

DANIEL PROCLAIMS GOD TO THE KING

Daniel 2:1-49

Key Verse: 2:37

"You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory..."

Daniel chapter 2 is a story about Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's interpretation of his dream. His dream was about four kingdoms which would rise and fall. His dream shows the characteristics of the kingdoms of the world and of human civilization. The kingdoms of the world and their civilization are composed of gold, silver, bronze, iron and the dust of the ground. These kingdoms and civilizations are ephemeral and they came from the dust of the ground and go back to it. In this chapter we learn Daniel's courageous faith. As he was in the adverse situation in the time of being dragged into captivity, so he was in another adverse situation when the king was troubled by his own dream. Again Daniel overcomes the adverse situation by faith and renders glory to God.

I. The king's dream (1-23)

Look at verse 1. "In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep." Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, was a conqueror and the king of the world power of the times. He fought many battles and won one victory after another until the kingdom of Babylon grew into a totalitarian empire. In the past, he was a man of heroic temper: He was never scared by anyone. But the dream he dreamed was so mysterious and terrifying that he was shaken and he could not sleep at all. Obviously, in the middle of the night, the king summoned the wise men of his kingdom such as magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers. When they came in and stood before the king, he said to them, "I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means" (2,3). Then the king demanded that they interpret his dream but he did not tell them the dream. In this way, the king wanted to know whether their interpretations were true or false. If the king told them the dream, they could interpret it very well based on their experience and skilled magic arts, annexing their soft and flattering language. The wise men pleaded with the king to tell them the story of the dream. The king didn't tell them the dream. Instead he clearly stated that there is reward and punishment. If they did not interpret his dream, the king would cut them into pieces and turn their houses into piles of rubble. If they told him the dream and explained it, they would receive from him gifts and rewards and great honor. They made a second petition, saying, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it." But it did not work at all. The wise men entreated the king to cancel his demand, saying, "There is not a man on earth who can interpret a dream without knowing the story of the dream" (5-11).

When the wise men revealed their inability to interpret his dream, the king was so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death. At the decree, the kingdom was in a great commotion. Since Daniel and his friends were among the wise men of the kingdom, they were also on the death penalty list. In this situation, what did Daniel do?

First, Daniel confronts Arioch (14-16). When Daniel heard that the king had sent men to arrest him and his friends to put them to death, he was scared to death, for he was an alien POW. But he did not sit down helplessly paralyzed by fear. Daniel overcame his fear by faith. Then he came to Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, who had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon. Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. Daniel's chances were 50/50. The commander might talk to him kindly to help him find a way of survival from the decree, or he might let his soldiers arrest him. Anyway, Daniel confronted the commander of the palace guard who came to arrest him (14). How did he fearlessly take a chance? He did this not because he was a man of nerve and guts, but because he had faith in God Almighty. When Daniel depended on God in that situation, God gave him wisdom and power to overcome his fear. When Daniel depended on God in that situation, God gave him a heart to go to see the commander of the king's guard. Daniel asked Arioch, the commander, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" At the moment, the commander did not arrest him. Rather the commander explained the matter to Daniel. After confronting the commander, Daniel persuaded the commander to let him see the king. In this way, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him. Daniel knew that the king had refused to let his wise men gain time, and the king was very angry (8). Daniel knew that his destiny and that of his friends was like a candle flickering before the wind. Anyway, by faith, he went to the king and asked for time. Daniel had faith that overcomes fear and changes the situation.

At ordinary times, there seems to be no distinction between true Christians and non-Christians. But when people confront crises, they reveal their true colors. True Christians overcome crises with courageous faith and render glory to God. On the other hand, godless people are gripped with fear and only try to get out of the situation.

Second, Daniel asks his coworkers' prayer support (17,18). Prayer is the measure of faith. When Daniel came home, he realized that he needed God's help to interpret the king's dream to save all the wise men's lives, including his own. He believed that God could do it. As yet, he had not received wisdom from God to interpret the king's dream. So he decided to pray that God would give him wisdom and power to interpret the dream, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Even a talkative person becomes acquiescent and

keeps the matter mostly to himself at a critical time. But Daniel was different from unbelieving people. For this, he wanted to pray for God's help. But Daniel did not pray by himself. He humbly shared his burden and prayer topic with his coworkers, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Daniel was a truly humble man to the point of begging his coworkers' united prayer. (Read verses 17,18.)

Jesus is a good example of this. Jesus had decided to drink the cup of suffering. He needed prayer support. So Jesus asked his disciples to support him by praying together. But they were so unprayerful that they fell asleep.

Third, God shows Daniel the dream. Look at verse 19. "During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven." If Daniel had prayed by himself, probably he would not have been able to sleep because he was burdened by the task he had to fulfill. But when he prayed together with his coworkers his burden was removed and he could sleep well. While he was sleeping, the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. When Daniel pleaded for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery in prayer, God answered his prayer in his dream. Verse 19 says, "The mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision." In this phrase, "in a vision" means that Daniel dreamed the dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed. So he could know all the story of the dream and also interpret it. When Daniel prayed earnestly with his coworkers God answered his prayer. In this event we remember Jesus' promise that if we pray, God answers our prayers. Mark 11:24 says, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." Matthew 7:7,8 says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." It is most beautiful to see that we pray together with our coworkers.

Fourth, Daniel praises God. Look at verses 20-23. "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: 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." These verses teach us God is the Sovereign Ruler. He also answers his children's prayers. In this part we learn that Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon, top leader of a superpower nation of the times. But he did not know God, so he was greatly troubled by a vision of God. On the other hand, Daniel was nothing but a POW. But when he saw a vision of God in his dream, he was not troubled. Rather, he was overjoyed, acknowledging that God answered his prayer. He knew God and he knew how to pray. When he prayed, God gave him wisdom and

power to overcome the situation. Then he praised God.

