

Bible Study – Daniel

Week 3 – Chapter 2, Part 1

I. Daniel 2:1

In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed such dreams that his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.

- a. Daniel was the only one defined as having the gift of understanding visions and dreams. (Dan 1:17)
- b. "In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar..." This is not Jewish time reckoning. By Babylonian time; it was the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. The first year of a ruler's reign is counted as his ascension year. The ascension year is still attributed to the last reigning year of the former King. The first full year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign would then be the first official year of the King's reign.
- c. The training of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah was most likely completed by the time the events of verse Dan 2:1 took place. They were approved as wise men, though were probably still at an apprentice level.

Years of Training	Year of King's Reign	Date
First	Accession year	From Sept. 605 (the time Nebuchadnezzar assumed throne) to Nisan (Mar.–Apr.) 604 B.C. ¹
Second	First year	Nisan 604–603 B.C.
Third	Second year	Nisan 603–602 B.C.

- d. Why does God reveal prophecy through a pagan King?
 - a. All of Israel was in rebellion against the Lord and God had given them up to the Gentiles.

¹ Stephen R. Miller, vol. 18, *Daniel*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 76.

- b. The “times of the Gentiles” as mentioned in Luke 21:24, begins with the captivity of Judah to the Babylonians and will last throughout most of Revelation (Rev 20:1-6 when Israel is restored).
- c. The prophecy is about the time of the Gentiles.
- d. This allowed God to establish Daniel as a reliable wise man and place him into a position of power.
- e. This event is very similar to what Joseph experience with Pharaoh.
 - a. Pharaoh had dreams about the future. Though the dreams did tell the future, it was only 14 years. (Genesis 41)
 - b. Joseph was able to reveal to Pharaoh the interpretation of the dream through the power of God.
 - c. Joseph was put in charge of all of Egypt, only answerable to the Pharaoh.
- f. “His spirit was troubled and his sleep left him”
 - a. Babylonians thought that the gods communicated through dreams.
 - b. Though he didn’t understand the dream, he knew that it was extremely important.
 - c. He was likely afraid that the dream contained a message for him and was frightened to the point of not being able to sleep.
 - i. “His spirit was troubled” could also be interpreted as “His spirit was struck”. This comes from the root word *pā’am*, meaning “to strike with a hammer on an anvil”. This dream severely affected the King.

II. Daniel 2:2-3

So the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. When they came in and stood before the king, ³ he said to them, “I have had such a dream that my spirit is troubled by the desire to understand it.”

- a. He called all his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and Chaldeans.
 - i. Magicians were scholars
 - ii. Enchanters and Sorcerers were workers of black magic and mediums
 - iii. Chaldeans were the wisest people, and likely astrologers
 - 1. These men studied the stars in order to predict the future.
 - 2. The Chaldeans were strong in science. In fact, in 500BC, Naburimannu was able to calculate the length of the year at 365 days, 6 hours, 15 minutes, 41 seconds—only 26 minutes and 55 seconds too long.²

² Miller, 79.

- b. These men were supposed to be good at interpreting dreams. They had written books on how to interpret dreams. By studying many people's dreams, along with follow up dreams, and plotting the course of each person's life, they believed they had developed a roadmap for dream interpretation. If they knew what the dream was, they could compare it with their volumes of books, and give the King an interpretation. This was obviously a highly inaccurate process.
- c. Did the King forget his dream?
 - i. Some commentaries indicate that the King forgot his dream and only remembered the terror. Could God have done this?
 - ii. Daniel 2:7 would indicate that the wise men at least thought that the King did remember the dream, but was just withholding it from them.
- d. Regardless whether the King forgot his dream or not, why did he ask his wise men to tell him his dream and then give him the interpretation?
 - i. The King might not have believed his wise men actually had the ability to interpret dreams and wanted to expose them as frauds.

III. Daniel 2:4-6

The Chaldeans said to the king (in Aramaic), "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will reveal the interpretation." ⁵ The king answered the Chaldeans, "This is a public decree: if you do not tell me both the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins.

