THRIVE – **WK 3 – Dreaming in Babylon**

**One of the most famous names in the Bible – maybe heard as a kid. The lion’s den. Think we know the story? There is more to the story…**

**Daniel and friends were kidnapped, castrated, names changed, forced to study the occult, and serve the bidding of an evil king in a place called Babylon (greatest & evil cities of its time). A people to be feared.**

**Was unexpected, not what they wanted and incredibly difficult**

**But Daniel – knowing God is good and in control – THRIVED!**

**This series is about, How to Thrive in a place we don’t belong**

**Places that do not honor God. Maybe it’s work, school, home, our Babylonian culture. \*\* go online and listen…**

**When caught in the backwash of someone else's sin, when experiencing Gods loving discipline, or simply suffering the natural consequences of living in a fallen world, the response is the same: we are to live a life of Hope, humility, and wisdom.**

**Last week – they took a stand in the cafeteria – this week they step out**

**Forced into Babylon University to study things they did not believe – they excel and rise to the top of their class and got the attention of the King… Daniel 2:1 In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled, and he could not sleep. (A Disturbing Dream - waking in the middle of night in a cold sweat - confused by what he saw… Neb. calls for interpreters) 2 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, 3 he said to them, “I have had a dream that troubles me, and I want to know what it means.” 4 Then the astrologers answered the king, “May the king live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it.” (Okay, What was it?)**

**5 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, (tell me the dreamed and meaning – or…) I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. 6 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.” (Okay… but tell us the dream. No one can do what you ask! Only the gods can do that. Neb said - you’re right I understand- No) 12 This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. 13 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. (D & the boys were on the list)**

**(In the dark of the night and early morning blood curdling screams can be heard) 14 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. (last week – positive, humble, and wise) 15 He asked the king’s officer, “Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?” Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. 16 At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him. (This is a God moment! A Dangerous Decision)**

**While he waited for the response he went back to his friends (the 3) and they prayed... Hard! That night God reveals it.**

**Daniel 2:24 Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, “Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him.” (Stop killing people – I can tell him. He did not have to do this. They were evil men of the occult. Daniel has a heart for people. Loving his enemies)** **25 Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and said, “I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means.”**

**6 The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), “Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?” 27 Daniel replied, “No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, (NO???? Then why are you here!!!!! The king is getting angrier) 28 but, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. (I Know who can)**

**Life’s many unanswerable questions; tragedy, sickness, (explain) no man can know why these things happen. Only God in heaven can reveal those mysteries**

**28 …there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. (this is the entire theme of Daniel) He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you were lying in bed are these: (A Defining Description)**

**29 “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. (The true God of heaven – gave you this dream) 30 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. (I am here only because God brought me here)**

**\* Here is the dream… (see image) Well… that is strange.**

**The king in awe – silent - continues to listen.**

**\*\*\* Here is a video that illustrates that emotional event. (Video)**

**\* NOW - Here is what it means… (see image)**

**The head is you Neb. (yes, I am the head!!!) BUT - the rest of the statue are kingdoms to come after you. All will fall, and their remembrance will fade – when the great rock (a greater kingdom) falls upon it. And that kingdom will reign forever - over all the earth.**

**Nebuchadnezzar’s response – He is amazed - starts shouting praise to the God of Daniel. Neb ends up promoting the 4 to places of authority - We will take a look in a moment.**

**Looking back we know the prophecy’s fulfillment:**

* **Head / GOLD - Neb.’s Babylonian Empire (God put you there)**
* **Chest & arms / SILVER – Medo / Persian Empire (2 armies)**
* **Stomach & thighs / BRONZE – Greek Empire (Alexander the great)**
* **Legs / IRON – Roman Empire (east and west kingdoms)**
* **Feet & toes / (mixed) IRON & CLAY - Divided Kingdoms (Diff views)**

**Thoughts: Rome before JC / mixed empires post JC / United Nations / US & UK / Catholics / Europe / end time final kingdom of an antichrist**

**There was no way for them to know 100’s of yrs before – the world powers. God’s prophetic word – given to an evil man for God’s glory. A great evidence of God’s word.**

**What about that Rock? The Rock is JESUS the Messiah!!**

**Daniel 2:34 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. 35 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.**

**(interpretation from Daniel) 44 “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. 45 This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. “The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”**

**THE ROCK – cut from the earth (man) but not by human hands (God) comes to the feet of the of this earth (Jesus humble birth) causes all the kingdoms to fall. (By his triumph at the cross) The rock rises (the resurrection) to become a great mountain over the whole earth. (His eternal kingdom – and reigns over all.)**

