

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (Daniel 2)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Daniel

I. Introduction

- a. This fall, I am teaching lessons from the Book of Daniel.
- b. Daniel is a spiritual giant. God used in amazing ways. Lived during a dark time, around 550-600 BC. The temple had been destroyed, and Israel has been taken into captivity to Babylon. God's people are living in a foreign nation and culture filled with evil. Despite this, we see Daniel (and several others) living righteous lives.
 - i. Over the centuries, the Book of Daniel has been very important to Christians. Much to learn from Daniel's courage, integrity, prayer life, and personal righteousness.
- c. In our first lesson we read the story of Susannah, found at the beginning of Daniel in the LXX. Persecuted Christians throughout the centuries have taken great encouragement from Susannah's example.
- d. The second lesson from Daniel, chapter 1, focused on fasting, both partial and full fasts, which Daniel used to tap into tremendous spiritual power. Jesus taught that after His death, His followers would also fast.
- e. Today, we pick up at a very famous passage, **Daniel 2**, which describes a terrifying dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, which Daniel explains to the king.
- f. Three floors of a building as we work through an Old Testament passage:
 - i. The story and facts
 - ii. Moral or spiritual lessons for us
 - iii. Prophecies of Jesus or His kingdom.

II. The Facts of the Story (First Floor)

- a. Read **Daniel 2:1-14**. Key Facts:
 - i. King Nebuchadnezzar has a terrifying dream and forgets the details.
 - ii. Deeply troubled, the king calls all his enchanters, magicians, and sorcerers to him, demanding 1) they tell him the dream, and 2) explain what it means.
 - iii. If they do not, the king will kill them and plunder their homes. (And if they do, they will be greatly rewarded.)
 1. This is an extremely powerful, arrogant, violent, and cruel king!

- iv. They ask the king to tell them the dream and then they will tell him what it means. He is outraged. Doubles down on his demand.
- v. Their response: “There is no man on earth who can make known the king’s dream” and there is no king on earth that would demand his servants to tell him a dream that he can’t remember. Only the gods can do that!
- vi. The king is outraged and decides to kill not only these magicians and sorcerers but also *all his wise men*, including Daniel and his three friends.

b. Read **Daniel 2:14-49**. Key facts:

- i. Daniel finds out about the king’s plans to murder all the wise men. Then takes the following actions:
 - 1. Step 1: “with wise counsel and intelligence,” Daniel goes to the captain of the guard and gets the inside scoop.
 - 2. Step 2: goes to the king and asks for time. Daniel promises he will tell the king the details and interpretation of the dream.
 - 3. Step 3: grabs his friends and cries out to God in prayer, seeking God’s mercy!
- ii. The details of the dream
 - 1. “Very large” and “fearful” statute consisting of four parts:
 - a. Head of gold
 - b. Hands, chest and arms of silver
 - c. Stomach and thighs of copper (or bronze: mix of copper and other alloys)
 - d. Legs of iron, with feet partly iron, partly clay
 - 2. A stone destroys the statute; grows into a great mountain
 - a. “a stone was cut out of the mountain *without hands*, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and ground them to powder.”
 - b. “like dust from the summer threshing floor, and a great wind blew them away; and their place was not to be found.”

- c. "Then the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled all the earth."

iii. The interpretation

1. Head of gold = King Nebuchadnezzar who God has given a mighty kingdom. God made him lord over all.
2. Second kingdom, silver, an "inferior" kingdom, will come next.
3. Third kingdom, copper, will rule over the earth.
4. A fourth kingdom, "as strong as iron" shall arise and break the then current kingdom to pieces and subdue all things.
5. The rock
 - a. "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will raise up a kingdom, and it shall never be destroyed" (an eternal kingdom).
 - b. It will crush all the previous kingdoms.
 - c. This will come in the future.

iv. The impact of Daniel explaining and interpreting the king's dream:

1. This all-powerful, murderous king falls on his face and worships Daniel. He exalts Daniel as second in command and invites him to live in his palace. Daniel then sets his three friends over the affairs of Babylon.

III. Lessons for Us (Second Floor)

a. Daniel's humility

- i. Cannot be revealed by wise men and enchanters, but only by God in heaven. **(vs. 27-28)**
- ii. Not by my wisdom, but so you would know what is to come. **(vs. 29)**
- iii. Daniel's reliance on prayer
 1. Seeks help from his friends **(vs. 17)**
 2. Gives thanks and blesses God for His great power and blessing. **(vs. 19-23)**
- iv. Daniel's humility produces many beautiful things.
 1. Concern for the innocent facing injustice/persecution

- a. We saw this in his concern for Susanna, as well as here: his concern for the other wise men, magicians and enchanters who are to be put to death.
- b. This is God's heart, Christ's heart: concern for others.
- c. Seems to me, the greater the humility, the more we are like God/Jesus and the greater our capacity of love.

