

Daniel Ch 2:1-23

"Staying Calm In Crisis"

There is a sudden & serious change in the atmosphere of Daniel Ch 2. Ch 1 closes on a note of security & recognition. Ch 2 opens on a note of insecurity & rejection! The reason? A dream...

How many of you regularly remember your dreams? Evidently, everyone dreams, but equally obvious is the fact that not everyone *remembers* their dreams. It's not uncommon at all for me to have action packed, almost superhero kind of dreams, now & then I might be flying, or breathing under water. Sometimes I have dramatic dreams of tornadic activity, or nightmares of forgetting my bible study ☺.

My wife on the other hand has dreams about going to Walmart... Perhaps shopping or something that's a boring chore ☺. But what is a dream? What's the point of a dream? No one really knows. Someone once said that a dream was like a relief valve on the pressure cooker of the mind...

But there are times that dreams have been significant. God spoke to Jacob in a dream (Gen 28:10-15). He spoke to Joseph in a couple of dreams (Gen 37:5-10), He communicated to Pharaoh through a couple of dreams (Gen 41:1-7). He encouraged Joseph (the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus) through a dream (Matt 1:20) & even ministered to the Magi not to return to Herod when they were seeking the Christ child, through a dream (Matt 2:12).

Today, in Daniel Ch 2, Nebuchadnezzar has a dream... & it disturbs him. He can sense something about it that ensures him that it's more than too much garlic in his salsa, it's significant.

Vs 1

3 Things here. #1 We note that it says this happened in the 2nd yr of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Yet we learned last time that Daniel didn't graduate B.U. (The University of Babylon) until 3 yrs of study & Ch 1 ends w/him being recognized Summa Cum Laude, graduating w/the highest possible honors above & beyond the rest of his class. So how do these dots connect?

Let's remind ourselves of our very 1st study in the book of Daniel where we learned that Babylonian rulers didn't reckon the year of ascension as an acknowledged yr of their reign. So this could be in the 2nd *full* year of his reign but in the 3rd *calendar* yr of his reign. It seems to me that this dream hit Nebuchadnezzar pretty much on the heels of Daniel's graduation. God has his man in position, now it's time to push things forward.

#2 We read here that Nebuchadnezzar “had dreams”, but don’t envision several different dreams, but more of the same dream again & again. He had a recurring dream. The reason we know that is because (spoiler alert) when Daniel seeks the interpretation God only reveals one dream & Nebuchadnezzar will acknowledge the accuracy & legitimacy of everything Daniel brings to him.

If it were more than one dream Nebuchadnezzar would’ve said, “Well, that’s great regarding one of them, but what about the rest?” He didn’t do that.

The 3rd thing is that Nebuchadnezzar is beginning to realize that “heavy is the head that wears the crown.” He’s discovering the burdens of the kingdom, the far-reaching consequences of his decisions & he’s wondering what’s going to happen to all this when he’s gone (again we know this because of the way the Ch unfolds [we’ll see it next time]).

Solomon went through a similar frame of mind. We read in the book of Ecclesiastes (when he was probing the depths of the temporary nature of life & how everything seemed to be in vain) where he wrote, *“Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity. Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun.”¹*

I don’t know if it’s true (but it’s probably pretty close), I read that psychologists will tell us that 90% of a person’s free mental time (time you haven’t devoted to some specific activity) is spent wondering about the past or worrying about the future. Be that the case Nebuchadnezzar was no exception. There he is laying on his bed at night & he’s thinking about his kingdom, where it’s been, where it’s going, what’s going to happen when he’s gone... how everything is going to end, & he falls asleep.

Evidently; he dreamt, woke up, fell back asleep dreamt the same thing, & this happened again & again & it was so disturbing that eventually it kept him up thinking about it, he was troubled by it. There was something spiritual about it, something unusually significant. But he couldn’t put his finger on it, he didn’t know what it was about.

