

Kingdoms in Conflict – Week 5 – Daniel Ch.4

After his encounter with the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the king's first response is to proclaim:

“to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.

*How great are his signs,
how mighty his wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and his dominion endures from generation to generation. -Daniel 4:1-3*

This is a major theme of Daniel and indeed of the whole Bible – that God's kingdom is all-powerful, everlasting, and brings peace and personal transformation to all who accept its authority. Once he has experienced this, the king can't help but publicly proclaim it to every tribe and nation.

And that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. -Luke 24:47

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. -Mark 16:15

1. Is there a passionate, joyful urge to share with the world what God has done for you? Or are you tempted to keep your faith private?
2. What stops you from openly sharing about the wonders of God, the mighty works He has done in your life, the peace that is available in Him, and the urgent reality that His kingdom is at hand?

I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. -Daniel 4:4-5

3. The king was thriving in his personal life (“at ease in my house”) and his working life (“prospering in my palace”). But his comfort was disturbed by yet another troubling dream. Has God ever allowed your world to be shaken up when you were feeling comfortable and prosperous in your personal life and aspirations? Why do you think God would allow this disturbance to happen or intentionally bring it about?
4. Typically, what is your spiritual life like when you are at ease and prospering? Is it humble thanksgiving to God, dependence on Him, and zeal for more of Him? Or is it easy to get complacent, self-reliant, and wrapped up in building your own kingdom?

“This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you.” -Daniel 4:18

5. When your comfort is afflicted and your mind and conscience bothered, where do you turn for answers and guidance? Is your heart-response, “woe is me”, or “Lord, what

would you like to do in me through this”? Do you pursue ease or the uncomfortable but necessary work of seeking and applying godly wisdom to your circumstance?

6. When personal crisis strikes the king, all of the wisest sources in all of Babylon once again come up empty of real help and meaning, so the king turns to Daniel who he knows as a man of true wisdom and spiritual integrity. There are people in our lives who by every appearance are flourishing personally and professionally, but will face personal crises that cannot be solved by human wisdom. How can you be ready to step up and point that person to the only One who can meet their greatest need- the Lord Jesus?
7. Who in your life (Christian or not) looks to you as a person of wisdom and integrity? How are you actively building real relationship and trust with people in your life, that they might look to you to share the truth of the Gospel with them in a time of need?
8. What does Daniel show us about faithful gospel-witness when the time comes?

*“Daniel witnesses with: **A tender heart**- He demonstrates that he wants nothing but the best for Nebuchadnezzar. **An honest word**- Daniel does not shy away from telling the king that he is the subject of his own dream. **A purpose given**- Daniel also tells the king why his ‘chopping down’ will occur...it has everything to do with [his] pride- his lack of recognition that the kingdom he ruled was the consequence of God’s will and not his own. And Daniel tells him that there is a way out through a king still greater than him...he ends the warning on a note of hope” -David Helm*

“this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will...Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.” -Daniel 4:24-25, 27

9. God graciously warns us that there are serious consequences for unrepentant sin. What means does God use to do this in our lives?
10. God lovingly calls us back to Himself, giving us time to see where we’ve gone astray and to turn our hearts to Him again. What does it mean to experience conviction in your heart? When conviction comes upon us, what are we meant to do in regard to our relationship with God, our conscience, our relationship with others, our actions?

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. -2 Corinthians 7:10

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? -Romans 2:4

11. What is the danger in *only* looking for encouragement and good advice in the scriptures? How does that miss a huge part of God’s purpose for sanctification through His word and Spirit?

At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, and the king answered and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?”... Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws. -Daniel 4:29-30, 33

12. God is serious about sin and will follow through on His word. How does pride keep us from repentance?
13. What has happened at times when you have continued to harden your heart in pride and self-exaltation when God is calling you to change? Are you hardening your heart right now against something God has been speaking to you about?

Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity. -Proverbs 28:13-14

14. God brings low the proud in order that they might realise the destructive nature of their pride, be restored, be redeemed, and praise Him alone. How has God humbled you- How is He showing you ways in which you are living for your own glory, taking credit for the good He has done, acting as though you are the king/queen of your own little kingdom? How can this realisation ultimately lead to great freedom and praise of the one true God?

At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured him who lives forever,

*for his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;
all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
and he does according to his will among the host of heaven
and among the inhabitants of the earth;
and none can stay his hand
or say to him, "What have you done?"*

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble. -Daniel 4:34-35, 37

Pray and Reflect:

Do I need to be more open about my faith? Is there someone that I've been walking with who God may be calling me to share the gospel with? Pray for that person right now! What is getting in the way of me joyfully sharing who God is and the incredible things He has done? Ask God for a refreshed passion to see His name lifted high and for people to know and be transformed by Him. Pray for a tender, compassionate, and courageous heart for the lost. Am I too comfortable right now? Is success and prosperity in my personal and professional life keeping me from the authentic discipleship that God is calling me to? Where is God humbling me and making me uncomfortable in order to open my eyes to changes that need to happen? Have I been hardening my heart against certain convictions? The time to repent and turn back to our loving and gracious Lord is right now. Praise God that our personal story and all of history is in His sovereign hands. He opens and closes eyes in His perfect timing, and He softens and hardens hearts as He wills. He humbles and He lifts up. He is in control of kingdoms and nations, and in all things His ways are perfect and just. This King Jesus is *for us* and *with us*, He loves us enough to convict, correct and discipline us- refining us for His glory, for relationship with Him, and for the Kingdom work we are called to. Spend some time in His presence, sensitive to His Spirit, lifting the cares and convictions of your heart to Him and receiving His grace. Glory to God!

