

INTRODUCTION

Opening Illustration: Vietnamese House Slaves

Disoriented...Distressed...Disillusioned... Confusion...pressure to Conform....

Bridge to Daniel

Background: Judah conquered by rising power of Babylon...Daniel taken as teen...probably in 90s when writing...first audience has seen the fall of Babylon only to continue to live under oppression of Persia...

Last week = Daniel and his friends taken to Babylon, by God's help, graduate at top of class...

Ch. 2 = Things take a sudden turn for the worse...

- Nebuchadnezzar's dream
- Nebuchadnezzar's order

Focus of camera = Daniel and Neb/Wise Men...FUNCTION = to show us God

- that's what Daniel needed
- that's what exiles who first heard this story needed
- that's what we need

We need to know "*There is a God in heaven...*" (V28)

And this God is actively shaping and ruling over all of history...from intimate details of individuals to the rise and fall of political dynasties...

Daniel argues, if we could REALIZE that there is a God in Heaven Ruling and Reigning over history...

- anxious -> anchored
- cynical -> confident
- panic -> peace, poise

Ch. 2 shows us the GOD in Heaven...and what He is like...as we read this rather long section of Scripture, listen for these three characteristics:

Billboard

1. Wisdom of God
2. Power of God
3. Mercy of God

Scripture Reading: Daniel 2:17-49

Pray

MP1: The WISDOM of God

The Bible tells us that we are EXILES...like Daniel..and what exiles need to realize is the WISDOM of God...

SP1: Because Our Wisdom = INSUFFICIENT

- Nebuchadnezzar: all the resources and power at his disposal...can't discern his dream
 - Wise Men of Babylon: "There is not a man on earth who can do this..." (V10)
 - Our Wisdom...the Wisdom of this World = *INSUFFICIENT*

 - Leaves us:
 - 1. INSECURE: Nebuchadnezzar, greatest human power on the planet, so troubled by a dream
 - 2. IMPULSIVE: Neb's order to execute all the wise men of Babylon...think of the time, resources, invested in training his group of counselors...

 - Daniel realizes:
 - 1. Wisdom BELONGS to God (V20)
 - 2. LIGHT dwells with Him (V22)
- = He is the very SOURCE of Wisdom...

To put it another way...

"God of Heaven" -> Babylonian wise men searched the stars...Daniel points us to the One who rules over the stars....

SP2: Because Life is often INCOMPREHENSIBLE

- Like Nebuchadnezzar's dream...we can't make sense of our circumstances...
- Daniel and friends...why would God get them through all of their training, give them favor with the king and his guards...to be the victims of a sweeping execution order???
- Daniel's original audience...still in exile now under PERSIAN empire....
- US:
 - Why is this happening?
 - Why ISN't this happening?
 - What do I do now?

Life is Incomprehensible, but God is...

- The REVEALER of Mysteries (22,28,29,47)
 - Psa 32:8 = He gives us the light we need

- The Greater REALITY
 - More *important* and actually more *informative* than discerning our circumstances is discerning our God...start with who God is...then move back into our circumstances!

ILL: Lincoln's 2nd Inaugural Address - "The Almighty has His Purposes"

Yes! ..we need to know that God is WISE and has His purposes...not just that...He has the POWER to carry them out...

MP2: The POWER of God

Narrative Structure = "Court of Contest"

God is the VICTOR!

Neb seems powerful...but only because God has *given* him power (**VV37-38**)

V21 = God sets up kings and removes them...

Isaiah 46 (another prophet comparing God with the false gods of Babylon)

"I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times what is still to come...what I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do."

AQ: If we REALIZED the POWER of God...what difference would it make???

SP1: It would make us HUMBLE

Daniel in VV26-28, V30

Neb in VV46-47

1 Peter 5:6

SP2: It would give us HEART

ILL: Andrew Melville's speech to King James

There are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland. There is King James, the Lord of the Commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church, whose subject James the Sixth is...We will yield to you your place, and give you all due obedience, but again I say, You are not the head of the church; you cannot give us that eternal life that we seek for even in this world, and you cannot deprive us of it

Daniel:

v14 = Daniel has the heart to question ARIOCH

v16 = he requests appointed time with the King

vv27-28 = no one can (same words as Babylonians)...but there is a God in Heaven!

Contrast this with Nebuchadnezzar...highest earthly power...but because he didn't Realize and REST in the POWER of the ALMIGHTY GOD..

= frenzied, fragile....anxious....paranoid...

Transition: Wisdom of God...Power of God...and if you are really going to be COMFORTED and CONFIDENT despite circumstances...need to know the MERCY of GOD...

MP3: MERCY of God

2 Striking Features of God's Mercy shown to us in this chapter...

SP1: The NEARNESS of God's Mercy

vv17-18 = ALL they did was PRAY!

- They didn't make a deal with God
- They didn't clean promise to clean up their lives or donate money or...

The "God of Heaven"... HEARS PRAYERS of LITTLE PEOPLE...and ACTS on their behalf...

ILL: Marthe Cohn "Behind Enemy Lines"

Wondering if her Swiss guide had really told the truth about staying hidden in the shadows close by to help if she needed it...from the darkness she heard the voice of her guide..singing a drinking song...changed the words to "Grus Gott" = "GOD KEEP YOU"

- assured of the NEARNESS of her earthly counterpart...but more than that...the GOD in Heaven...

SP2: The FULLNESS of God's Mercy

To whom does God give mercy in this chapter???

- Daniel and his friends
- Nebuchadnezzar
- wise men
- whole world (**VV44-45**) = stone cut by no human hand...crushes other kingdoms...becomes a mountain that fills the whole earth!!! = Promise of the KINGDOM of GOD that will ENDURE forever...

So What...

- Gives us HOPE!
- God's mercies never end...new every morning...He is RICH in mercy...
 - you can't be too far gone...or too bad...
 - only way to disqualify yourself is to deny your need of it!!!

Conclusion

ILL: Vietnamese House Slaves

Majority = Xians...convenient way for Communist Gov't to rid itself of Jesus followers...

What did they do?

- they TRUSTED in the WISDOM of GOD
- they RESTED upon the POWER of GOD
- they SHARED the MERCY of God
 - ***They whispered the Gospel into the ears of the children they were forced to raise...and thousands upon thousands of these children became followers of Christ and led the explosion of the Xian Church in Communist China...

How were they able to live with such POISE instead of PANIC? ANCHORED instead of ANXIOUS? CONFIDENT instead of CYNICAL?

They took hold of something BIGGER than their Circumstances...

JESUS is the...

1. Wisdom of God

- God's solution to the problem of our sin...God's inconceivable strategy for reconciling us to Himself... ""in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2)

2. Power of God

- defeated sin, Satan, and death itself.. referred to Himself as "THE ROCK".ushering in the Kingdom of God that will one day defeat all earthly empires...a kingdom that will endure forever

3. Mercy of God

- Never abandoned those who abandoned Him
- said to the Thief dying beside him, "Today, you will be with Me in Paradise"
- Says to all of us:
 - "Come to Me and find rest"
 - "I will never leave you or forsake you"

He came to deliver us from our deepest trial...our deepest EXILE...our ALIENATION from GOD.