

Reminder of two major themes from Daniel 1:

1. The kingdoms of this world are in conflict with the Kingdom of God.
Chapter 1 begins with Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, waging war against the king of Judah. In the process, 4 young Jewish men are taken captive to live in Babylon - Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. That historical conflict is part of an ongoing conflict that will occur until Jesus comes again. And, while Daniel and his friends give us a great picture of what it looks like to live faithfully in a chaotic world that's opposed to God, they aren't the central figure this book, God is.
2. While kingdoms are in chaos, God is in control. He is working in the midst of the kingdoms of this age. He is establishing His eternal Kingdom on this earth...a kingdom that will not be defeated.

So, with that in mind, let's look at our next passage in the Book of Daniel, Chapter 2.

1 In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. 2 Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. 3 And the king said to them, "I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream." 4 Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation."

There's an important change that occurs in verse 4. The magicians speak to the King in Aramaic and the language of the original text actually changes from Hebrew to Aramaic. From this verse all the way through the end of chapter 7, Daniel is written in Aramaic, not Hebrew.

So, why would Daniel write this portion in Aramaic instead of the Hebrew language of the Jews? Well, remember that Daniel will be appointed to one of the highest positions of leadership in the Babylonian Empire. Aramaic was the predominant language used throughout the Near East to conduct business. It seems likely that he wants the whole world to learn the truths that we are going to see in these chapters: truth about Nebuchadnezzar's dream, truth about the future of this world, but most of all, truth about who God is.

5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. 6 But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation." 7 They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation." 8 The king answered and said, "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm— 9 if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation."

Nebuchadnezzar doesn't know what to make of his mysterious dream, but he knows it's too important not to get right. So, he lays down a pretty savvy challenge. The magicians have to tell him what his dream means without him telling them what his dream was.

And men like Nebuchadnezzar don't mess around. He says that if they fail to do it, he will have them torn limb from limb. I think that qualifies for cruel and unusual punishment...

Notice how the magicians respond.

10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. 11 The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

Do you remember what the name Babel means? It means confusion. And the kingdom of Babylon represents the godless kingdom of confusion. And that godless confusion is on full display here.

They're like, "What makes you think we can do this?" Neb's like, "you call yourselves magicians." They're like, "Well, we just identify as magicians...we can't actually do magic."

Even more, they are confused because they think there's more than one God. They also think that no god makes his dwelling among men...none of them had access to a god like that...they are like, "What are we supposed to do? Call up a god and ask him for a favor?"

In literature, there's a technical term for what is going on here. It's literally called a 'setup.' Verses 10-11 are setting up the main point...

Because the truth is there is only One, True God and He has chosen to make His dwelling among men. Where did God dwell in the Old Testament? Among His people in the Temple in Jerusalem...Daniel's hometown.

But, in all their confusion, the magicians did get something right: no man on earth could do what Nebuchadnezzar demanded. That phrase is laying the foundation for the point of this first part of chapter 2.

12 Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. 13 So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them. 14 Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. 15 He declared to Arioch, the king's captain, "Why is the decree of the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. 16 And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king.

Ancient historical records reveal that Nebuchadnezzar failed anger management classes. He demands that all the wise men in the kingdom be killed...including Daniel and his three friends. But, just like we saw last week in chapter 1, Daniel asks for more time so that he might show the interpretation to the king. Now, remember, the so-called wisest men in the world have established the fact that no man on earth could do what the king demanded. Only a god could do it...and none of them had access to a god.

But Daniel is different. He was born in the city where God dwelled among His people. He knows who God is and what God is capable of doing, and he actually believes he can ask God for favor.

17 Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, 18 and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. 20 Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. 21 He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; 22 he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. 23 To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter." 24 Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation." 25 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.

I want you to see the point of this section of chapter 2. The most powerful man in the world is doing everything in his power to get his heart's desire. So, he looks to the wisest, most insightful people in his kingdom for the answer, but they can't provide it.

Then, a man from the kingdom of God steps in. He has access to a deeper and stronger power than the kingdoms of this world. He goes before God and seeks His mercy...and God shows up. God makes the impossible possible. God does what no one in this world could do. Through Daniel, God teaches a truth to Nebuchadnezzar and the magicians and all the people of the world who would read this account...

And that truth is our big idea: **Only God can do what only God can do.**

There is a God in heaven and only He can do what only God can do. And you might think that's a no-brainer, but the people of this world are just as confused about that as the people in our text.

There's a world full of modern-day Nebuchadnezzars who are looking for something only God can do...and they are looking everywhere but to God. Like Nebuchadnezzar, they are restless and weary and frustrated. They are buying into the false advertisement of this world that promises a kind of magic that fails every time it's put to the test.

People are looking for meaning and satisfaction and lasting pleasure. They are trying to heal their deepest wounds and find rest for their weary souls. They have a constant craving that is gnawing away, day after day and night after night. And this world advertises a kind of magic that promises to give them what they want.

The magic of power or popularity or wealth or sex or entertainment or pornography or drugs or religion or relationships or ten thousand other things that promise to deliver but fail every time they are put to the test.

Hear the word of God: Only God can do what only God can do.

