

The Prophets Still Speak
Daniel 2

Have you ever heard somebody say, *"I had the craziest dream last night"*? Well, I'm pretty sure they are all crazy. I say that because have you ever had a dream that made really good sense? Have you ever woke up and thought, *"Hey, that's a great idea"*? I think I'll go to work with no pants on but it'll be okay because I'll just put an orange squid on my head and nobody will notice. It's not high on my list of questions to ask God when I get to Heaven but at some point I want to ask him about dreams. Where does that stuff come from? Is there a point to most of them?

I do know that sometimes God uses dreams to tell people things. There is a phenomenon happening in a lot of Middle Eastern countries that I have heard about where God is giving people that have never heard of Jesus dreams about Jesus. They wake up and know His name or maybe they have seen a figure in white and they just know it is Him.

Many times in the Bible, God gave people dreams to give them information He wanted them to have. Dreams in the Bible were sometimes used to warn individuals or provide them with guidance. For example, in **Matthew chapter one**, Joseph, Mary's husband, received divine instructions in a dream to take Mary as his wife because the baby conceived in her was from the Holy Spirit.

I don't know about you but I have never had a dream that really meant anything. And if you do think God is trying to speak to you through a dream – and maybe He is – He will make sure that you know what the dream means or will allow it to be interpreted in some way. If you can't figure out what God is trying to tell you through your dream of being chased by clown nuns on flying horses then it probably doesn't mean anything. Don't worry about it.

But we know that God does sometimes use dreams and we see this in **Daniel chapter 2**. While you turn to the book of Daniel, which is between Ezekiel and Hosea, I will tell you that we are finishing up our series about how the Old Testament prophets are still speaking to us today. I was telling some folks the other day that I went through a few of the books of the prophets looking for what I thought those prophets would say to us at Christ Fellowship today. If they were here with us, what would they say?

We heard Isaiah tell us that we can't have a real relationship with God when we continue to live a sinful life. We heard Jeremiah tell us that sometimes we get what we want and it makes us miserable because sin can be its own punishment. And last week we heard Ezekiel tell us to open our eyes and see that Jesus is coming to rapture us all very, very soon. This week we are going to hear from a young prophet named Daniel. And Daniel has a lot to say, some of it easily understood and some of it we might need a little help with. But ultimately, I believe Daniel will tell us what could well be one of the great secrets to a full and abundant life, the kind of life Jesus said He wanted us to have in John 10:10.

In this chapter, it is not Daniel that has the dream but the King of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar. The problem is the king has had this dream and doesn't know what it means so he calls all his wisest men into a meeting and tells them to interpret the dream. And they all say, no problem, just tell us the dream. Now, King Nebuchadnezzar was not a godly man. He had no knowledge or fear of Jehovah God...but he wasn't stupid. He knew this dream was supposed to tell him something important and he also knew that his dream team (pun intended) of wise guys would only tell him what he wanted to hear if he told them his dream. So, he told them to not only interpret the dream but also tell him what the dream was. That way he would know they truly knew the interpretation.

Not only did he want them to interpret and not only did he want them to tell him the dream, King Nebuchadnezzar told them that if they didn't, he was going to chop them all up and then burn down their houses. But even though they are now properly motivated, they still can't tell the king his dream and it looks bad for all the wise men and that even

included Daniel and his buddies, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Daniel and the other three weren't in the meeting but Daniel heard about it when the guard came to get him to kill him. So, Daniel asks the king to pump the brakes on this deal for just a little while and then he would tell the king his dream and what it meant. So, let's pick up in **Daniel chapter 2** and let's read **verses 17-23**.

Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 18 He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven 20 and said:

*"Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever;
wisdom and power are his.*

*21 He changes times and seasons;
he deposes kings and raises up others.*

*He gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to the discerning.*

*22 He reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what lies in darkness,
and light dwells with him.*

*23 I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors:
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.*

There are a couple of things I want to bring out in this passage. First, look at what Daniel told his buddies when he got home. In **verse 18** it says that Daniel *urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven*. That word "mercy" in Hebrew is "racham" and it means to have compassion on somebody you love. Have you ever needed compassion from God? Of course you have. You need compassion from God to go to Walmart these days, right? You need compassion from God to take another breath. But sometimes you need it more than others.

A mother once approached **Napoleon** seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death. *"But I don't ask for justice,"* the mother explained. *"I plead for mercy."*

"But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied. *"Sir,"* the woman cried, *"it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for."* **"Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have mercy."** And he spared the woman's son. (Luis Palau, *Experiencing God's Forgiveness*, Multnomah Press, 1984.)

Notice that Daniel doesn't tell the three boys to pray to God for justice. He doesn't ask them to pray and tell God that they deserved it. He didn't say to ask God for help based on all the good things they had done or even all the bad things that had been done against them. He said pray for mercy.

You know, we talk sometimes about God being loaded or how money means nothing to Him but did you know He was also rich in mercy? That's what **Ephesians 2:4** tells us. King David knew it. In **2 Samuel 24** he said, *"I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great."* Let me ask you a question. Why is God so merciful? He is great in mercy and rich in mercy. Why?

Yes, He loves us but I could ask the same question about that. Why does He love us? What is His root motivation to show us love and mercy and forgiveness and grace and generosity; all the things we know He does? He does those things for the same reason God does everything and anything: for His glory.

