

## Why Are We to Praise God and Not Man?

Daniel 2:19-23; Psalm 115:1

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When God clearly shows His mercy in healing you or a loved one of some terrible affliction, when He mends a broken relationship, or when He brings to pass something for which you have so urgently prayed, you are not only taught by the text before us today to give thanks to the Lord for graciously hearing and answering your prayer, but also to exalt Him and glorify Him for His greatness. Consider these two elements in the healing of the 10 lepers (and the one leper who returned to give thanks to Jesus, Luke 17:15-16).

Why make such a big deal out of this, that we are not only to thank God, but also to bless God and exalt Him? Because this is what we are to be taught in God's Word (Psalm 34:3; Psalm 103:1-2). Blessing God, exalting Him, and magnifying Him is different from merely thanking Him. Thanking the Lord is an expression of gratitude for a benefit received, but praising Him is exalting Him for who He is and what He has done. It is taking a magnifying glass with our thoughts and words to declare His greatness.

In the text before us today, we are taught to be thankful to the Lord for His answered prayer, but we are also taught to declare His greatness as well. The main points from our text are: (1) The King's Dream Revealed (Daniel 2:19); (2) The Wisdom and Might of God Exalted (Daniel 2:20-22); (3) The Thankful Heart of Daniel Expressed (Daniel 2:23).

### I. The King's Dream Revealed (Daniel 2:19).

A. King Nebuchadnezzar dreamt a distressing dream which he apparently was unable to recall (at least as to the specifics of it).

1. He sensed it was significant and summoned the chief wise men in Babylon to come and tell him what he had dreamed and the interpretation of the dream. They confessed that they could not do so (only the "gods" to do so). The king threatened that if they failed to do so they would die an agonizing death. They tried stalling the king, hoping he would change his mind, but he only grew more angry with them.

2. The captain of the guard (Arioch) was sent to arrest all of the wise men of Babylon and to lead them to their executions (among whom were the Hebrew teens: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah).

3. Daniel was completely unaware of the king's decree when Arioch appeared at his door to arrest him, but Daniel responded so wisely to both Arioch and then to the king himself that he was allowed a brief period of time to bring back to the king the dream and its interpretation.

4. We ended last Lord's Day with Daniel and his three friends crying out to the Lord, pleading for His mercy in revealing the king's dream and the meaning of it (Daniel 2:17-18).

B. Now we see that God graciously revealed to Daniel both the dream and its interpretation (Daniel 2:19).

1. The dream and its interpretation came to Daniel "in a night vision". Divine revelation by means of a DREAM came to one while asleep (Daniel 2:1—the king was asleep). Whereas divine revelation by means of a VISION came to one while awake (Peter had a vision at noon on a roof top, Acts 10). So what is a "night vision"? Apparently this revelatory vision came while Daniel was awake at night and while he and his friends were praying through the night. Daniel did not "wing it" because he was gifted by God (Daniel 1:17). He prayed through the night. Don't rely on your strengths/gifts/training/education to carry you though. Lean upon Jesus ESPECIALLY when you are gifted (Proverbs 3:5-6).

2. What rejoicing must have overwhelmed Daniel and his friends at that moment! What

Nebuchadnezzar had seen in a dream, Daniel had seen in a vision, so that Daniel could tell the king precisely what he had seen in his dream with the interpretation.

a. Reflect back on those occasions when God has so clearly supplied what you sought from Him (whether a job/work, healing from an affliction, wisdom in having the right words to say at the right time, financial help, reconciliation in a relationship, taking away some fear). Remember the jubilation and joy that overcame you? You were in utter amazement at the goodness of the Lord. That, no doubt, was what overwhelmed Daniel and his friends at that time.

b. Oh, dear ones, don't forget to be overwhelmed at the goodness of God in bestowing His mercy upon you when He provides that for which you have sought from Him. There will be plenty of time and occasions in which to mourn in life, but take the time to celebrate and to remember God's goodness (Ecclesiastes 3:1,4). The Lord uses those times of joy to help us through the painful times. Daniel blessed the Lord as an expression of his great joy for God's goodness.

## II. The Wisdom and Might of God Exalted (Daniel 2:20-22).

A. Even before expressing his thanksgiving to the Lord for mercifully hearing and granting his request to know the king's dream and the interpretation of it (Daniel 2:23), Daniel first blesses, exalts, and magnifies "the name of God for ever and ever" (Daniel 2:20). This is also true in the Lord's Prayer. Daniel's prayer is just another example from which we learn how to pray unto our glorious God.

1. Praising God is not optional, nor is it a suggestion, but is rather a loving duty (Psalm 29:2; Psalm 115:1).

2. It would exhibit sinful pride in us to call people to glorify us, to magnify us, to exalt us. Why is it not pride on God's part to do so?

a. First, for us who are sinful creatures to do so is to take credit for what God has accomplished and brought to pass by His sovereign wisdom and sovereign power (whatever it may be by way of benefit—even if we have worked ever so diligently in prayer and tireless effort to bring about a certain blessing—it is God that has done it through His own appointed means, Romans 11:36). The Creator, Provider, and Savior deserves all glory and praise—not the recipients of those benefits.

b. Second, "there is none that doeth good, no, not one (Romans 3:12). However, our God alone is perfectly good in who He is and in all that He does (Psalm 25:8; Genesis 1:31; Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28). All that He brings to pass is good in glorifying either His justice or His grace. He who is the source and fount of all goodness is to be praised—not those who benefit from His goodness. Being perfectly good in who He is and all that He does, it is the highest good to glorify Him and to enjoy Him forever.

c. Third, we are ignorant in our limited knowledge and foolish in the use of the knowledge that we have. How many bad decisions have we all made? Too many to count, right? And yet our God has never made a bad decision or ever been unwise in what He has ordained. He knows everything and is absolutely wise in who He is and in all that He does (Colossians 2:3). Thus, at least for those reasons, it is God that is alone to be exalted, magnified, and glorified—not any creature.

