

TRUSTING GOD IN BABYLON

Devotional | February 5, 2023

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discuss: When have you trusted in God's wisdom instead of your own?

Key Text: Read *Daniel 2:1-49*

In 1999, John F. Kennedy Jr. flew his small airplane from New York City to his family home in Massachusetts for a wedding. On board were his wife Carolyn and her sister. Though Kennedy was a licensed pilot, he had not yet been approved for instrument flight (using only instruments to navigate). When their takeoff was delayed until after dark, Kennedy should have waited for daylight or sought a more experienced pilot to help. Yet, Kennedy took off into the darkness. The plane never reached its destination, and all three passengers were killed in the crash. Investigators determined that the crash was likely caused by disorientation from flying over open water at night without any landmarks or visible horizon. Kennedy's lack of experience may well have led him to trust what he thought he was seeing more than what his instrument panel was telling him.

In Daniel 2, we see a dramatic encounter between Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar in which Daniel interprets a disturbing dream of the king. But before his encounter with the king, Daniel, recognizing his own limitations, asked his friends to pray with him for wisdom. God answered the prayer, and not only was Daniel able to interpret the king's dream, but Daniel also saved many lives in the kingdom as a result. It all occurred because Daniel first humbly refused to trust his own intuition, and instead trusted in the "instrument panel" of God's infallible wisdom to guide him.

1. Nebuchadnezzar has a disturbing dream (2:1-16).

God gave King Nebuchadnezzar a dream about Babylon's future, but the king was so distressed he could not sleep (2:1). He summoned his advisors and, to test their authenticity (he may have feared they would simply say what he wanted to hear or even conspire against him), without telling them the dream he commanded them to tell him what he had dreamed and then to interpret the dream! The humiliated advisors failed, saying it was an impossible task (2:2-11). The king became furious and sentenced all his advisors to death, which included Daniel and his godly friends (2:12-13). When Daniel heard this news, he asked Arioch, the chief executioner for permission to meet with King Nebuchadnezzar to interpret the dream (2:14-16).

Discuss: God can still communicate through dreams to people today if He so chooses, but according to these verses, what are His primary ways of communicating His will to us today: 2 Timothy 3:16, Rom.8:14, Prov.11:14. Revelation 3:8.

2. God reveals Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its meaning to Daniel (2:17-23).

When Daniel learned of the impending execution, he asks his three friends to pray. God answers the prayer by revealing to Daniel the dream and its meaning (2:17-19). Daniel praises God for His omniscience and omnipotence (2:20-23).

Discuss: What key words and phrases about wisdom stand out to you in these verses: Proverbs 1:7; 4:7; 16:16; James 1:5? What are advantages of trusting in God's wisdom rather than our own knowledge?

3. Daniel reveals the meaning of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar (2:24-49).

In his dream, the king had seen a statue with a gold head, silver chest and arms, bronze belly and thighs, iron legs, and feet made of a combination of iron and clay. A massive rock was cut out from a mountain by supernatural means. It struck the feet of iron and clay, smashing them to bits so that the whole statue collapsed (2:24-35).

Here is Daniel's God-given interpretation:

- The statue (2:36-43) represents four successive Gentile powers: Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome that would oppress and rule over the people of Israel. The gold head (2:32a, 37-38) represented King Nebuchadnezzar. But Nebuchadnezzar would not live forever – other kingdoms would arise after his. The “*chest of arms and silver*” (2:32b, 39a) represent the Medes and Persians who would conquer Babylon in 539 B.C. The third kingdom that would conquer the Medo-Persian Empire between 334 and 330 B.C. under the leadership of Alexander the Great is the Greek Empire, symbolized by the “*middle and thighs of bronze*” (2:32c, 39b). The fourth kingdom, represented by the “*legs of iron*” (2:32c, 40) is the Roman Empire, which conquered the Greeks in 63 B.C. Just as iron is the strongest of all metals, the Roman Empire would be stronger than all the previous empires. The “*feet partly of iron and partly of clay*” (2:32d; 41-43) represents a revived Roman Empire in the end times, over which the Antichrist will rule. This satanic-energized kingdom (which has not yet occurred in history but will occur during the end times) will never attain true unity, thus it is described as a mixture of iron and clay – characterized by division.
- The rock (2:44-45) Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream smashing into the statues represents God's kingdom which will one day destroy all pagan kingdoms, including the revived Roman Empire of end times (2:36-45a). The term “rock” is used frequently in Scripture to describe Jesus Christ, the Messiah (Ps.118:22; Is.8:14; 1 Pet.2:6-8). Christ will overthrow all earthly kingdoms and rule forever.

Daniel affirms that “*the dream is certain*” (2:45b) since its interpretation comes from God, who reveals mysteries (2:19, 23, 28, 30). A humble and amazed Nebuchadnezzar praises God and appoints Daniel to be ruler over the entire province of Babylon and chief of all the king's wise men. Daniel shares credit with his three friends and spares the lives of the king's advisors (2:46-49).

Discuss: Daniel refers to God as the “*God of [or in] heaven*” five times in Chapter 2. What do we learn about the “*God of heaven*” in these verses: 2:18, 19, 28, 37, 44?

Discuss: God exalted Daniel because he was obedient and humble. What do you learn about humility in these verses: Proverbs 15:33; 22:4; 29:23; 1 Peter 5:6; James 4:10?

For Further Study:

Free online commentary on the Book of Daniel at www.enduringword.com

No Reason to Hide: Standing for Christ in a Collapsing Culture by Erwin Lutzer

“Questions about End Times” Bible-based articles at www.gotquestions.org