

DANIEL 2:1-49, Part 3 Oct 9, 2016

HOT KING, COOL KID

This morning we pick back up with the story of Daniel who was a young man of teenage years when he was dragged away to Babylon and trained to be an official in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar. We saw last time how committed Daniel proved to be to the law of His God and how God honored him for His devotion. Today we move to the second of the great stories about this wonderful man, Daniel who faces another very difficult challenge and I want to begin by asking you a math question. You ready? Some of you kids may get this. If you have 40 students in the class and 15 of them are seniors, how many are juniors? What's the answer? You say, "We can't tell you because we don't have enough information." Right, but that is the kind of problem Daniel faces in chapter 2. Actually, his situation is more like this question - who knows the answer to this question? Uh, Pastor, what question? Ah-ha. You see how difficult it is? Daniel is going to have to come up with not only the right answer, but the right question. Now that's a tough assignment. Let's see how Daniel does it as we read about and talk about the hot king and the cool kid. The hot king is Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel 2:1 *Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.* We expect that Nebuchadnezzar had actually been ruling for several years at this point, but it is called his second year because his sickly father had finally passed away, making Nebuchadnezzar the king both technically as well as practically. And in this particular year Nebuchadnezzar started having dreams, possibly recurring ones. And these dreams were very disturbing to the king. Most of us can relate somewhat to that. We have all had dreams that jarred us emotionally and most of us have had dreams that were useful to us in some way. I remember I had a dream about a family in our church. I dreamed that this family had decided to leave our church and their leaving had something to do with their son. So I called them and asked and sure enough, I discovered a mom very frustrated with a hyperactive son who was too old for Children and Worship and yet unable to sit through our worship service. They were not goners yet, but being among us was getting very difficult for them. I had no idea of this until my dream. Most of my dreams are meaningless and stupid, but not this one. The most vivid dream I ever had was given to me by God, I believe, to help me understand a painful situation a dear brother was going through. If we read the Bible we should expect that God may have purposes for our dreams. In Numbers God said he would speak to prophets in

dreams. He spoke to Jacob in a dream, and Joseph in a dream and Pharaoh, and Ahimelech and Solomon. People can certainly get too caught up in dreamology and go off the deep end. But we don't want to go off the shallow end either and ignore what may be a chosen means of the Lord to get our attention about something. These dreams of Nebuchadnezzar were not the result of his imagination; they were clearly from God himself.

Nebuchadnezzar seemed to know that these dreams were significant so **2** *Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.* Magicians, sorcerers, conjurers, and Chaldeans? Yeah, these would be the intellectual and occultic elite of the land. Nebuchadnezzar was looking for answers anyway he could get them. His spirit, his peace had been shattered by this dream. But as we will see - all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put the king back together again. **3-5** *The king said to them, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream."* **4** *Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation."* **5** *The king replied to the Chaldeans, "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap.* Uh-oh. The stakes in this game just rose considerably. Failure did not mean a discouraging look, a demotion, or even getting fired. Failure meant painful death and family disgrace. The king was blazingly serious and clearly lacked the motivational skills of good management. He threatened. And then he promised. **6** *But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation.*" Now here is where we must focus on the challenge of the king. He is telling his advisors to do two things isn't he? This isn't pharaoh telling his dream and waiting for an interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar wants to hear what the dream is. He wants them to provide not only the correct answer but the correct question. And you can tell from the answer he was given that his servants didn't quite catch what he was asking them. Someone sent me a humorous list of real questions and answers from court trials held in the US. Some questioners who didn't get it, like the lawyer who asked a witness, "How far apart were the vehicles at the time of the collision?" On the other hand, some of the responses from witnesses who their confusion about the question. One witness was asked, "Were you shot in the fracas?" She said, "No, I was shot midway between the fracas and the naval." You just

know from that response that the question wasn't rightly understood and so too here. The king said, "Tell me my dream and the interpretation." **7** *They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation."* These fellas actually had books they used to interpret dreams. Certainly, given some time they could bluff their way through an interpretation. But without hearing the dream - they were lost. And the king was not exactly being patient here. **8-9** *The king replied, "I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm, 9 that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation."*

There now we see why the king put to them this seemingly unreasonable challenge. It is possible that the king really didn't remember the dream, but I don't think so. Verse 9 tells us why he wanted them to recount the dream. He says, "If you can tell me the dream - then I know you can interpret it." Why? Because to know the dream would require supernatural revelation. They could fake the interpretation but not the dream. The king would know they were lying. Now, I assume that all these occult artists the king had among his advisors held themselves out as being able to do this kind of stuff. This was the original psychic friend network. If their claims were true they should be able to tell dreams as well as interpretations. Nebuchadnezzar is calling their bluff here, and the psychic friends fold. **10** *The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. They say "it's unfair." Then they say it is very hard **11** Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh."*