2. Courage

- a. See this in Daniel's response when he learned the king planned to kill all the wise men.
- b. When humble, we are close to God's heart and not fearful of men, or what might happen to us.
- c. Daniel was confident in God's care and concern for him, and God's ability to take care of him.
 - i. "God opposes [or resists] the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (**James 5:5**, quoting **Proverbs 3:34**)

b. God is over all of the earth's kingdoms.

- i. "He appoints kings and removes them." (**vs. 21**)
 - 1. God gave you, King Nebuchadnezzar, this mighty kingdom. (**vs. 37**) and God will take it away!
 - 2. "For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God." (**Romans 13:1**)
- ii. "Examine then and see if God is not the dispenser of kingdoms. For He is Lord of both of the world that is ruled and of the man who rules. See if He has not ordained the changes of dynasties, with their appointed seasons.... See if the rise and fall of states are not His work, under whose sovereignty the human race once existed without states at all."
 - 1. (Tertullian, c. 197 AD, bishop from Carthage, ANF 3.40)
- iii. The picture: the mighty statute crushed to powder "like dust from the summer threshing floor" blown away by the wind.
 - 1. Reminds me of what John the Baptist said about Jesus, also referencing a threshing floor:
 - a. "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and

burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (**Matthew 3:12**)

iv. Lessons for us:

1. We don't need to worry about who is ruling over us, their kingdom will come to an end. Jesus will, upon His return, rule over all.
2. Comforting in times of persecution for Christians today and over the past centuries. Perhaps for some of us someday.
 - a. Possessions taken. Discrimination (can't work). Jailed. Family members murdered.
 - b. You can learn about persecuted Christians today (email updates): Asia Harvest, Voice of the Martyrs, Elam Ministries, Open Doors USA.
3. God authority over the nations should produce great humility in us.
 - a. Jesus will return with great power.
 - b. We can live humbly, with great love and courage like Jesus.
 - c. Should draw us to prayer, relying on His mercy to sustain us through difficult times/challenges.
 - i. Jesus “offering up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who could save Him from death” (**Hebrews 5:7**)

IV. Prophecies of Christ and the Kingdom of God (Third Floor)

- a. First prophecy: The Dream of the Statute and the Rock
 - i. **Questions:** How do we understand the meaning of the dream? Has it been fulfilled? Not fulfilled?
 1. Daniel tells us that the head of gold was King Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler of the Babylonian empire.
 2. Christians have long understood the other parts as representing the kingdoms that followed:
 - a. Silver = Medo-Persian empire
 - b. Copper = Greek empire

- c. Iron = Roman empire
 - d. The rock cut out from the mountain “not by human hands” (and destroyed all other kingdoms) = Christ.
 - i. To learn about the many places Christ is foreshadowed in the Old Testament by a rock or a stone, see *Christ the Living Stone (1 Peter 2:4-8)*, by Chuck Pike at www.walking-by-faith.org.
3. “Behold a great image.’ How, then, should we not mark the things prophesied of old in Babylon by Daniel, and now yet in the course of fulfilment in the world? For the image shown at that time to Nebuchadnezzar furnished a type of the whole world. In these times the Babylonians were sovereign over all, and these were the golden head of the image. And then, after them, the Persians held the supremacy for 245 years, and they were represented by the silver. Then the Greeks had the supremacy, beginning with Alexander of Macedon, for 300 years, so that they were the brass. After them came the Romans, who were the iron legs of the image, for they were strong as iron. Then (we have) the toes of clay and iron, to signify the democracies that were subsequently to rise, partitioned among the ten toes of the image, in which shall be iron mixed with clay.”
- a. (Hippolytus of Rome, “Fragments from Commentaries on Various Books of Scripture,” ANF 5.186, c. 200-230 AD, a leading elder in Rome.)
 - ii. But, there is a problem. Christ was killed. Other kingdoms came after the Romans. Christ’s kingdom has not yet destroyed all other kingdoms and is not currently reigning over all!
 - iii. **Question:** Has the **Daniel 2** prophecy been fulfilled?