B. Daniel said, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever" (Daniel 2:20). The name of God is not simply GOD, but is all the ways in which He reveals who He is and what He had done. To take God's name in vain is not simply to profane God's name (GOD), but is to treat anything by which He makes Himself known as common (creation, providence, salvation, His Word, and His works). The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Questions 4 and 11) is very helpful at this point in giving us an aid to praise and magnify who God is and what He has done.

C. There are two attributes of God that are especially praised and exalted by Daniel: God's might (power) and God's wisdom.

1. Daniel exalts God’s might, for it is unlimited—He can do all His holy will. No creature can hold back the hand of God (Daniel 4:35).

a. God’s absolute power governs at all times and in all seasons (in all events and circumstances—great and small—world events and your personal events, Daniel 2:21a). Daniel is praising the power of God in this instance for so ordering all the events that have brought him to this place (including being taken into captivity, passing through the test in Daniel 1, and now threatened with death, but seeing the hand of God in it, Genesis 50:20). Will we praise God for all that He has ordained in our life (both good and evil)? Will we submit ourselves to the Lordship of Christ in all areas of our lives? There is no other way to find true peace than to humble ourselves under His loving and mighty hand. I know from personal experience. Fighting against God is a losing battle. Let us humble ourselves under His mighty hand.

b. God’s absolute power governs all people, even the mightiest, richest, and most powerful (Daniel 2:21b). God laughs at the foolishness of rulers and people who think they can dethrone Christ and His sovereign rule (Psalm 2:1-5; Proverbs 21:1). If those who are the most powerful on the earth are under Christ’s sovereign power, then so are we and so are all events. Our fears and worries arise from not remembering and not trusting in God’s absolute and almighty power and His unchangeable love for us, His beloved children. Praising the Lord for His absolute power daily will grow courage and overcome fear. The more we rest in His might, the less we will be given over to worry/anxiety. The more we see our weakness, the more we will rest in His might.

2. Daniel exalts God’s wisdom and knowledge (Daniel 2:21-22). Wisdom is the application of God’s knowledge/truth revealed in nature and Scripture.

a. God’s perfect wisdom presupposes God’s absolute knowledge. For if there is no true knowledge, there can be no application of true knowledge by way of wisdom. God revealed His knowledge of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream to Daniel (God knows all things). God had revealed His wisdom in giving the interpretation of the dream to Daniel (the application of that knowledge). That which was a dark and hidden secret, God made known by the light of His unsearchable knowledge.

b. Dear ones, let us understand that our rebellion against God’s knowledge/truth in His Word is either saying, “I know more/better than God”, or “I would rather do my will rather than God’s will.” In either case, it is utter foolishness on our parts. We are choosing misery/destruction over blessing/life.

c. God’s wisdom in facing trials, controversies, tyranny, broken relationships, and seemingly impossible situations is ours in Christ, if we earnestly seek it in faith (James 1:5-7). God’s wisdom does not just fall from heaven into our minds, but comes through Christ and the means He has appointed:

(1) Since all wisdom and knowledge is hidden in Christ (Colossians 2:3), let us never think we can obtain wisdom apart from Jesus. He is our wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:24). Thus, wisdom comes from knowing and communing with Jesus Christ. Familiarity with Christ breeds knowledge and wisdom. Distance from Christ breeds foolishness.

(2) Wisdom comes through the fear of the Lord—reverence for the Lord, holding Him in awe and wonder, taking Him seriously in His promises and in His warnings. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all true knowledge (Proverbs 1:7). Likewise, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all true wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).

(3) Wisdom comes through learning Christ’s will in His Word—reading, studying, meditating, and memorizing it (Isaiah 8:20).

(4) Wisdom comes through walking with the wise (Proverbs 13:20). Who you choose to spend your time with, what you watch, what you listen to says much about whether you truly desire to be wise. Listen carefully to those who are older and wiser (by way of knowledge of God’s Word and experience) rather than having to learn through your pain.

### III. The Thankful Heart of Daniel Expressed (Daniel 2:23).

A. Now we finally read that Daniel thanked the Lord for revealing to him the king's dream and the interpretation of it. A thankful heart is a contented heart. It is hard to be thankful and yet to be discontent, for one is searching out all the ways that the Lord has blessed him/her.

B. Again, this is not an option, but a loving duty (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Giving thanks to God not only when God gives us that for which we ask, but especially learning to be thankful when He does not do so or when He delays in His response. God will always answers the prayers of His children: "Yes!", "No!" or "Wait!" It is always for our good. He cannot as our loving good Father give to us what is evil. How hard it is to have the Lord to close a door entirely that we greatly desired or to have the Lord to prolong the delay for that which we have prayed so much. That is so hard, humanly speaking. A thankful heart in all things comes from trusting in God's love for us, God's power to uphold us, and God's wisdom in always doing what is good and best for us. When we can rest in God's love, power, wisdom, and goodness, we will learn to be thankful and content in all circumstances.

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