Now that they got right. This request of Nebuchadnezzar is beyond men. There is nobody this good. But the king didn't see it that way **12-13** *Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 13 So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them.* Now we have a hot king. He was agitated by the dream, rebuked by his advisors. He is furious and there is nothing to restrain the display of his wrath. He is the most powerful monarch in the world and his anger is going to result in a bloodbath in Babylon. His cabinet of advisors and all

their company would be wiped out. Few things are more powerful than a hot King. But one of those things is a cool kid. We read about him now. Verse 13 says they came looking for Daniel and his friends because they were Babylonian wise men. Odds are that Daniel had just completed his three years of training and was sort of a rookie on the team. That's why he would not have appeared before the king already. But he was going to get to share in the rewards anyway. You can imagine that when Daniel heard the news about his own eminent annihilation that he went ballistic. No doubt he started weeping uncontrollably. Huh? Not this man. Daniel, albeit, 18 or 19 years old was as cool as a cucumber. When he realized what was happening **14-16** *Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon; 15 he said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter. 16 So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.* Now think about this. Here is Daniel, a young, rookie advisor from another country who is so bold that he comes before the king, a king who was not in a good mood, a king that was raging on his throne. And he dares to speak to him. Furthermore, he suggests that he can pull off the miracle Nebuchadnezzar is looking for. All he asks is for a little time. A little time? What good is time in a mess like this? I mean, what can Daniel possibly do to make a difference here? That's what we are about to see. You have three sub-points on your outline. First thing Daniel does is to talk to God. **17-18** *Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, 18 so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.* What do you do when you face an impossible challenge? May I suggest a prayer meeting? What do you do when you don't know what to do? I always think of the line from King Jehoshaphat when Judah was invaded by a massive army and the king prayed: II Chronicles 2:**20** *We are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You.* We look to God. We cry out to God. This kind of response we might expect out of some veteran saint but Daniel was a kid. Still, he didn't panic under pressure. He took the matter to God. Now that's cool. Sometimes in our lives God puts us in positions so plainly over our heads that all we can do is look to Him. That is what the boys did. It doesn't say they put their heads together and came up with a

solution. No, they put their hearts together and came up with a prayer. They looked to the Lord and cried, "Help!" I used this a few months ago but it bears repeating. Years ago on Sesame Street I heard a great song that has stuck with me. It goes like this, "When you've got a trick task, all you've got to do is ask. A-S-K just ask." Did you know the Bible teaches that? Jesus told us, "If you need anything, in my name, just ask." James 1:**5ab** *But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God.* Please don't believe the lie of the devil that praying is the same as doing nothing. You hear people talk like this: don't just pray about it, do something. And I grant you, prayer is no substitute for appropriate action, but our problem is usually the opposite. We are often acting without prayer and God says to us, "Don't just do something - pray." We can't see the connection, but prayer changes things. In the realm of the spirit the movers and shakers are the ones on their knees. Read Revelation 8:**3-4** *Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.* There we read of the prayers of the saints ascending to God. Now read what happens to those prayers. **5ab** *Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth.* God takes our prayers and mixes them with heavenly fire and sends them back down to earth where they really stir things up. **5c** *And there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.* Did the prayers of Daniel and the boys change anything? Did they ever! They saved the life of dozens of Babylonian wise men, calmed the king, and put Daniel in a place of power, and eventually provided encouragement to millions who have read what Daniel said by the inspiration of God. The cool kid talked to God as a first course of action.

We don't have a record of the exact prayer Daniel offered but we read the results **19-23** *Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; 20 Daniel said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. 21 "It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. 22 "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. 23 "To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power; even now You have made known to me what we*

requested of You, for You have made known to us the king's matter.” Note a couple of things briefly about Daniel’s response to God’s answer. When God answers a prayer, what should you do? Pray again, this time a prayer of thanksgiving. And that is all Daniel includes in this prayer. It is pure thanks and praise to the Lord His Savior. In that prayer he acknowledges two attributes of God - His wisdom and His power. Daniel praises God not for keeping his holy nose out of human affairs but for being in absolute control. He says in verse 21ab *It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings.* This is the major theme of the book of Daniel - God’s sovereignty over the affairs of men. We will see it again and again. And you can expect to hear me talk about it again and again. During the election of 1978 I was in a Bible study when I heard someone say that Christians shouldn’t waste their time in politics because God had already determined who would be president. I was aghast and appalled at that statement. I still would be, but for different reasons. Now I’m appalled by the last part about us staying out of politics. Then I was appalled at the notion that God had determined the next president. I believed in the popular American deity who basically controlled the weather and that’s all. A sovereign God who changes times and epochs, removes kings and establishes them was an offense to me. I had to have my nose rubbed into the book of Daniel and a few other choice Scriptures before I figured out that the world centers around God after all. Daniel, apparently, was raised to delight in God’s sovereignty. I love how he praises God here. He first of all mentions the Lord’s attributes - wisdom and power. Then he thanks God for how they were expressed toward him in the answering of His prayer. The cool Kid comes to the rescue first of all by speaking to God.

But, he went on. The next thing he did was to speak about God. He spoke about God 24-27 *Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king’s presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king.”* 25 *Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king’s presence and spoke to him as follows: “I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!”* 26 *The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?”* 27 *Daniel answered before the king and said, “As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.* Now is Daniel putting these poor fellows down?

