

Revelation!

March 14, 2021

Daniel 2:17-30

As we continue our study of the book of Daniel I apologize in advance for those who are either joining us for the first time today or who will not be back with us next week. It would be great to deal with these events from Daniel's life in one sermon, but the stories are just too long to do that. The story of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is 49 verses long and contains too much detail to do in one message, two messages, or three. I'm taking it in 4 parts. Sorry! But that is what we have to do if we are going to adequately do it justice.

So, this means I have to begin by summarizing where we have been in the story and at least give a sense of where we will be going in the next weeks. Our story builds on the concepts laid out in chapter I, that this whole experience with Daniel and his friends was intended to demonstrate to everyone that the Babylonian culture and gods were superior to their own. Do you remember that? You need to if you are going to properly understand today's text.

The next thing this builds on is the fact that Daniel and his friends are being trained to become advisors, wise men, in the king's service...if they succeed in distinguishing themselves among their peers. And they did! The third

thing is that back in chapter I we learn that Daniel had been given the gift of understanding dreams and visions. His God, the God of Scripture had equipped Daniel especially in this regard. So this is what we must remember from chapter I.

Then last week, we learned that the king had a troubling dream, so troubling that he called together his advisors (not Daniel yet) and challenged them to help him understand the meaning of the dream. But, the story takes a turn when we learn that whoever seeks to interpret the dream must first give the king the content of the dream. In other words, since the dream by definition came from a god, you must demonstrate a connection with this god before the king is going to trust your interpretation of it. It would not suffice to just give your interpretation, no Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know for sure that you were actually speaking on behalf of the god who sent the dream. It must have been quite a troubling dream. If you succeeded, you would be handsomely rewarded. But if you failed, you would be killed.

The advisors objected. No wise man could do such a thing. No king had ever made such a demand. But the king was firm. So, when no one came forward, the captain of the king's guard was sent out to kill ALL of the king's advisors, INCLUDING DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS. When Daniel learns of this whole situation, he asks for permission to meet with the king and interpret the dream. As we noted last week, it appears that to Daniel this was no big deal, another day at the office. Of course he could interpret the dream, that

is what he had been trained to do! And that is where we take up the story this morning. Follow along as I read Daniel 2:17-30, the next chapter in the story. READ.

Main point: The God who knows all and controls all is free to reveal truth to whomever He chooses. What is really the issue is who will get the credit for it.

The issue front and center in today's portion of the story is not yet the content of the dream or its interpretation. That will come in the weeks ahead. It is not even so much on how Daniel came to know the content of the dream. Rather, this section of the story highlights who gets the credit for the revelation. And on this the text is clear: Daniel's God is to get ALL the credit for the content and interpretation of the dream. It is not the king, nor the captain of the guard, nor Daniel himself. Instead, the credit is all given to Daniel's God, Yahweh, the God of Scripture.

Now, at the risk of getting too far ahead of myself, can you see how this might fit into the whole message of the book of Daniel? The Babylonian plan was designed to show the superiority of their culture and its gods. But from the first episode with Daniel we see that they were inferior to the one, true God. He alone knows all, controls all, reveals as He chooses. He controls the future!

So, as we take on this text, I ask you to focus your attention not on the fact that God reveals, but on the charge to give Him the credit. Let us learn from Daniel! (2 parts)

I. When God chooses to reveal Himself, it ought to lead us to credit Him for it.
vv. 17-23

By definition, and in line with this story, we do not get to choose when or how God will reveal Himself to us or anyone else. He is God and we are not. But when He does, we ought to expect that it will be done in a way that leads His people to give Him credit for it, and not take credit for it themselves. We see that here with Daniel.

v.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.

Remember, Daniel has just told the king that he would take up the challenge to interpret the dream. He was confident that he could do it. He set up a time to do it. By the flow of the text, I imagine that time to be short, like the next day. We know that the king's patience had already run out. This needed to happen right now, the orders to kill the advisors had already gone out.

So, Daniel goes to his house and tells his 3 friends to start praying. Are you catching that? Daniel did not agree to the challenge because he already knew the dream. No, he agreed to the challenge and THEN went and asked his friends to pray. In other words, he took up the challenge by faith. He trusted that His God would reveal the dream. . .but he could not assume that He would. (We will get to this point later in the book, “but even if He does not. . .”) He prayed that God would have mercy on them and reveal the dream to him. He asked his friends to pray, probably to pray like their lives depended on it, and they surely did! Not only was Daniel’s life at stake, so were the lives of the friends, and not only the friends, but all the advisors to the king as well. They would all be killed if God did not reveal to Daniel the mystery of the dream.

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

There it is in the simplest of terms. That night, Daniel had a vision from the Lord. God answered His prayers. But again, notice the order of events. Daniel prayed, God responded with revelation, Daniel blesses the Lord BEFORE he even finds out if his interpretation was correct. Again, notice the faith of the man of God. He praises God BEFORE it is official that the mission has been successful. He praises God simply for giving him the message. He knows the outcome before he knows the outcome. Why? Because the message came from the God of heaven who knows all and controls all. Is this making sense? This is how revelation works: He reveals, and His people simply acknowledge it and

thank Him for doing so. He gets the credit, immediately. We take no credit ourselves. We are simply the vessel, the vehicle, the conduit. If our God chooses to reveal Himself, we can be sure that He will arrange it so we will give Him the credit for it.

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.