Vs 2-9

“Houston, we have a Problem!” I made mention to you a week or 2 ago how that ancient kings were notoriously cruel (& could be radically temperamental) in the way they handled those whom they seen as set against them.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ec 2:18–20]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Here we're getting just a glimpse of that kind of resolve in Nebuchadnezzar. Now we don't know what time it is here, but it could easily be 3, 4, 5 o'clock in the morning! The king couldn't sleep so he calls his cabinet into the boardroom or oval office; he has questions & he's demanding answers!

& Don't be deceived by their description, these were men w/the highest education &/or most revered for their wisdom in all of Babylon. They were the brains of Babylon. When you read in Vs 2 of magicians, astrologers, sorcerers & Chaldeans, these were guys whom the king looked to for insight because they were supposed to be connected to the gods. They were fortune tellers, star gazers, mediums, men of renowned wisdom. They all foretold the future through different means (all of which was ultimately Satanic) & so the king required them all at his disposal. (Kind of like the wise-men, magicians & sorcerers of Egypt when Moses stood before Pharaoh, they weren't sleight of hand kind of guys, they were deep into occult type practices).

But the king is reasoning that if one can't help him, perhaps the other can, so he calls them all. Perhaps collectively they could exercise their various enchantments & give the king an interpretation that would satisfy or pacify his anxiety.

Now as I said earlier, there are times throughout history that God has used dreams to minister to, or direct people in significant ways. When Pharaoh was the most powerful world ruler, God gave him a couple of dreams & Joseph interpreted them for him... Here, Nebuchadnezzar has become the most powerful ruler on the earth & God is going to show him how history wraps up & winds down & Daniel is going to lay it out for him.

I suppose this is as good of a time as any to address a question that people often wonder & that is, "Does God still direct people through dreams today?" Let me just say that He certainly *can*. God spoke through the prophet Joel (in regard to the last days) saying, *"And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions."*² So it's certainly possible that God could give you a dream that has some kind of significance (of course it may also indicate that you're old ☺).

However, I should also issue a word of caution about placing too much credence or confidence in a dream. God has also warned us regarding placing stock in a dream when we have His word. We read in the book of Jeremiah,

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Joe 2:28]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

"The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the Lord. 'Is not My word like a fire?' says the Lord, 'And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?'"³ In other words, compared to the wheat of God's word, the chaff of a dream is worthless. The wheat is filling, it's nurturing, it's solid substance. The idea is that we need to be paying attention to the Word of God rather than looking for revelation in a dream.

God has given you His Holy Spirit, He's given you the revelation of His written unchanging word. So though He *can* use dreams, His primary approach to guiding us is through His word by the power of His Holy Spirit.

Now, when Nebuchadnezzar says, "my spirit is anxious to know the dream" he's not saying that he forgot it. But rather he wants to understand it. If he'd forgotten it they could've made up anything they wanted, but they knew that's not what he was saying. He wanted an interpretation.

So in Vs 4 they're all, "Well, tell us the dream & we'll give you the interpretation." (& We read that they spoke in Aramaic. From this point on through Vs 28 of Ch 7 the book is written in Aramaic. It was the Gentile language of the day & it's a section of scripture that deals w/the age of the Gentiles. Once Israel enters the equation again in Ch 8, the language is in Hebrew...

But we note the problem in Vs 5... The king is all, "No can do. You say you're connected to the gods, you can foresee the future, it's time to prove you're legit." The idea here is that the king realizes that if he tells them the dream they can make up anything they want. "Oh king, your dream means that you reign supreme & that your kingdom will forever prosper." Like calling a psychic hotline or something, it's never bad news.

He's not having that. If they know the dream, he can trust they have a correct interpretation. And if they're truly able to do what they say they can do, then it shouldn't be a problem. (Btw, have you ever wondered why psychics don't play the lottery...☺)

This was an opportunity for them to gain tremendous wealth, power & prestige. He's willing to reward them. He tells them that gifts, rewards & great honor awaits them... But we get the feeling that he's starting to think that the things they've shared w/him in the past was perhaps a bunch of hogwash...