You bet he is. He is making sure the king sees that all his pagan witches were lacking in power.

28-30 *However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed. 29 As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place. 30 But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.*

Notice that Daniel is taking no credit at all for this. He denies any innate personal ability. In verse 28 he doesn't even mention himself. He says, "God has revealed it to you." Contrast that to what Arioch says in verse 25 when he comes to the king and says, "I have found you a man." Daniel just says, "God, God, God." He does everything he can to give glory to God. An American reporter went to London in the last century to hear the two men known as the greatest preachers in England. On Sunday morning he went to hear the first man and left his church saying, "Wow, what a preacher!" On Sunday evening he heard Charles Haddon Spurgeon and left saying, "Wow, what a Savior!" That is what we are to strive for. Our goal can be to make Jesus famous. Kirk Cameron was a teen-idol TV star in the 80s in the sit-com, *Growing Pains*. He was huge and famous – but he had an encounter with Jesus that turned his world right-side up and made him passionate, not about his own fame anymore, but about the fame of Jesus Christ. In nine days at the Cinemark in Wexford, there will be a simulcast of a special gathering called simply, *Revive Us*. It will feature some big-name Christian speakers and bands. It will feature Kirk Cameron who put it all together and did it for the fame of Jesus. Being a TV star is cool, but what Kirk is doing is even cooler. He learned the lesson from the cool kid of Babylon. Talk to God, then talk about God.

There is a third thing Daniel did and this too had to do with talk and with God. Thirdly, when the time came he talked for God. He delivered faithfully and fully what the Lord had revealed to him. **31-38** *"You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. 32 The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck*

*the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. 36 "This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. 37 You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; 38 and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. And I stop there just to tell you that all this was certainly true of Nebuchadnezzar. God had said the same things thru Jeremiah 27:**6-7a** Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him. 7 All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land comes. So, the head of the statue was the Babylonian kingdom. Next Daniel speaks of the chest and arms **39a** After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you. This would have likely been the Medo Persian Empire ushered in by Cyrus the Great. **39bc** Then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. The kingdom that follows next in Middle-Eastern history would have been the kingdom of the Greeks who under Alexander the Great became masters of the known world. The kingdom of bronze is the Greek empire. **40** Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. Most agree that the iron kingdom is that of Rome. The Roman kingdom allowed many individual provinces within it to govern themselves to an unusual degree. This explains the next remarks **41-44a** In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. 42 As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. 43 And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. That is in the days of the Roman rulers **44-45** In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will*

itself endure forever. 45 Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.” You know, this is one of the most awesome and impressive speeches ever given in the history of the world. This is incredible. The dream ends with the interpretation of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands. When you read about something happening “without hands” guess who did it? The point is that God does this without any use of human agency. Clearly, the last kingdom belongs to whom? Jesus Christ. *In the days of the Roman kings.* You know Jewish Bible scholars have had to twist this whole prophecy to avoid the obvious. They agree that the fifth kingdom is the Messianic kingdom but to avoid the Jesus implications they claim the fourth and fifth kingdoms still haven’t arrived since to admit that kingdom four is Rome is to admit that Messiah has come. He has come. During the days of Rome and upon His ascension to the throne of power established a kingdom that is unlike any other. It differs from earthly kingdoms in its origin. The kingdom of the Caesars was from men. The kingdom of Christ came from God. This fifth kingdom differs in power. All the other kingdoms were eventually defeated, but no one defeats King Jesus. And this fifth kingdom differs in duration. Dynasties of men come and go but when God comes in human form to take His power and authority the rule of Christ will last forever. Read verse 44 again 44 *In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.* Now read Revelation 11:15 *Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”* This is the message and vision Daniel spoke for God.

We finish the reading 46a *Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel.* To say the least, the king was impressed. 46b-47 *And gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. 47 The king answered Daniel and said, “Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.”* That is what Daniel wanted to hear. 48-49 *Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 And Daniel made request of the king, and he*

appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king's court. Now that is one awesome story. And it all goes to prove that the indomitable strength of the human spirit right? Where there is a will there's a way, right? Wrong. It all goes to prove that where there is a God there's a way. But the story also shows the need for men of faith and courage like Daniel. The hero of our story is God. Don't get that wrong. He is the Sovereign one. But the role God plays here is not for us. We don't get to be sovereign. Our call is to be like Daniel. To be young men, young ladies, old men and old ladies, boys and girls who face crises like he did. And what did he do? He spoke to God, spoke about God, and spoke for God. Is the Lord calling you to do any of those today? Is there something happening in your life or family for which you need to call a prayer meeting, either personally or familiarly, maybe in your business or ministry? Speak to God. Then speak about him. Take every opportunity to give him glory and to get even pagan people thinking that maybe God is. Then speak for Him. When the Lord gives you a message to deliver you be faithful, whether it's good news or bad news, hard news or happy news.

And hey, if you are a Nebuchadnezzar here today, there is a God you have been denying for years. You have doubted His being, His wisdom, His power and it's time to admit that there is a God in heaven who deserves your devotion. Maybe at the end of this service you will go to our prayer corner over right there to ask someone how you can make friends with the God who is. We need to pray...