

Bi235 Old Testament 2

Lesson Bi235-36 Daniel Interprets the King's Dream

God sometimes used dreams to communicate with people. Young Joseph had a dream about his brothers and himself. The king of Egypt's butler and baker each had a dream about what was about to happen to them. Two years later the king of Egypt had a dream about the future of Egypt. No one could interpret it but Joseph.

In the time of Daniel, the pagan king of Babylon also had a dream. This dream troubled him, and he couldn't get back to sleep. The dream was sent by God himself, but the king didn't know it. The king commanded his magicians, astrologers, and other wise men to come to him and remind him of his dream. He said, "I had a dream, and I'm troubled by it, but I can't remember the details. Tell me what I dreamed!"

The magicians and astrologers replied, "O king, may you live forever! Why don't you tell us the dream, and then we'll interpret it for you."

The king flew into a rage, since he was a tyrant. "I'm telling you my decision," he shouted, "if you can't tell me what I dreamed, and interpret it, I will have you torn limb from limb, and your houses reduced to rubble. But if you tell me what I dreamed, and interpret it, I'll give you gifts, rewards, and great honor. Now, tell me what I dreamed!"

They answered a second time, "Why don't you tell us the dream, and then we'll interpret it for you."

"You're just stalling for time," said the king, "because you know that I'm serious about my threats. You have agreed to lie to me; you're hoping that I'll change my mind."

They complained, "No man on earth can do what you demand. No powerful king has ever asked such a thing from his advisors. No one but the gods can tell the king what he dreamed."

The king followed through with his threat, and commanded that all his advisors be put to death. Daniel and his friends were threatened, as well, since they worked for the king. Daniel spoke calmly to the captain of the guard, "Why has the king made such a harsh decree?"

The captain told Daniel the whole story about the king's dream and the failure of the advisors to interpret it. Daniel immediately asked to see the king. He pled for him to delay the executions. The king granted him a one-day delay. Daniel hurried to his house and told Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego what had happened. He asked them to pray to the God of heaven and ask for mercy concerning the dream and its interpretation. After they prayed, God revealed the mystery to Daniel in a vision during the night.

Daniel broke out in praise to God for his help: "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; he is wise and powerful. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings. He reveals deep and concealed things. I thank you and praise you, O God of my fathers, for you have given me wisdom and strength, and have made known to us the king's matter" (Dan 2:1-23).

The next morning Daniel went to the captain of the guard and said, "Don't kill any of the wise men of Babylon; bring me to the king, and I will show him the dream and the interpretation."

The captain quickly took Daniel into the palace. He told the king, “I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who can make known to the king the interpretation.”

The king looked at Daniel. “Can you remind me of my dream, and interpret it?”

Daniel replied, “None of your wise men can show the king the dream and its interpretation, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has revealed to the king what will happen to his kingdom. While you lay in bed, you were thinking about the future, and God revealed the future to you in your dream. I’m not any wiser than the rest of your advisors, but God revealed this mystery to me so I can help you.”

Daniel went on to describe what the king had seen in his dream: a frightening figure with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, and legs of iron. Its feet were partly iron and partly clay. The figure was standing tall. Suddenly a stone flew toward the figure and broke its feet of iron and clay. The whole image crashed to the ground and broke into pieces as small as chaff. The wind blew the pieces away, but the stone that struck the image grew and grew and became a mountain that towered over the whole earth.

Daniel then interpreted the dream. “You, O king, are great because God made you great. You are the head of gold. After you will arise another kingdom, inferior to you, and after that, a third kingdom of bronze. The fourth kingdom is iron, because iron shatters everything else. Its feet are weaker, however, as they are a mixture of iron and clay. The fourth kingdom will be partly strong and partly breakable. During the fourth kingdom God will bring a change. God will set up his own kingdom which shall never be destroyed. It shall break into pieces all other kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. This is what the stone means—the little stone that grew into a great mountain. This is your dream and this is its God-given interpretation.”

When the king heard Daniel’s interpretation, he bowed down to Daniel and showed his gratitude. He said, “Truly, your God is the supreme God and Lord above all earthly kings. He can reveal mysteries, and helped you to interpret my dream.” Then he gave Daniel gifts and high position in the province of Babylon. He made him chief over all the wise men, as well. At Daniel’s request, the king also appointed Daniel’s friends to important government posts (Dan 2:24-49).

God still speaks to people today through his Holy Spirit. Many people are coming to faith in God through visions and dreams. One of the gifts given to persons by the Holy Spirit is the ability to know things. This is called the ‘word of knowledge’ (1Cor 12:8). This is not ordinary knowledge, but knowledge that builds up fellow Christians. Sometimes, it is knowledge that shows unbelievers that God is working in their lives. He is reaching out to them.

This story is **important** because it shows that God answered the prayer of Daniel and his companions. Through the dream and interpretation, God was offering the pagan king of Babylon a demonstration of his wisdom. He showed the king that he alone knows the future. God was giving the king a chance to worship him instead of the pagan gods of Babylon.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God was actively engaged with his people, even after hundreds of them were taken into exile in Babylon—a culture that served other gods. God was also reaching out to the king. Although the king was a tyrant and a pagan, God used miracles to speak to him.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. How can we be sure that God was the source of the king's dream? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered, "Daniel told the king that God had sent him a dream about the future," you answered correctly.

2. What did the dream mean? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, "The dream predicted a succession of four empires or kingdoms to be followed by a kingdom set up by God himself—a kingdom that would never end," you are correct.

3. How did the king respond to Daniel's interpretation? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, "He acknowledged the greatness of the God of Israel, he decided not to kill all his advisors, he honored Daniel with gifts and high position in the government, and he appointed Daniel's friends to high positions, as well," you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened. See the events in your own mind. Then tell someone else the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and re-tell it until you feel sure you are repeating the words and actions correctly. Share this story about the king's dream and Daniel's vision. Gather together some of your friends and ask them whether God has spoken to them or someone they know through a vision or dream. Pray together that the Holy Spirit may speak to some of the unbelievers in your community in this way. Most of the time, God uses both a dream and a living Christian to show people his way.