Genesis 1 tells us we are made in His image and in His likeness but Romans 3:23 says that we all fall short of His glory. God wants us to see His glory and recognize it in everything and worship Him when we see that glory. When we see a tree or a sunset, we ought to give God glory. When we see a newborn baby or a precious Christian family member going on to Heaven, we ought to give God glory. When we see God give us grace and mercy...give God glory. He deserves it. He earned it. And when we do, when we give God the glory He deserves, His glory spills over onto us and our circumstances.

Daniel is young but this is obviously not the first time Daniel has prayed. It says they pleaded for God's mercy. I remember hearing the late Adrian Rogers tell this wonderful story about prayer. It made an impact on me and so I may have told it before but it's worth thinking about again. He said when he was a young pastor a woman called him late one night and asked him to come to her house because her husband had gotten drunk and left hours before in their car and she didn't know where he was.

So, Dr. Rogers drove right over there and knocked on the door and the woman's grown son answered the door and he was obviously very drunk as well. But he invited Rogers in and the wife asked Rogers if he would please just pray. So, he started praying in a typical way asking for God to show mercy to this family. But Rogers said that not long into the prayer the drunk son interrupted and said, "Hey Preacher! You ain't praying. You need to pray!"

He said that was pretty startling but Rogers said he went to praying with a little more umph and a little more power and a little louder. And he prayed for a little while and the young man said it again. "Pray, preacher! You ain't praying. You need to really pray!" Rogers said this was just too distracting and he just stood there a minute when he realized that the wife was gone. He said he could hear her in the other room talking so he walked in there and saw her laying on the floor stretched out and praying like a woman pleading for God's mercy. He said she had the hem of God's robe and she was pulling on it and wasn't going to let go! And it was then that he realized why the drunk son didn't think Rogers was praying. He had heard his mama pray and she was pleading like her life depended on it.

That's where Daniel and his three buddies were. They were pleading with God for His mercy. They weren't trying to make themselves look good. They weren't giving God any new information. They weren't trying to impress Him or bribe Him or argue with Him. They were asking God, begging God for mercy because they knew God is merciful. They didn't go to God based on who they were or what they deserved. They went to God in spite of who they were and pleaded for mercy.

Then! Then look what happened. God answered their prayers and do you remember what I said about God doing what He does for His glory? Daniel gave Him the glory. He gave God glory that next morning when He woke up. He gave God glory in the beautiful prayer in **verses 20-23** but let me read to you what Daniel told the king the next morning.

Look at it in **verses 26-28**. *The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?" 27 Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, 28 but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries."*

I gotta be honest. That's not how I would have responded to that question. Knowing the king was dead set on killing all his wisest men, I think I would have started that sentence with, "Yes! Yes, I can." But Daniel immediately gave God the glory. He said, "No, I can't but God can." I can't but God can. Isn't that the real story of our whole lives? I didn't give myself life but God did. I didn't give myself health but God did. I didn't try to wind up here. I didn't ask to be here. I never dreamed of being here but God did. I can't do anything. It is in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28) and we will give Him the glory He deserves.

Look again at Daniel's beautiful prayer. I think if Daniel were here with us today in person he would pray like this again. I think he would want us to pray like this. *"Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever;*

wisdom and power are his.

21 He changes times and seasons;

he deposes kings and raises up others.

He gives wisdom to the wise

and knowledge to the discerning.

22 He reveals deep and hidden things;

he knows what lies in darkness,

and light dwells with him.

23 I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors:

You have given me wisdom and power,

God, we do pray like that right now. We come to you, Father, not because of who we are or anything we have done but only because of who you are and what you have done. And you tell us to come boldly into your throne room and ask for help in our time of need. So, we do that. Father, we don't know what the future holds for our church or what may happen or where we might go but we trust you and we give you the glory for it right now. You have been so good to us. You have proven yourself to be merciful so many times over.

You brought us from Runaway Bay to Lake Bridgeport and then from there to here in Chico. And we know you have brought us here and we know you have allowed us to minister specifically to the poor, the addicted and the incarcerated this whole time. And only you could supply us with what we need to do that. Only you could give us the ability, the motivation, the supplies and the people necessary to do what you have called us to do. We can't do it but you can, Lord. You can and we want you to. We want you to use us and minister through us and to us.

Lord, we need your wisdom to be able to do what you want us to do and Daniel said in verse 21 here that you give wisdom to the wise. You said through James that if we lack wisdom, we should just ask for it. So, because you have said it, we believe it and count on you to do it. And may everything we do, every person that is helped, every life that is changed, every disease that is healed and every marriage that is saved and every soul that is saved be a neon sign giving you and only you the glory you deserve. Thank you, Lord, for hearing us. Amen.

Daniel and his friends were saved physically that day but they had been saved spiritually sometime before that. And if Daniel were here today he would make sure that every one of you have been as well. Have you come to God in submission and admitted that you need a Savior? Have you asked Him to forgive all your many sins? Have accepted Him to be not just your Savior but your Lord? Do you believe that Jesus is God and sacrificed Himself on the cross to pay the price for your sins, the price you could never pay? He did it out of His grace and for His glory and when you accept it, His glory spills out over onto you for all eternity. Do it right now as the music plays.