Let's not forget that he's a pagan king & he was accustomed to pagan means of gaining insight into the future.

³ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Je 23:28-29]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God told Ezekiel, *"For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver."*⁴ But at this point he's not feeling super confident in what these guys have been bringing to the table.

So he says, "Tell me the dream, give me the interpretation; riches & honor are yours. Fail, & you're all dead." More specifically, you'll be cut in pieces & your house will be burned to the ground...

When he says they'll be cut in pieces the idea is one of dismemberment. They would bend 4 trees inward & tie them together at the top. The victim would be tied to the trees w/a rope at each arm/leg. Then the rope at the top would be cut & the body torn into 4 pieces. The word "cut" isn't in the text. It's literally, "You shall be made into limbs." So it's quite literally "do or die" time!

So they start stalling, "Tell us the dream & we'll tell you the interpretation." In Vs 8 the king is like, "I know you're trying to stall, but you're out of time. If you don't make known to me both the dream & it's interpretation than it's obvious to me that you've been ok w/lying to me & deceiving me since I took office!" **He's saying that if they can't tell him now, than they've never been able to tell him, they've just made stuff up when he's called them w/questions regarding which direction to take, about the future or whatever.**

Vs 10-11

"King, if you'll just be rational about this... There's a reason that no one has asked this of anyone before, it's because it can't be done! There's not a person on the planet who could give you what you're asking for! This is something only a god could do & ... they aren't in the business of hanging out w/men." Their argument wasn't that they were incompetent, but that he was unreasonable...

& Just like that the stage is set for Daniel to exalt the true & living God... Btw, it's a bit of a veiled reference, but they say that God's not into dwelling w/flesh. The fact of the matter is that, that's exactly what God would do. J.C. (Immanuel) "God w/us". The brightness of His glory, the express image of His Person. God in human flesh, sacrificing Himself for the sin of the world... They're saying, "The gods don't really like us that much, they don't condescend to meet w/us." The exact opposite is true, God loves you, He meets you right where you are, abides w/you & in you through the power of His Spirit in the Person of J.C.

⁴ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Eze 21:21]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But they were right about one thing. No man has it in him to supply what he requested. God alone searches the heart, tests the mind & knows the future. In the book of Isaiah He declares the futility of idolatry & seeking after any other “god” besides Him. Knowing the future is His case in point. We read, *“Present your case,” says the Lord. ‘Bring forth your strong reasons,’ says the King of Jacob. ‘Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, That we may consider them, And know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, That we may know that you are gods; Yes, do good or do evil, That we may be dismayed and see it together. Indeed you are nothing, And your work is nothing; He who chooses you is an abomination.’”*⁵ Is there legitimate power in occultism? Absolutely, but it’s limited to the restraints God has placed upon it. Only God is infinite in power & might, able to tell the end from the beginning.

Vs 12-13

He’s justifiably angry, feels like he’s been being scammed by these guys... Now his decision seems a bit extreme, but nonetheless he had no need for wise men who couldn’t bring him wisdom from God.

& When they were shown to be phonies (as far as he’s concerned) he was furious & gave the command to destroy them all. & Just like that they began killing these guys & burning down their houses... But we’re reminded here that Daniel was considered to be a part of this class of men, of the circle that formed the wise counsel of the king.

Vs 14-16

Perhaps we should remind ourselves that Daniel is at this point 17-18 yrs old. Yet the scriptures record for us that he when he’s confronted w/crisis, he responds calmly, communicates clearly & uses tact & wisdom in the situation. We’re beginning to learn here that crisis doesn’t *make* the man, but it will *reveal* the man.

Daniel doesn’t freak out, he doesn’t hit the panic button. When Arioch (the executioner) knocks on his door & it’s obvious the situation is critical, Daniel is careful in his reply. Proverbs 29:20 says, *“Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”*

Daniel says, “Hey, why is the king being so harsh?” Arioch tells him what’s happened & he says, If you’ll let me speak w/the king, we can put an end to this...