- a. What does it mean "in Aramaic"?
 - i. This is probably just a notation in the text indicating that the rest of the chapter was written in Aramaic, not Hebrew. The normal language of the time was Akkadian, so there would be no reason to speak in Aramaic.
- b. Because they had no way to discern the King's dream without him telling them what it was, the wise men asked the king to just tell them the dream and they could give him an interpretation.
- c. "This is a public decree"
 - i. The King James has this listed as "The thing is gone from me". Some commentaries feel that this is an expression reinforcing the idea that the King forgot his dream.
 - ii. Other interpretations indicate that the King's mind was made up in his decision as to what would happen should the wise men not be able to interpret his dream
 - 1. New Revised Standard, "The command from me is firm"
 - 2. English Standard Version, "The word from me is firm"
 - 3. New International, "This is what I have firmly decided"

- iii. It is important to reference many different translations of the Bible when attempting to determine the meaning of a phrase or when developing a doctrine as some older idioms are misunderstood in today's context.
 - 1. Example, "Raining Cats and Dogs"
- d. "Your houses shall be laid to ruins"
 - i. This is interpreted by other translations as Rubbish Heap, Ash heap, Dunghill, and piles of rubble
 - ii. The King James' translation of "Dunghill" was exactly that. It was common practice when disgracing someone in this fashion, for the house to be destroyed and the associated property to be made into a public outhouse area. Literally, a dunghill.
 - iii. Verse 5 definitely gives the impression that if the wise men were not able to give the appropriate interpretation, they would be killed and their houses would be destroyed.
- e. In verse 6, the King promises a great reward for the wise men if they are able to tell him his dream and its interpretation. This sets up a platform for God to elevate Daniel in the King's eyes.

IV. Daniel 2:7-8

They answered a second time, "Let the king first tell his servants the dream, then we can give its interpretation." ⁸ The king answered, "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see I have firmly decreed:

- a. The wise men again petitioned the King to tell them his dream. They could not attempt to reference his dream in their manuals if he did not divulge it.
 - i. This is possibly a good proof that Satan and his demons cannot read minds. If they could, likely these wise men would have had experiences where, through their dark magic, the mind of individuals had been revealed to them.
 - ii. Can God read minds?
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 3:19-20
 - 2. Romans 8:26-27
 - 3. Matthew 9:1-8
 - 4. Matthew 12:22-27
- b. Why were the wise men trying to "gain time"?
 - i. The King had just told them that if they could not answer him that he would have kill them all. The wise men were pleading for time in hope that the king's anger would subside and they wouldn't be punished.

V. Daniel 2:9

if you do not tell me the dream, there is but one verdict for you. You have agreed to speak lying and misleading words to me until things take a turn. Therefore, tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation.”

- a. The King reiterated the punishment for failure to correctly interpret his dream.
- b. The King also discerned that his wise men were willing to lie to him to buy time until he calmed down.
- c. The King was likely upset because his wise men, who were supposed to be in communion with the gods, obviously were not since they could not tell him his dream, which he thought the gods had sent him.
- d. Another possibility is that he may have felt as though he was being subverted and that his rule was being challenged. Coups were often orchestrated by either the military or the court.³

VI. Daniel 2:10-11

The Chaldeans answered the king, “There is no one on earth who can reveal what the king demands! In fact no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. ¹¹ The thing that the king is asking is too difficult, and no one can reveal it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with mortals.”

- a. The Chaldeans were correct; no one on earth could possibly reveal what the dream was. The only person who could reveal that information was God.
- b. The Chaldeans went further and told the King that not even the most powerful Kings that came before him ever asked wise men such questions. In effect, they were telling the King that since no one else had done this before, he had no right to ask this of him.
 - i. How do you think Nebuchadnezzar would respond to being told he couldn’t do something by one of his servants?
- c. The Chaldeans opened the way for God to display his power through Daniel. Through their constant pleadings that only a god could know such things, they not only exposed themselves as being people who didn’t communicate with the gods, but elevated Daniel when he was able to discern the dream.

³ Miller, 82.

VII. Daniel 2:12-15

Because of this the king flew into a violent rage and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. ¹³ The decree was issued, and the wise men were about to be executed; and they looked for Daniel and his companions, to execute them. ¹⁴ Then Daniel responded with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the king's chief executioner, who had gone out to execute the wise men of Babylon; ¹⁵ he asked Arioch, the royal official, "Why is the decree of the king so urgent?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel.