Notice here the focus of the blessing. God has shown that He alone is the source of wisdom and power. It comes from Him. He has it all. None of it came from Daniel, nor the king, nor the other advisors. The God of heaven is the source, and He gives it out as He sees fit. Can you see that this fits the point of the book? Who’s God is superior? Who’s wise men are actually wise? Who is the powerful One in the room? That is the point of the whole book: Daniel’s God is the wise and mighty One, as demonstrated again and again and again, in spite of how it might appear. Oh yes, His people have been defeated, humiliated, dragged off to foreign land. And yes, His temple lie in ruins and His cities burned, but He was still on the throne. He still ruled all. By revealing the dream to Daniel, He proved Himself to be the superior God over all.

Then notice that Daniel hints at the interpretation of the dream. Yahweh is in control over all kings and kingdoms. It might seem like some kings have tremendous power, it might seem like some men are filled with great wisdom, but we must know that if they are in charge, it is only because the God of Scripture has allowed them to be there. He can and will remove them as He desires. He is the King of kings. He is sovereign over all. Daniel celebrates that fact in his blessing. We will discover why later in the chapter.

Ours is the God who reveals Himself, sometimes to a king in a cryptic dream, other times to His prophet. The question is not whether He can do that, the question is whether the people to whom He reveals Himself will give Him credit for it. Daniel does here, in a most appropriate and beautiful way.

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.”

We praise Him for His attributes and we thank Him for allowing us to be the beneficiaries of those attributes. In this case, we praise Him for being the God who controls all and reveals Himself to us and we thank Him for showing mercy on us to the point of using us to accomplish His purposes. In other words, Daniel now knows where this is all headed and so, he also knows that God has chosen to use him to accomplish His purposes. God didn't have to,

but He did. He has elevated Daniel to a place of prominence in a very public way. And it is clear that none of this has gone to Daniel's head.

Now, I am quite confident that not one person here has been put in the position of interpreting the dreams of the president or the queen or any other world leader. Right? So does this not apply to us? No, I am also quite confident that God has put you in a position to reveal His truth to others, people He puts in your path. This is what He does. He is still the God who reveals Himself. So, the real question, the question in this passage is whether you have been faithful and then given Him the credit for it. Have you ever had this sequence of events, where you prayed and even asked others to pray with you? And then God has answered your prayers and directed your steps as you prayed? Did you stop to praise and thank Him? That is the issue here for us. If ours is the God who reveals, then His people ought to be regularly pausing to thank and praise Him for His revelation, His truth, the opportunities He has set before us to share that truth with others. This is what He expects from us. Daniel here provides a great example.

II. What we pray privately, we ought to proclaim publicly as well. vv. 24-30

The perspective Daniel articulates in his blessing of his God, he also shares with the king, once more even before he finds out if he is right in his interpretation of the dream.

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.”

This is a little bit confusing, since we know from v.16 that Daniel has already sought and received permission to approach the king with an interpretation of the dream. Perhaps he is simply imploring the captain of the guard to stop his mission to wipe out the advisors until Daniel has his day before the king.

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.”

So, Arioch hurries Daniel off to the king, almost as if he is taking credit for scouring the land to find him. But I also see here that Arioch is risking his reputation and perhaps life now as well. If Daniel is wrong, Arioch might be finished as well.

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?”

The drama is now set: the prophet of the God of Scripture is standing before powerful king Nebuchadnezzar, answering the challenge to reveal the content of a dream of the king and give the proper understanding of that dream. The king begins by asking the obvious question, “Can you do this?” But Daniel’s answer is perhaps deeper than we might expect.

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:

There is no man, no wise man, no craftsman of the magic arts, no consultant of the gods, no reader of the stars who can reveal such a mystery. There is no man who can do this...BUT there is a God in heaven who can do so. Can you see how this ratchets it up a notch? The astrologers were correct when they said no man could do this, that only the gods had such knowledge. And Daniel affirms that they were actually correct, but there is a God in heaven who is up to the challenge. He knows all and reveals mysteries. He has already revealed one such mystery to Nebuchadnezzar. He has revealed it to Daniel, and now Daniel is going to reveal it to the king. This God has desired to reveal to

King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future. The dream concerns the future.

Now, pause for a second. Are you catching that we have already revealed something about this God? He knows the future! And the only way He can know the future is if He is in control of the future. And yet, He is revealing the future to the king, so He wants this revelation to be known. Why? Because the king might change the course of history? Not in this case. Instead, He is revealing the future to show who is really in charge, who is the real king, who is the King of kings. This dream is all about showing who is in control, and it is not Nebuchadnezzar, nor is it the king who will someday conquer him, or the king who will someday conquer him. Are you seeing that? This revelation about the future shows who is REALLY in charge.

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.

Once more, before revealing the content or interpretation of the dream, Daniel wants the king to know that he himself is no one special. In fact, this whole situation began with this God of heaven revealing something directly to king Nebuchadnezzar, not through Daniel. So, the king is no one special (he

will lose his kingdom), Daniel is no one special (he is just the mouthpiece for his God). The only One who is special is the God who knows all and controls all, the God of wisdom and might. This revelation is all about Him. This book is all about Him. The Scriptures are all about Him. True men of God, true prophets of God, true spokesmen of God all know that. Only He is worthy to be praised!

Come back next week to find out the actual content of the dream. You will see why the king was confused and troubled.

If we believe this passage is the Word of God, then what should be different about our lives?

1) We will remember who is really in charge, and it is not us, nor is it any human leader.

2) We will be ready to be used by God to reveal truth to those He puts in our path.

3) We will make sure God gets the credit for what He does through us.