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Is 41:21-24]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& God gives him favor. Ladies & Gentlemen this was no small thing. If you bring a man to the king & say, “He can give you what you want.” & He can’t give him what he wants... It’s not only his life, it’s yours as well! Arioch is taking his life into his own hands by allowing Daniel an audience w/the king! But he does...

Daniel says, “King, give me a little time & I’ll give you the dream & the interpretation.” & Again this is huge because time is what he *refused* to give the other guys. & If Daniel didn’t deliver not only would he be killed, we’re talking tortured beyond belief... But the king (probably to the shock of everyone standing there) says, “Ok, you’ve got 24 hrs” or whatever he told him.

But I think this speaks to how much he respected Daniel (we see that he had direct access to the king, he could petition him personally & the king granted his request). He was just a genuine kind of guy. & There’s something about a genuine person that you just appreciate. He wasn’t trying to sell the king, he cared *about* the king & wanted to *help* the king.

& You might make note of it, we’ve already realized that Daniel lived a life of *separation* (meaning set apart to God). Here we’re seeing that he was a man of *expectation*. He had every expectancy that God was going to speak to him, he was a man of faith.

These pagan “wise men” had no idea that Daniel’s presence in Babylon was literally saving their lives. Lot’s presence preserved the people of Zoar, Paul’s presence saved the lives of everyone on the ship that was busted up in the sea. Unbelievers are often times against *you*, not even realizing the blessing that your presence is perhaps bringing *them*. God will bless others at times for your sake (& that’s what’s happening here).

Vs 17-18

You can connect the dots here, yes? Daniel goes to his friends, those who (like himself) were separated to God, sought to honor God & had a heart to glorify God & said, “Guys, we need to pray! We need to seek for mercy from God that He might reveal to us this secret.” How many people want to receive insight *from* the Lord, but don’t want to lead a life that’s upright *before* the Lord nor walk in the fear *of* the Lord.

Daniel could remain calm in the crisis because he knew that God was in control & that w/Him nothing would be impossible. Question: How do you handle a crisis? Where, & to whom do you run? Nebuchadnezzar took his problems to bed, worried about them. Daniel took his problems to God, therefore was at peace w/them. (Look it up later Phil 4:6-7)

Maybe you're anxious about something in your life right now. Why don't you grab a few God fearing friends & say, "Hey, would you pray w/me?" & Explain the situation & see what God does w/it. I trust He will give you His peace in the midst of it. Look at Vs 19.

Vs 19

Jeremiah 33:3, *"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."*⁶ James said, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."*⁷

Daniel (& his friends) asked & God delivered. & What did he do? He didn't rush to the king, he paused to give God praise, notice.

Vs 20-23

Again, Ps 50"15, *"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me"* He was confronted w/a problem, moved to prayer & inspired to give God praise!

Wisdom & might belong to God, He's the One who is sovereign & in control, He changes times & seasons, raises up & removes kings, gives wisdom to the wise... (Decides the course of history). Note words like He gives, He reveals, He knows... There's nothing He can't do, nothing He doesn't know, the deep & secret things, He knows what's in the darkness & in Him is *no* darkness at all (light dwells w/Him).

Family, this is the theology of a young man (perhaps 18 yrs old) set your heart to serve the Lord, to love His word! & Note that Daniel wasn't just a prayer warrior, he was a praiser & a worshiper. He gave praise to God, we do well to worship Him, to magnify Him from the heart... & Remember to give God thanks... If God has been gracious to you (which He has) than be careful to offer gratitude to Him...

God made known to Daniel the dream, what did it mean? We'll see it, next time 😊.

Prayer Points:

God thank You for Your mercies that are new every morning. May we develop a heart of gratitude, giving thanks to You for all that You are, all that You've done & all that You will do. We thank You that for You nothing will be impossible. May we dwell in your peace.

Mercy is God's response to a person's need. You don't want justice, you want mercy. God loves you, He wants to meet you where you're at & give you new life. Turn from your sin, give your life to J.C. & you'll never be the same.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Je 33:3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jas 1:5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.