II. Daniel interprets the king's dream (24-43)

The next morning Arioch the commander took Daniel to the king. What did Daniel do before the king?

First, Daniel proclaims God to king Nebuchadnezzar. On seeing Daniel, the king asked him, "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?" What did Daniel say? Read verses 27 and 28. "Daniel replied, 'No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, 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 lay on your bed are these:'" On seeing the king, Daniel proclaimed God to the king, saying, "there is a God who made heaven and earth and can reveal mysteries." First and last of all, Daniel witnessed God to the king. Daniel lost no chance in proclaiming God, for God was in his heart. We also must proclaim God to other people through our conversations, and at any available opportunity, instead of wasting time in gossip.

Daniel is also eager to win the king over to God. Look at verses 29,30. "As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind." The phrase, "but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation," expounds that Daniel is determined to win over king Nebuchadnezzar to God. Daniel was eager to lead the king to God because he saw the king as a mere man who could not but struggle with a dream.

Second, the interpretation of the dream (31-45). Look at verse 31. "You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue--an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance." King Nebuchadnezzar saw a large statue in his dream which was so enormous and dazzling and awesome in appearance that he was troubled. What does the statue symbolize?

Firstly, it has a head of gold. Verse 32a says, "The head of the statue was made of pure gold..." Verse 37 says, "You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory." The last part of verse 38 says, "You are that head of gold." The head of gold stands for King Nebuchadnezzar and his empire Babylon and its civilization. Nebuchadnezzar fell into the illusion that he had made his empire and the glorious civilization of Babylon with his own hands. But Daniel says God made the empire and civilization and gave it to him to rule over. King Nebuchadnezzar must have been shocked when his

inner thought was revealed on the surface. At this point, Daniel expounds that God is the Sovereign Ruler and king Nebuchadnezzar is his servant, even though he was the most eminent king in human history as the head of gold.

Secondly, it has a chest of silver. Verse 32 goes on to say, "...its chest and arms of silver..." According to Daniel, the chest and arms made of silver refer to Media and Persia (5:31, 8:20). In the time of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Media and Persia allied army forces and conquered the Babylonian empire and ruled it alternately.

Thirdly, it has a belly of bronze. Verse 32b says, "...its belly and thighs of bronze..." According to Daniel, the belly and thighs of bronze represent the kingdom of Greece (8:21). As we know well, Alexander the Great conquered Media, Persia, Macedonia and Egypt and established, in name and reality, the kingdom of Greece. It is interesting to know that the belly of bronze extends to both thighs, dividing into two parts. This implies that the kingdom of Greece would be divided into two parts.

Fourthly, it has legs of iron. Many Bible students say that the legs refer to the Roman Empire because her empire extended like two legs to the nations of both west and east. In verse 41, the feet and toes represent various nations which are partly weak and partly strong.

The statue refers to the kingdoms of the world and explains their characteristics. Kings and kingdoms of the world rise and wane. The Chinese Emperor Chin wanted to keep his life and his dynasty forever. So he made The Great Wall and sent out several thousand physicians to seek for herbs which make life everlasting. But he failed. Mr. Chin's agony must be the agony of all kings and kingdoms. Kings and kingdoms are made from the dust of the ground and for the time being exist in the world and go back to the dust of the ground. Nothing is forever. 1 Peter 1:24 says, "For, 'All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall....'"

The statue also tells us of human civilization in allegory. These days many people believe education improves human minds. Through education they can ameliorate the world in which they live. But history proves the world is not getting better. As we know well, the civilization of Babylon was really rich and noble. All the foundation of worldly achievements came from its civilization. The civilization of Greece was poor and ignoble. The civilization of Rome was cruel and violent. After the civilization of Rome, the civilization of the world did not improve. Rather, it got worse and worse. In the statue we see that gold deteriorates into silver and silver into bronze and bronze into iron. Likewise, the civilization of the world got worse--never better.

Verse 35a says, "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and

the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace." This verse describes exactly the characteristics of kingdoms and civilizations of the world. The world without God only gets worse and worse. Men without God cannot have any moral codes or spiritual dimension. So they become dummies with ignoble desires. The world needs God more than better human conditions.

Look at verse 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." By the estimation of value, gold is better than iron. But by the degree of strength, iron is stronger than gold. Where there is no God, there is no value system in men's hearts. So inferior kinds of people, who have the crushing power of iron, crush all the good things of the world and make men worthless.

III. The rock (34-49)

First, the Kingdom of God (34-44). Look at verse 35b. "But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth." In this verse, rock refers to the eternal kingdom of God. Verse 44 explains this well. It says, "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." In the Bible, the rock refers to Jesus. Gospel writers, and especially Peter, refer to Jesus as the "cornerstone." 1 Peter 2:6 says, "For in Scripture it says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'" This is a free quotation of Isaiah 28:16. Its meaning is that whoever trusts in Jesus will never be put to shame and they will inherit the kingdom of God. Again 1 Peter 2:7 says, "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,' and, 'A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.'" This is a quotation of Psalm 118:22. Its meaning is that Jesus came to this world as King of kings and Lord of lords. But people, because of their sins, rejected him like the stone the builders rejected. But Jesus will be the standard which causes men to stand or stumble. This part explains that the kingdom of God is forever.

Second, your God is the God of gods (45-49). Daniel testified about God to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. Look at verse 45b. "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy." Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all his wise men. 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 (48,49).

In this passage we learn that kings and kingdoms of the world rise and wane. But the kingdom of God is forever. We also learn that faith is victory. By faith Daniel overcame fear and proclaimed God to the king and thus rendered glory to God. May God grant each of us courageous faith to proclaim God to the people this generation.