

WHEN THE BOTTOM DROPS OUT

(Daniel 2)

I have a feeling that if I asked you to share a story about a time in your life when you were bringing groceries in from your car, or were taking a bag of lawn fertilizer or dog food out of your trunk---I have a feeling that all of us in one way or another have experienced the inconvenient and exasperating experience of the grocery bag ripping and food going all over the place or bits of dog food or lawn fertilizer going all over the driveway. It is circumstances like these that cause us to know exactly what someone means when they say to us: “the bottom dropped out.” What they mean is that things were going well, and all of the sudden, things are horrible!!!

What do you do when the bottom drops out? Well, if it’s just 40 pounds of dog food on the driveway, you get a broom and dustpan and put it in a different container. But what do you do when the bottom falls out of your life—your career, your finances, your health? What do you do when—many times out of the blue—things just go horribly wrong?

Though we don't like to think about it, we all know the unthinkable can happen. Believers are not insulated from life’s crises; the bottom can drop out for us, too. We live in a fallen world and, like everyone else, may face debilitating disappointment and disaster.

In our text in Daniel 2 this morning, one day, out of the blue, the bottom drops out for Daniel. Chapter 1 ends with Daniel being recognized by King Nebuchadnezzar as 10X better than all the other wise men in his entire empire. But now in chapter 2, he learns that the king is going to execute all of the wise men—including him. What did Daniel do when the bottom dropped out for him? That’s what I would like to talk to you about for a few minutes before we share the Lord’s Supper this morning.

Title: When the Bottom Drops Out

(Prayer)

The 1965 song entitled, “California Dreamin’” by the Mama and the Papas was written by John and Michelle Phillips (who were members of the band). When they were living in New York in 1963, the winter that year was bitterly cold and Michelle Phillips told her husband how much she was missing the sunny warmth of California and dreamed of being there. He wrote the first verse of that song and gave it to her:

All the leaves are brown
And the sky is grey
I've been for a walk

On a winter's day
 I'd be safe and warm
 If I was in L.A.
 California dreamin'
 On such a winter's day

Now, when you turn to Daniel 2, there is **another kind of dreamin' going on**, but it's not California dreamin'. The dreaming in Daniel 2 is by the king of Babylon named Nebuchadnezzar. And it is not about sun or safety, but about a gigantic statue that gives Nebuchadnezzar the heebie-jeebies.

First, we see that...

1. The king has a dream and wants to understand what it means (2:1-3)

Daniel 2:3-----And the king said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream."

In the first verse of this chapter, we are told that Nebuchadnezzar is "troubled" (2:1). In his dream he sees a gigantic statue being "ground to powder" and apparently thinks it means something bad was going to happen to him (like military defeat or his assassination). So he commands his wise men to help him know what this all means.

The king is putting his wise men to the test. He not only wants them to tell him **the dream** but **what it means** as well. (If he tells them the dream, he won't be able to be certain that the interpretation they give him is correct.) But if they can tell him the content of his dream, he will know their interpretation is correct. Unfortunately for them, when they tell him that **no one** can reveal dreams, Nebuchadnezzar blows his top.

2. The king's wise men can't tell the king what his dream was about, so the king angrily commands them to be put to death, including Daniel and his friends (2:4-13).

Daniel 2:12-----For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave the command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

Well now this is a life and death situation for Daniel because he and his friends are wise men and will be executed. The bottom has dropped out.

3. To prevent his unjust execution, Daniel wisely questions the captain of the king's guard and then asks the king himself for the time he needs to obtain the interpretation, which he seeks from God through prayer (2:14-17).

Daniel 2:17-18-----Then Daniel went to his house...and...his companions, ¹⁸ that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise *men* of Babylon.

Apparently, Daniel couldn't give the interpretations of dreams apart from seeking God for them. Otherwise, he could have immediately given the king what he wanted. So Daniel and his friends seek God in prayer. Their life depends on it! They probably prayed all night until God gave Daniel the vision and interpretation.

4. In answer to prayer, God reveals the king's dream to Daniel in a night vision which causes him to thank and praise God for His wisdom, might, sovereignty, and revelation (2:18-23).

Daniel 2:20, 22-----Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His ... ²² He reveals deep and secret things...

In vv. 20 through 23, Daniel lifts up the most beautiful prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God you might find in the Bible. He is so thankful that God, in His mercies, gave him what he needed to spare him and his friends from being killed by the king's executioners.

5. Daniel tells the king that his God is the one who has done what was humanly impossible—revealed the dream and its interpretation concerning future events on earth (2:24-49).

Daniel 2:28-----...there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days...

Not only does the king spare Daniel's life, but he makes him second in command over his entire empire!

Application

When the bottom dropped out for Daniel on the day he heard that all of Babylon's wise men would be put to death, what did Daniel do? And what should we do when we suddenly find ourselves facing some kind of tragedy or disaster?

1. We should pray to the God who loves us

Daniel is amazing. He may still be a teenager. And when things go south, he doesn't try to flee the country, he prays! When the bottom drops out, do you complain, do you become full of fear, or do you cry out to God? It was Old Testament scholar Stephen Miller who wrote:

Although circumstances sometimes may look impossible from an earthly standpoint, there is a God in heaven who can do all things. He can solve

*seemingly insoluble problems, supply needs, and provide strength for impossible tasks.*¹

2. We should praise the God who alone can help us

It is so easy to forget God, even when He comes through for us in an amazing way. We need to learn to be grateful.

Story about a Christian man upset about car's keyless entry repair bill. The day he was told to pick up his car, April 16, 2007, a gunman killed 32 people at Virginia Tech. When he got to the repair shop, he was upset about how much his repair bill was. The woman at the counter said to him: *"I'm getting off work in five minutes, and do you know what I'm going to do?"* The man shook his head. She said: *"I'm going to go home and hug my little boy."*

3. We should proclaim the God who controls all that concerns us

When Daniel got an answer from God about the content of the king's dream and its meaning, he gave God all the credit. He made sure the king understood that it was it was God and not him who deserved the praise and thanks.

Lord's Supper

¹ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, vol. 18, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 89.