

## Kingdoms in Conflict – Daniel Ch.2 - Study

### The futility of pagan religion

*Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king... The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." -Daniel 2:2,10-11.*

1. What are some specific things (religions, superstitions, sources of "knowledge" or "wisdom") that the culture around you turns to religiously in times of fear, anxiety, and an overwhelming sense of a lack of control?
2. Why is there danger in religious practices that may feel temporarily therapeutic but are ultimately not true?
3. What are some things besides the one true God that you are tempted to turn to for comfort or answers in our current situation?
4. How have these things come up short and been dead-ends when you have embraced them?

*Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them. -Psalm 115:4-8*

*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. -Acts 4:12*

5. Nebuchadnezzar in his situation sought 'spiritual' guidance, confident that someone must know the answers. In a way, the king was 'spiritually open', yet searching for answers in futile places. How do you see that reality reflected in yourself, or in the world and the people you know who are not Christians?

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. -Romans 1:18-21*

## The mystery of God's sovereignty

*Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, 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. Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. 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; -**Daniel 2:17-21***

1. Daniel confidently trusted God's sovereign wisdom for the answers *before* God had revealed the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream to him. He called his friends to seek the Lord in prayer (vv.17-18). What can we learn from Daniel's trust and his impulse to pray?
2. Daniel saw the opportunity to step up and point the king toward the one true God when pagan religions had failed. What might opportunities look like for us to step up and boldly share the truth of the gospel and a biblical worldview with people when counterfeit gods have failed them?
3. Do you struggle to recognise or find such opportunities? When you do, do you find it difficult to know what to say?
4. In seeking to be heard, Daniel spoke to the king's guard "*with prudence and discretion*" (vv.14). What does this teach us about how we ought to approach potential faith conversations in the public sphere? What might that look like?

*but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame. -1 Peter 3:15-16*

5. How is the idea of God's sovereignty – the truth that He is at work on a macro-level in the world and a micro-level in the hearts of human beings - comforting to you?
6. Do you ever find it hard to trust that God is at work in ways that you don't see or understand?

Consider the confidence and certainty that God's people were called to have in His sovereignty:

*Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come? Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins? -**Lamentations 3:37-39***

*Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand. -**Proverbs 19:21***

*Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding." -**Job 38:1-4***

*I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. -**Job 42:2***

## The frailty of earthly kingdoms

*You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. -Daniel 2:37-38*

1. It was God who gave Nebuchadnezzar his position, just as everything we have comes directly from the hand of God. What causes you to forget this truth? Hardship? Success? Pain? Prosperity? The pursuit of honing your craft?
2. Are there certain areas of your life that you would rather try to keep to yourself than acknowledge that it is from God and belongs to God?
3. How can we learn to practice a consistent awareness of God's presence, provision and sovereignty in every area of our lives?

*For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. -Romans 11:36*

## The incomparability of God's kingdom

1. It can seem difficult and counterintuitive to remain confident in a supernatural kingdom when the kingdoms of man around us are so loud, prevalent, and in so much turmoil. Practically, what does it look like to fix our eyes on Christ and His kingdom while living actively, fruitfully and missionally in this world?

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. -Hebrews 12:1-2*

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. -Colossians 3:1-2*

2. How does it help put the ups, downs, and uncertainties of life in perspective to know that citizens of God's kingdom will enjoy the glories of God in His perfect kingdom forever?

*Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, -Hebrews 12:28*

*The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. -Psalm 46:6-7*

### **A timely prayer celebrating the kingship of Christ:**

Lord Jesus, we're never more sane than when we raise our eyes toward heaven and set our hearts on things above—where you are seated at the right hand of God. Navel gazing, circumstance-watching, daily-news-fixating *never* serve us well.

King Jesus, help us to understand the glorious implications of your present and invincible enthronement. Your dominion is the *only* eternal dominion and your kingdom is the only unshakeable kingdom. Elections and political insurrections; the world economy and temperature instability; earthquakes and terrorist attacks; nuclear build-ups and cultural breakdowns don't affect your reign *one* micro-bit for *one* nanosecond.

For your kingdom endures from generation to generation. There never has been, nor will there ever be, any nervous sweat, furrowed brows, or anxious pacing in heaven. There will never be not one moment of consternation or vexation in the corridors of paradise; no need for a plan B to emerge from the "big boardroom in the sky."

You do as you please with the powers of heaven and the peoples of earth. I praise you for marshalling the powers of heaven for the salvation of ill-deserving rebels like me and the ultimate transformation of the entire cosmos. Though many tried to hold back your hand and many said, "What are you doing?" nevertheless, through the sacrifice of your life and the "foolishness" of the cross, you demonstrated the reach of your sovereignty and the riches of your grace.

The only King who could say, "Behold the world I have made," is the only King who would say, "Behold the people for whom I die." King Jesus, the greatest sanity is gospel sanity. Keep us sane... keep us gospel sane. We choose to lift our eyes to heaven today and fix our gaze on you—the author and perfecter of our faith, and we cry with unfettered, unabated joy, "Hallelujah, what a Saviour! Hallelujah, what a salvation!" Your kingdom has come, your kingdom is coming! So very Amen we pray, in your name and for your glory. -*Scotty Smith, The Gospel Coalition.*