**DANIEL PROCLAIMS GOD TO THE KING**

June 25, 2017

Daniel 2:1-49 Key verse 2:44, “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.”

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 last only for a short period of time and they came from the dust of the ground and go back to it. But in contrast, the kingdom of God endures forever. God revealed this truth through Daniel. In this chapter we learn Daniel’s courageous faith that overcomes the critical situation like a candle flickering before the wind. Also through Daniel, we can learn how we can become useful instruments of God in order to reveal his glory and help a troubled soul like the king Nebuchadnezzar.

**I. The king’s dream (1-2)**

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 his mind was troubled 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, using their soft and flattering language. Probably the king had already experienced their flattering lip-service which didn’t contain true fact at all.(9) But this time, the dream that he had dreamed was different. It was mysteriously terrifying dream and his mind was so troubled that he couldn’t sleep at all. So he took it seriously and he really wanted to hear right interpretation. The wise men pleaded with the king to tell them the story of the dream two times. But when their 2nd plea as well didn’t work, they finally revealed their inability to interpret his dream and they indirectly blamed the king who asked them for impossible things. They said to the king, “There is no one on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods. And they do not live among humans.”

At this answer, 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 critical situation, what did Daniel do?

First, Daniel confronts Arioch, the commander of the king’s guard (14-16). When Daniel heard that the king had sent men to arrest him and his friends to put them to death, his heart must have sunk, sensing that the wave of death was approaching to him. Humanly speaking, there looked like no exit for the survival from the king’s furious order of execution. But in this critical and urgent moment, Daniel did not panic nor sit down helplessly paralyzed by fear. In verse 14, Daniel confronted Arioch who came to arrest him and spoke to him with wisdom and tact. This fact reveals that Daniel overcame his fear by faith.

At ordinary times, there seems to be no distinction between true believers and unbelievers. But when people confront real crises, they reveal their true colors. True believers overcome crises with courageous faith and render glory to God. On the other hand, godless people are gripped with fear and only try to escape from the difficult reality. When Daniel confronted the commander overcoming fear by faith, the commander did not arrest him. Instead when Daniel asked, “Why did the king issue such a harsh decree? He explained the matter to Daniel. At this, Daniel persuaded the commander to let him see the king and he went in to the king again by faith even though he knew that the king had refused to let his wise men gain time and he was very angry toward all the wise men of Babylon. He asked for time to interpret the dream for the king. This time the king was not angry to Daniel and he accepted his request.

Second, Daniel asks his coworkers’ prayer support (17, 18). Prayer is the measure of faith. United prayer is the measure of humble faith. When Daniel returned to his house, he knew that he needed earnest prayer to get 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. But here, one thing we need to learn from Daniel was that Daniel did not pray by himself alone. He humbly shared his burden and prayer topic with his coworkers. Daniel was a truly humble man to the point of begging his coworkers’ united prayer. Some people do well in doing alone but do not well in asking coworkers’ help such as asking prayer support. Only truly humble man acknowledges his weakness and humbly asks coworkers’ prayer support. God works more effectively when we pray in united prayer in one spirit and one mind.

Third, God shows Daniel the dream and Daniel praises God (19-23). Look at verses 19-23. “During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said: ‘Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. 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, 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” When Daniel prayed earnestly with his coworkers in unified prayer, God gladly answered his prayer. When God gladly answered his prayer, he came to not only know the meaning of the dream but also know God more deeply. This made him praise God all the more. In his praise, he came to know that God is the Sovereign Ruler in deed. It is God who deposes kings and raises others. 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, humanly speaking Daniel was nothing but a POW. But when he knew God and saw a vision of God in his dream, he was not troubled. Rather he was overjoyed and praised God. When he knew God, he could be the shepherd for the troubled king.