**Nebuchadnezzar had a prophecy of JESUS!!**

**This is a dynamic prophetic picture of his future and our Lord**

**The Walk Aways: Why did God honor Daniel so much?**

**Some things stood out to me… that we can learn from and walk out**

**1. When the pressures on… He prayed and praised God (v. 17-23)**

**Daniel 2:17 Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 18 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. 19 During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven 20 and said: “Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. (He continues with a great declaration of praise and gratitude for God’s power, wisdom, and dominion in all things)**

**Don’t panic- pray! And don’t just pray- praise God in advance!**

**Daniel did not melt in fear / worry, he did not panic - but prayed & praised**

* **His confidence was not in his own abilities and experience**

**Daniel 1:21 – God had given Daniel a unique gift of dream interpreting.**

**Daniel has this gift – but he did not rest on it. He got on his face before God. As smart and gifted as he was – his confidence with in the LORD.**

**Unfortunately, the things we do well, we often do without God. Relying on our gifts and abilities. We tend to pray when we feel like we can’t do it. Imagine God working thru you in the gifts that he gave you!**

**2. No matter how offensive his enemies were, he valued their life**

**Daniel 2:24 - “Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him.” (never counted them out)**

**What an amazing picture of the character of Jesus. He will later find out it would be much easier without them - they even conspire to kill him. But Daniel understood God cares for everyone – your life is special.**

**Don’t hate – Help!**

**3. Daniel made sure God always got the glory**

**V28 – No man can explain the mysteries – But there is a God in heaven who can**

**V30 – …this has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than anyone else alive… but God did this so you can understand your dream**

**V36 – The God of heavens has given you your power and kingdom**

**V45 – This dream is about and from the great true and only God of heaven**

**46-47 – Daniel did not get the glory… The true and living Lord of all did!**

* **Gods’ gifts in you will make room for you**

**Daniel never pursued his own glory – he never tried to make a name for himself – or promote himself. He stepped up when there was a need!**

**If your good at that gift and God is in it – God will give you a platform and opportunities. (Joseph has similar situation)**

* **God raises up people who raise him up**

**Daniel was willing to put his reputation on the line to honor God – look what happened - Daniel 2:48 Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. 49 Moreover, at Daniel’s request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.**

**If we can just learn to lift him up – and seek his glory.**

**I don’t want to pray, “God fall on us, be lifted up, show your power, change our hearts, draw us close - and let everyone here think I am the coolest pastor ever! Amen. (This cannot be about me or my name)**

**We struggle with our own Babylon – and our own idols. The biggest – self. We build statues in our appearance - that make us look good before others. Ie. if our kids can look good, I look good - if my paycheck, my position, my possessions, my reputation. Look – behold the great TED! We are that statue – that must fall.**

**James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. (lift you up) If we can learn to humble ourselves at his feet – and raise him up – we are put in places of influence.**

**4. There is only one kingdom that will last – The Kingdom of God**

**Daniel 2:31-45 – his kingdom and the ones that follow – all will fall**

**Two questions:**

* **Are you building toward an earthly kingdom or heavenly kingdom?**

**Everything that can be shaken will be shaken. (Hebrew 12:27)**

**This world will pass away and everything in it that is not from God. No matter how precious it is here (the gold, silver, bronze, etc.)**

**Our name, your popularity, your fame, your possessions, your finances, your creations, your accomplishments…**

* **Are your dreams built upon the temporary or the eternal?**

**Neb as great as you are and those that follow you – they will not last.**

**What are you building – will it last? Do you want it to last?**

**5. Not everyone who experiences God and acknowledges God is a follow of God.**

**Daniel 2:46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. 47 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.”**

**Neb praised the true and living God of Heaven – but then we find out he added God to his list of idols. This is the dream God.**

**Not everyone who gets goose bumps, gets a miracle, hears God’s voice, or even gets a prophetic dream – is right with God.**

**Maybe that is you. People tell me how close they are with God – they had a vision or a dream, a miracle – but their hearts are far from Jesus. LORD God does not sit on the throne of their heart.**

**Maybe your like Neb –**

**You shout and acknowledge God – but your heart is far from him.**

**OR - Maybe your being challenged to be like Daniel –**

**To stop self-promoting, honor God, seek his glory, his dream for you, lift Jesus up – and watch what God will do in your life.**

**May our life look to the exalted rock of our salvation – Jesus Christ – who rules even now over all and for all eternity.**

**God come and crush us – crush our kingdoms – our idols – our pursuits. So that – YOU – may be exalted, honored and lifted up for all to see!**