- a. The King obviously didn't like being told what he could or could not do, so he ordered all the wise men killed. Since they had exposed themselves as frauds and liars, they deserved death in his eyes.
- b. Likely, the wise men were not being killed one by one, but they were being gathered up for a mass execution.
- c. Daniel and his friends were not present at the initial meeting with the King. This could be because they were newly appointed, possibly still apprentices, and did not have the honor of appearing before the King.
- d. Arioch was the King's chief executioner.
 - i. What do you think the character of Arioch was? Do you believe he was naturally a friendly person?
- e. Despite the King's order to gather Daniel and his friends to be executed, Arioch instead took the time to explain what was going on to Daniel.
 - i. Proverbs 16:7

VIII. Daniel 2:16

So Daniel went in and requested that the king give him time and he would tell the king the interpretation.

- a. The King had ordered the execution of all the wise men, but Daniel went before the King so he could talk to talk.
 - i. Why would Daniel risk appearing before Nebuchadnezzar when he knew that the King had just ordered his death?
- b. Daniel asked for some time and he would tell the King the interpretation he was looking for.
 - i. Didn't the other wise men ask for time? What is the difference here?

IX. Daniel 2:17-19

Then Daniel went to his home and informed his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,¹⁸ and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions with the rest of the wise men of Babylon might not perish.¹⁹ Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night, and Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

- a. We know from Daniel 1:17 that Daniel had the gift of understanding dreams and visions. Yet he didn't rely on himself in attempting to figure out the dream. He went straight back to his home and told his friends that they needed to pray in order that God may reveal the mystery.
- b. The King's dream and its meaning were revealed to Daniel in a dream.

X. Daniel 2: 20-23

Daniel said:

"Blessed be the name of God from age to age,
for wisdom and power are his.

²¹ He changes times and seasons,
deposes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding.

²² He reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what is in the darkness,
and light dwells with him.

²³ To you, O God of my ancestors,
I give thanks and praise,
for you have given me wisdom and power,
and have now revealed to me what we asked of you,
for you have revealed to us what the king ordered."

- a. Daniel gives thanks to God for revealing the mystery of the King's dream. He does this by praying and giving worship to God.
- b. Daniel gives us a good model for how to pray. This model is mirrored in Matthew 6:5-15

XI. What is the Pattern for Prayer that the Bible establishes?

- a. What is your Character before God?
 - i. Matthew 6:5 warns not to pray like a hypocrite. It says not to pray in public so that you may be seen by men. Should we only pray in private then?

1. There is no prohibition on praying in public, so long as your motives are right. If you are only praying so that men can see how righteous you are, the Bible says that you have already received your reward. The Bible indicates that by praying in private, the only reason for praying would be for communion with God, which is the proper motive.
 2. Pray humbly, without pride, like the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14.
- b. Do not use repetitious prayers.
 - i. This indicates that you shouldn't repeat the same written prayer over and over, like the heathens may use an incantation. Prayer is about expressing a need to God.
 - ii. This does not mean that you should only express your needs to God only once. Clearly, Jesus spoke about constant petitioning in Luke 18:1-6 and Luke 11:5-9.
 - c. Acknowledge God for who He is and give him praise.
 - i. "Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name"
 - d. Submission to the Will of God
 - i. "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done"
 - e. Prayer for forgiveness of violating God's law
 - i. "Forgive us our Debts"
 - f. Forgive others who have done you wrong.
 - i. "As we forgive our debtors"
 1. A warning is given that if you don't forgive others, your sins will not be forgiven
 - g. Prayer to avoid temptation and sin.
 - i. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"
 - h. End your prayer with praise to God and again acknowledge his power.
 - i. "For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory forever"
 - i. Whatever you ask, ask in the name of name of Jesus – John 14:13.
 - i. This does not mean that you should tack on "in Jesus' name" to every prayer. Rather this means that you should pray in accordance to the will of Jesus. A prayer shouldn't be for selfish purposes, but to further His Kingdom and Glory.
 - ii. Instead, think of, "because it is in accordance with the will of Jesus"
 - j. Pray Continually – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17
 - i. This means that we should pray regularly, always giving God acknowledgement and thanks for the things in our life. This does not mean that we should always walk around, with our eyes closed, mumbling a prayer.