Only God can satisfy the deepest longing of your heart. Only God can give you meaning and purpose and lasting pleasure. Only God can thrill your soul and heal your deepest hurts. Only God can do what only God can do. The magic of this world is only an illusion. There are no substitutes for God. Only God can do what only God can do.

And Daniel provides us a picture of what it looks like to respond to that truth. So, in the rest of our time together, I want to focus on 3 things that we see in the life of Daniel that show us what it looks to live like we have a God in heaven Who can do what only God can do.

1. We live like we have a God in heaven when we look to God in prayer.

17 Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, 18 and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

In the face of circumstances that were beyond the power of man, Daniel and his friends prayed. In chapter 6, we find out that Daniel would enter into a season of passionate prayer three times a day...no matter what. You know why? Because he believed that only God can do what only God can do.

And you want to know why so many of us have such an anemic prayer life? Because we believe someone else can do what only God can do. Let me give you a quick example: the only hope for America is a work of mercy that only God can do. There's no doubt that God uses leaders. And there's no doubt we should seek the best leadership available and vote for leaders who represent the values of God's kingdom...but do not be confused, the only hope for this nation is the mercy of God.

That means that Donald Trump can't make America good again, let alone great. That means Joe Biden can't build us back better. That means Ron DeSantis won't save Florida, let alone America. That means Brevard County Schools need more than a few new members on the school board.

The only hope for this nation is the mercy of God. The only hope for this community is the mercy of God. The only hope for the broken marriages in this room is the mercy of God. The only hope for your prodigal child is the mercy of God. The only hope for your own soul is the mercy of God.

So, then why are evangelical Christians known for having a fevered pitch for political action but the same can't be said for a movement of passionate prayer?

I'll tell you why. Because deep in our hearts, we honestly believe that someone else can do what only God can do.

What would it look like in your life today if you truly believed that God's mercy was your only hope? How would you pray? How would you invite your friends to pray?

Truly wise people look to God in prayer to do what only God can do.

2. We live like we have a God in heaven when we rest in God with patience.

19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night.

God answered Daniel's prayer by giving him a dream of his own. I love this. Do you see what Daniel did? He prayed and then he went to sleep. He rested.

I think one of those most powerful dynamics in this entire story is what Daniel didn't do. He didn't come up with a 10-step plan to save his life. He didn't stay awake all night worrying about the future. He didn't get on his smart phone to try and escape from the anxieties that come from having a crazy king. *He went to bed and rested.* He waited patiently on the Lord to do what only the Lord can do.

There is an epidemic of anxiety among God's people. You probably feel it. I sense a cloud of worry hovering over almost every person I talk to throughout the week. Just think about all the movements in our country that seem to be motivated by fear and anxiety. Political movements. Personal improvement movements. Family restoration movements. It's like the church of Jesus Christ is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. If I didn't know any better, I would think the people of God are living like we don't have a God in heaven!

Psalm 127 says:

1 Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. 2 It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

How many of us are waking up early and staying up late with worry? How many of us are nervously working hard at something because we feel the need to do something?

God says that when we work from a place of worry, it's all in vain. He will build the house. He will watch over the city. We have a Good and Sovereign God who is keeping every promise He has ever made and is fulfilling every plan He has ever set forth. And do you know what He wants to give to you? A good night's sleep.

This isn't a call to be lazy or passive or disobedient or disconnected. It's a call to go about doing **only** what God has called you to do. It's a call to take God at His word and rest in His promises and provision and believe that He is at work even when you go to bed.

What's that thing that is keeping you up at night? What's that thing that meets you first thing in the morning and makes you worried sick? What would it look like if you laid it down before the Lord in prayer and then went about your day like there is a God in heaven who hears your prayers and cares for your soul?

Truly wise people rest in God with patience.

3. We live like we have a God in heaven when we respond to God with praise.

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

When God showed up, Daniel responded with praise. He didn't take credit for God's work. He gave credit to God for doing what only God can do.

Daniel praised Him for who He is...

21 He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;

He praised God for being God. God is King over all earthly Kings. God is the Giver of all good things. We always have reason to praise because God is always God. No matter what is going on around us, God is always God. And God is always good.

Daniel praised God for what He's done...

23 To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."

By God's gracious power, He gave Daniel what He needed when He needed it. And Daniel responded with praise and thanksgiving.

Friend, you have reason to praise today. God has done what only God can do. And do you want an awesome place to start your praise? Let me give you one.

Remember when the magicians of Babylon said that no gods dwelled among men? Well, they weren't just wrong, they were unbelievably wrong. Because God had a plan that He was bringing about to make His dwelling in men...

In Jerusalem, there was a Temple where God dwelled among His people. And, in that Temple was a place called the most Holy Place. That was where God's glory was displayed most fully in this world. The only problem was that the sin of people kept them from being able to go into that Most Holy Place...so, a massive curtain had to be hung to keep people from entering into God's holy presence.

But, when Jesus was on the cross, God placed the sin of this world on Jesus and punished our sin at the cross. And, when Jesus died, something incredible happened. The curtain in the Temple was torn in two. That happened because God was now able to dwell inside His people. Jesus Himself will come to live inside anyone who will trust in Him as Lord and Savior.

That means, if you will trust in Jesus, God will dwell in you. And that means that, as God, Jesus will do what only Jesus can do...in and through you!