1. CHAP. XIV.—CONCLUSION. CLUE TO THE ERROR OF THE JEWS

Learn now (over and above the immediate question) the clue to your error. **We affirm two characters of the Christ demonstrated by the prophets, and as many advents of His forenoted: one, in humility (of course the first), when He has to be led “as a sheep for a victim;** and, as a lamb voiceless before the shearer, so He opened not His mouth,” not even in His aspect comely. For “we have announced,” says the prophet, “concerning Him, (He is) as a little child, as a root in a thirsty land; and there was not in Him attractiveness or glory.

And we saw Him, and He had not attractiveness or grace; but His mien was unhonoured, deficient in comparison of the sons of men," "a man set in the plague, and knowing how to bear infirmity:" to wit, as having been set by the Father "for a stone of offence," and "made a little lower" by Him "than angels," **He pronounces Himself "a worm, and not a man, an ignominy of man, and the refuse of the People." Which evidences of ignobility suit the FIRST ADVENT, just as those of sublimity do the SECOND; when He shall be made no longer "a stone of offence nor a rock of scandal," but "the highest cornerstone,"** after reprobation (on earth) taken up (into heaven) and raised sublime for the purpose of consummation, *and that "rock"—so we must admit—which is read of in Daniel as forecut from a mount, which shall crush and crumble the image of secular kingdoms. (Daniel 2) Of which second advent of the same (Christ) Daniel has said: "And, behold, as it were a Son of man, coming with the clouds of the heaven, came unto the Ancient of days, and was present in His sight; and they who were standing by led (Him) unto Him. And there was given Him royal power; and all nations of the earth, according to their race, and all glory, shall serve Him: and His power is eternal, which shall not be taken away, and His kingdom one which shall not be corrupted." (Daniel 7)*

- a. (Tertullian, "An Answer to the Jews," ANF 3.172, elder from Carthage, c. 200 AD)
- b. Two advents of Christ.
 - i. Suffering servant (**Isaiah 53**): When Jesus *came*, He established His kingdom in humility, as a sheep to the slaughter.
 - ii. Jesus *will return* a conquering king to demolish the kingdoms of this world and reign over His eternal kingdom.
- c. So, several aspects of the **Daniel 2** prophecy have been fulfilled, yet we are still waiting for Jesus' return for the final fulfillment.
 - i. Note Tertullian's assumption that Daniel's dream (in **chapter 7** about four beasts, ultimately being destroyed by "One like the Son of Man... coming with the clouds of heaven") and King Nebuchadnezzar's dream (several decades

earlier) in **chapter 2** were predicting the same four kingdoms and Christ's return!)

- d. (See also Iraneaus, ANF 1.554, who discusses how John (in **Revelation**) and Daniel (in **Daniel chapter 2** and **7**) predicted the fall of the Roman Empire.)
- b. Second Prophecy: Daniel as a Type of Christ? (Eastern style)
- i. **Question:** Are there details in the life and story of Daniel that remind you or point to Jesus?
 - ii. Read **Daniel 2:46-49**.
 - iii. **Questions:**
 1. Why did the powerful king humble himself before Daniel? (this was quite a dramatic turnaround!)
 - a. Details of dream revealed?
 - b. Realized his kingdom would be destroyed by the God of the universe?
 2. Why does Daniel not tell the king not to worship him? Why does he not reject the king's gifts? (He does later on in the book.)
 - a. For example, in **Acts 14**, Paul and Barnabus heal a crippled man. The people in the city of Lystra start calling Paul Zeus and want to worship them both as gods. Paul and Barnabus's response: "What are you doing?! We are men just like you! Worship God!")_
 - b. **Question:** Is Daniel a "type" of Christ, pointing us to the Son of God who would walk among us as Jesus?
 - i. His great humility.
 - ii. Was innocent, but sentenced to death
 - iii. Was raised up and exalted to second in command and lived in the king's palace.
 - c. "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should

bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth.” **(Philippians 2:8-10)**

- iv. Consider, as we work through these lessons and even the ones we have already covered: Are there details in Daniel’s life that remind you of Jesus?

V. Conclusion

- a. Let us imitate Daniel’s humility; his care and mercy for the vulnerable.
- b. Let us imitate Daniel’s reliance on prayer.
- c. These prophecies, written around 500-600 B.C. should:
 - i. build our faith in the Scriptures
 - ii. produce in us tremendous awe and encouragement as we await the great Rock who will pulverize the nations to dust, whose kingdom will fill the earth, and the Son of God will reign for all eternity!