

When Life Seems Out of Control Daniel 2:1-49

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Does life seem out of control sometimes? Coronavirus. Debt. Politics. Natural disasters.

It's like being a parent. You try to protect your kids by managing their environment, but you can't control all the people and cultural influences surrounding them.

You work hard. You try to live the right kind of life and make smart choices, but things just don't work out.

You mind your own business and try to treat people right, but even today, there might be one person, one hazard, or one difficult situation that's a continuing threat.

Slide 2 - LIFE IS OUT OF CONTROL

In chapter 2, Daniel is a young intern in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

He's a Jewish refugee doing his best to survive and do well, but he became caught up in events totally beyond his control.

Daniel 2:1-13, *"In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. 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." Then the astrologers answered the king, "May the king live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it."*

The king replied to the astrologers, "This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me." Once more they replied, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it." Then the king answered, "I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me the dream, there is only one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me."

The astrologers answered 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." This made the king 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, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death."

Now, Daniel didn't cause the king's troubled mental state, his sleeplessness, or his troubling dreams. He had no control over the king's "enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers."

Yet, Daniel's life was in danger because of the failures of others and it seemed he couldn't do anything about the situation. Think about that, do the failures of others cause problems for you?

We couldn't blame him if he panicked and got angry at God, or lashed out at the men who came for him and his friends to put them to death. But, Daniel handled the situation with WISDOM and FAITH.

Daniel 2:14-16, *“When Arioch, the commander of the king’s guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. He asked the king’s officer, “Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?” Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him.”*

Which gives us a good principle for life. When life seems out of control, a wise person understands that, although he might not be able to control the situation, he can control how he responds to it.

Daniel responds with *“wisdom and tact.”* This teaches us that we shouldn’t “shoot the messenger,” or vilify a person who’s caught in a bad situation.

Get the facts straight and figure out the causes of the problem. Make space for a solution, by asking for time, looking for flexibility, and reducing the anxiety level.

But it’s hard to be wise and tactful when you’re in panic mode so, how do you get control of your response?

Slide 3 - FAITH.

Daniel 2:17-23, *“Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 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.”

Daniel prayed, not just any prayer, but a prayer of faith. A prayer of faith goes beyond worrying on your knees, regurgitating your problem, or blaming God.

Daniel laid out his problem before God and pleaded for help. Then, when God answered his prayer, he completed the cycle by praising Him.

But how did Daniel know that his understanding of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision was correct, or that Nebuchadnezzar would accept it? Daniel praised God BEFORE he knew how everything would turn out.

In fact, the most important answer to his prayer was not that God solved his problem, but that God spoke to him. Daniel believed God was in control.

But when life’s out of our control, is it enough to know that God’s in control? It was enough to give Daniel, a young intern, the courage to face the king of Babylon!

Because, when he was granted an audience with the king, in verses 27-8 he boldly said, *“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.”*

Don’t miss the irony in Daniel’s statement. In verse 11, the astrologers had said, *“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.”*

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Daniel proceeded to prove that God had revealed the meaning of the dream, by describing the dream to Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 2:29-33, “As Your Majesty was lying there, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than anyone else alive, but so that Your Majesty may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind. “Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.”

Now don't get caught up in the statue as the common interpretation is that the head of gold represented Babylon, and the silver, bronze and iron pointed to the succeeding kingdoms of Medea, Persia and Greece.

Yet, since the Medes and Persians overlapped, the statue could have pointed to the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

But, like I said, don't get caught up in the interpretation as the details of the statue are not important; it's the rock on which we should focus.

Daniel 2:34-35, “While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.”

Daniel's interpretation of the dream was not only for his time, but for ours today. This dream tells us that the powers of the kingdoms of this earth will all pass away.

Rome, Nazi Germany, Russia, China, even the USA? But the rock?? The rock becomes a huge mountain and fills the earth.

What does the rock represent? Nebuchadnezzar's vision gives clues: *a rock was cut out, but not by human hands*. The rock became a huge mountain, filling the earth.

In verse 44, Daniel goes on to say, *"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."*

From our perspective as Christians, we can see that the kingdom that fills the earth and endures forever is the kingdom of God, and Jesus is the King who reigns.

Revelation 5:9 celebrates the victory of the Lamb, as all of heaven sings, *"And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation."*

Revelation 11:15 jumps to the end, *"The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever."*

And to bring Daniel's interpretation into today's environment, listen to verse 43, *"And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay."*

America used to be known for and proud of being a melting pot for *“your tired, your poor, your huddled masses.”* Now we’re just a boiling pot with everyone at each other’s throat wanting to be separate!

This is why, in our dreams and visions in the dark of the night, or the darkness of the day, Nebuchadnezzar’s statue sometimes looms large.

This statue, representing political, economic, and cultural powers, towers over whatever powers we have.

Yet the eyes of faith see something else: a rock that will crush the powers before it, filling the whole earth.

Daniel caught a glimpse of that rock, far off in the future, and the young intern rose above the powers of Babylon.

Daniel 2:46-47 finishes the story: *“Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. The king said to Daniel, “Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.”*”

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Conclusion

When our lives seem out of our control, and the kingdoms and powers of this world loom large, we have an even greater vision than Daniel.

We have a vision of Jesus, risen from the dead, overcoming every power and authority, establishing a kingdom that will fill all things, and endure forever.

In the words of Ephesians 1:19-23, *“God raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is*

invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

Or, in the words of Jesus: John 16:33, *“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*