the gold head, as he states. The kingdoms to come, actually, are more or less well agreed upon by scholars, and we can see them in history. All of these empires will have direct rule over the Jews, until by Jesus's hand an everlasting kingdom is established. The kingdom that comes after the Babylonians, that replaces them, is the Persian Empire. (King Cyrus will release the Jews about seventy years from the time of the interpretation. The Persian Empire are the bad guys in the movie 300 if you want to picture the kingdom.) They are the silver arms and chest. After the Persians comes the Greek Empire, most made famous by Alexander the Great who conquered most of their known world. Appropriately the Greek Empire is made of bronze, a stronger material than the previous two. The Greeks are superseded by the Roman Empire, which is noted as the iron legs of the statue. It crushes and consumes all that it encounters, until in its latter days it becomes weak through various alliances. The iron/clay toes represent the waning days of the Roman Empire, when it falls to human weakness. It is in those days when Jesus comes, and establishes His kingdom that has no end by overcoming sin and death. The same spiritual kingdom that you and I are a part of is represented by the stone that becomes a mountain and fills the whole earth. It is also worth noting, that some will connect the final two kingdoms to the end of days, which Daniel actually talks much about in its later chapters. All of this suffices to show that God's plans for the world are well in motion, and while these inferior kingdoms think that they will last forever, only Jesus's reign is everlasting.

At the conclusion of the interpretation, Daniel and his friends are promoted and revered by King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel himself is from here on out constantly in the king's court, the highest adviser and official. In what looked like a death sentence, the Lord has done quite the opposite. He has not only saved Daniel and his friends, but has made them heads within the government to enact great change for His sake. Beloved, I would have us again note just as last week, how even in situations beyond our control that look bleak, God can still do the impossible. Our duty, is to bring it to Him in prayer and act faithfully.

There are so many things that are beyond our control, where we have to put the outcome in God's hands. Life almost never goes how we would choose it. Daniel and his friends had no part in the king's dream, nor did they have any part in the "advising" given by Nebuchadnezzar's wise men. If it were up to them, they would still be back in Jerusalem in ease and comfort. No doubt they prayed for their return home daily. Yet, they were to be killed along with the other wise men over something that had nothing to do with them in this foreign land. When they are approached by the king's guard, you can almost imagine their fright. What if the Lord didn't answer their petitions? What if they were killed anyways? Why is this happening and for what purpose? Perhaps many of you can identify. A diagnosis that comes out of the blue, or the unexpected passing of a loved one, or a forced change of profession all feel this way. You may have done nothing wrong, and yet find yourself in a position of great personal stress and difficulty, where the future looks bleak. Sometime survival alone is the greatest we can humanly hope for. In fact, I would argue, most all of us will find ourselves in similar situations throughout our lives. Beloved, let us learn from Daniel's example, and go first and foremost in prayer to the Lord and then approach such things head on while giving God all the glory. There was no way these four men could have known how God was going to use them here, to enlighten us in scripture, to be placed in high authority for protection of God's people, to be examples for us in our distress in the world. Even if they had been murdered by the king, it still would not have been the end, for they had and still have eternity to look forward to. Beloved, take courage for what seems like an everlasting problem or issue or struggle is not when compared with the One who has set up His actual eternal domain. In God's time, He will smash to pieces the evil and sin of this world, and the kingdom of which you are a part will have no end. In our time here and now, as we wait for that day, our job is continuing in prayer and to be faithful to our real king... Jesus. We leave everything in His hands, and we remember that He can do the impossible. Let us pray.

Closing Prayer