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

As God revealed the mystery to Daniel, the next morning, Daniel met Arioch and Arioch the commander took Daniel to the king. What did Daniel do before the king? First, Daniel proclaimed God to king Nebuchadnezzar. In verse 26, on seeing Daniel, the king asked him, “Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?” When the king asked, “Are you able to tell…?, it was easy to answer, “Yes, I am able to tell, emphasizing “I” instead of God. But what did Daniel say? Let’s read verses 27-28. 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 Nebuchadezar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you were lying in bed are these.” Daniel started his answer from denying any human wise men’s capability in explaining the mystery the king asked about. Daniel focused his answer on proclaiming God in heaven, saying, “There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.” First and last of all, Daniel witnessed God and focused on God to the king. Daniel lost no chance in proclaiming God, for God was in the centre of his heart. As we all know, to the king who thought that he was the king of kings, proclaiming God above all kings was not easy because it could offend him and as a result bring the king’s anger. But Daniel could do so because God was in the center of his heart and he feared God more than the king Nebuchadnezzar. Like Daniel, we also must proclaim God to other people through our conversations, and at any available opportunity, instead of wasting time in meaningless talk. It is possible only when God is in the center of our heart and we really fear God more than any human authority. Daniel was also eager to win the king over to God because he saw the king as a mere man who absolutely needed to know God; otherwise, could not but be troubled with a dream.

Second, the interpretation of the dream (31-45) Look at verse 31. “Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large-an enormous, dazzling stature, awesome in appearance.” 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 kings 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. Even though he was the most eminent king in human history as the head of gold, Daniel expounds that God is the Sovereign Ruler and king Nebuchadnezzar was just his servant.

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. 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 the kingdom of Greece. Fourthly, it has legs of iron. Many Bible scholars 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 fall. There is no eternal kingdom on earth. Babylon, Persia, Greece, Roman Empire were all superpower countries which looked like they would be forever in those times. But as time passed by, all of them were destroyed and passed away. Our present superpower nations, like US and China will also pass away someday. Of course small and weak countries like Korea and Myanmar also will pass away someday when Jesus Christ comes gain.

The statue also tells us of human civilization allegorically. The statue started from gold but gradually the quality and value of the material became worse and worse like silver, bronze, iron, and then iron and clay. Many modern people believe that human education would make better civilization but in reality human condition becomes worse and worse; in modern time technology became more advanced but human moral codes or humanity will become worse and worse. Jesus warned that in his time of return, the world will become like the time of Noah in which people were full of moral corruption and wickedness.

Lastly, there would be eternal kingdom of God. (34-49) Look at verse 35. “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 very 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. Especially Peter refers to Jesus as the cornerstone that the builders rejected but has become the cornerstone (capstone) which became the foundation for our eternal salvation.

The king Nebuchadnezzar was completely overwhelmed by Daniel’s awesome interpretation inspired by God’s revelation. So, even though he was the king of world power in his time, he fell prostrate before Daniel to pay honor to him. He also gave glory to God even though he was a godless king.

In conclusion, today we learn that Daniel was in critical crisis because of the king’s dream but the crisis was the opportunity; the opportunity to reveal the glory of God when he overcame fear by faith and earnestly prayed in humble united prayer with his coworkers. His faith and prayer led him to be the shepherd of troubled king Nebuchadnezzar and many wise men. Ultimately it rendered glory to God. To us, the purpose and goal of study of book of Daniel this year is to learn Daniel’s holy and godly life. In chapter 1, we learned that holy and godly life is to keep our identity pure as children of God in Babylon exile-like world. Today in chapter 2, we learn that holy and godly life is to overcome fear by faith and earnest prayer life especially with humble united prayer. When we live such holy and godly life, we can become useful instrument of God to shepherd troubled souls and reveal the glory of God. The kings and kingdoms of the world will pass away but the kingdom of God and the people seeking the kingdom of God will last forever. May God help us to put our hope in eternal kingdom of God and seek God’s glory and be a shepherd for troubled soul by living by faith and prayer! Amen.