

Daniel 2

Aim of lesson

To show that God gives wisdom to men of faith in answer to their prayers, and that God knows the future.

Background study

Ensure that you are familiar with the image, and be prepared to answer likely questions on the names and duration of the kingdoms.

Suggested outline of lesson

Introduce the story by describing the kind of king Nebuchadnezzar was, namely, the most powerful ruler in the world at that time. His servants were well aware that if they offended him or failed to respond to his wishes their very lives were in danger. Having established the relationship of the king with his subjects, try to convey to the children the feelings of fear, tension and anger the people would have experienced.

The King's dream

The action begins with Nebuchadnezzar's unreasonable demand to be told the dream, which he himself could not remember (or could he? - was he just pretending?). Discuss with the children how sometimes we know we have been dreaming, even though we cannot recall what the dream was about. On this occasion the king was strongly aware that his dream held some significance, and so he was anxious to be reminded what it was about in order to learn the meaning of it. It is possible, of course, that he had not really forgotten the dream, but was testing his wise men to see if they really had the power to interpret it.

Where is the wise man?

The wise men whom Nebuchadnezzar summoned approached him with flattering words, confidently preparing themselves to offer an interpretation of the dream, but their complacency soon turned to nervous uncertainty and then to desperation. The king was consumed with anger. These men were supposed to be the cleverest in the land, possessed of special gifts of understanding, yet his demand was too much for them. In his frustration he sentenced them all to death.

Daniel

Although Daniel had not been present in the court, he was one of the "wise men" and thus included in the death sentence. But he did not share the hopelessness of the Babylonian scholars when hearing the news. He knew that what seemed impossible to men was not impossible with God. He had only to ask God, in faith, for true wisdom. The prayers of his friends were needed also. In response to God's answer to his prayer, Daniel praised the Lord. Verses 20-23 could be read aloud effectively in class. In these words of praise,

Daniel revealed his awareness of God's supreme power over all human beings, including kings, and expressed his gratitude for the gift of wisdom.

And I will show the king the interpretation

It would appear that the revelation came just in time to enable Daniel to prevent the executions. He was rushed to the king who was still wholly preoccupied with the dream, and ready to honour the one who could solve the mystery. This was not what Daniel sought. His manner was calm and humble. He took no credit or acclaim for himself, but showed himself to be the servant of the living God, who alone could reveal secrets.

Discuss in general terms the fulfilment of the prophecy. It may be hard for them to imagine the long time periods involved. The important thing is to establish in their minds the overall lesson that the rule of men on earth, after a long and varied history, will be superseded by God's kingdom on earth and the kingship of Jesus Christ.

Nebuchadnezzar was impressed by Daniel's interpretation of the dream. He was filled with awe in the presence of such wisdom, and felt impelled to acknowledge that Daniel's was the true God. He even bowed himself down to honour the power that was so much greater than his own. The executions were stayed, and Daniel and his friends were promoted to positions of honour.

Worksheets

The solution to the code is: 'Because Daniel could interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the king said to Daniel "Your God is a God of Gods and a Lord of Kings and a revealer of secrets".'

Prayer

Dear Lord God, we praise you, as Daniel did, for your wisdom and might. We are glad that you have power over all the world. Amen.

Memory verse

"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44).

Relevance to the children's lives

With God's help, Daniel could forecast future events; he was God's prophet. He was aware that God knows all that has been, and all that will be. Because God is all-knowing, we can rely on him and be sure that everything he promises and foretells will come true. What is it that those who believe God's promises are really looking forward to?