

The God Of Dreams – Part 1

Daniel 2:1-23

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There's an amazing kind of stark contrast when we move from Daniel 1 into Daniel 2. At the end of the first chapter, Daniel and his three friends have been exalted, and God has blessed and given them a place of position and influence. They seem to be blessed and prospering at the end of chapter 1, but oh how quickly our circumstances do change because now we find that king Nebuchadnezzar has a dream and calls his wise men in to interpret the dream. They can't interpret the dream or tell him what it means, so he gets angry and furious. Kings, in that part of the world at that time, were very temperamental—I think about 90 percent temper and 10 percent mental is what they were. They just seemed to not be able to hold it together. We're going to learn a lot about Nebuchadnezzar. Actually, a little footnote, this Gentile king, Nebuchadnezzar, is talked about more than any other Gentile king in all of the Bible, the Word of God. We're going to learn a lot about him. There are interesting contrasts because then we move to Daniel and his three friends. Their lives are threatened, yet God intervenes and raises him up to a place of greater prominence. What we see going through this chapter is the hand and sovereignty of God.

There are three things I want to point out by way of outlining these first 23 verses. First of all, we see God distresses the king. Let's look at verse 1. "And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him." Now, this dream, and it seems as though it could've been the same dream repeated because notice it's "dreamed dreams," in the plural, or it could be that some feel maybe there were multiple dreams, but more likely it was the same dream, one dream, repeated throughout the night.

Do you know that every one of us dreams every night? You say, "Not me, Pastor John, I don't dream." We do dream, but we don't remember our dreams. The average adult has about seven dreams a night, and we don't always remember them. The older I get, the more bizarre my dreams get. I don't know what it is lately, I'm having all kinds of crazy dreams. I don't know if I'm perplexed or troubled like the king. We all dream, but we don't always remember our dreams. It's interesting, that's the same thing with this king. In a moment we'll talk about it, but he has a dream and then forgets his dream, but he wants his wise men to be able to give him the dream and its interpretation.

Let me just say this, at the end of the three years (there was the three years of their preparation, their school of Babylon), we come now to the second year of Nebuchadnezzar. Some are perplexed by that. They say, "How could Nebuchadnezzar have captured Jerusalem and carried away the captives, trained for three years, and now we're only at the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign?" I probably didn't need to mention it because most of you wouldn't have even noticed it, and I could've passed over it quite easily. Just in case it does come up, I wanted to make mention of that; that is, there are a couple of explanations. First,

Nebuchadnezzar was the son of the king of Babylon and co-reigned with his father for several years. When he first laid siege to Jerusalem, his father was actually the king and died in Nebuchadnezzar's first year. Nebuchadnezzar reigned for two more years. They would only give him credit for two years when he began to reign as a single king rather than co-regency.

There is also another possible theory; that is, in Babylon, in your first year of reigning as king, it wasn't counted until your second year. It would start the second year, so it would be three years but they would only credit him for two. It's like when you graduate from high school you say, "I've gone through 12 years of school," but you actually went to kindergarten, then first grade, then you graduate from school. You really went through 13 years of school, you go on to college, and you're forever a student. There are explanations for this "second year" of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar that had these dreams "...wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him." You know, no matter how powerful, no matter your position, no matter how many possessions you have, you can be king and that doesn't mean you're going to have peace. It doesn't mean you're going to be able to sleep at night. You may have a large nest egg and a lot of money in the bank, you might have what you think to be a secure job, but that doesn't mean that you're going to sleep.

The Bible tells us, when we get down to verse 29, that the king had gone to sleep that night and was wondering about his future. He was wondering about what the future held. Go with me to verse 29, "As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter." So, that's why he had these dreams. He was thinking about his kingdom and wondering what the future held. A lot of people wonder and sometimes we worry about the future. We're distraught about that. The truth is, this was the hand of God. This distress that the king was experiencing was nothing short of God's sovereign hand working and orchestrating this out so that Daniel could come to prominence there in Babylon.

Daniel has finished school and is one of the wise men, but he is new on the block. When the king calls the wise men in to give him the dream and its interpretation, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, his three friends, are not invited because they were low on the totem pole. They were "junior" wise men at this time and had not yet been exalted or elevated.

The second thing I want to point out (verses 2-13) is God disgraces the wise men. God distresses the king and then puts to shame or disgraces the wise men. Let's read it beginning in verse 2. "Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers," those who conjure up spirits with their con"talk"tions? "...and the Chaldeans," which was a general term given to these wise men, "for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king." Why have wise men if they aren't very wise? Why have these fellas if they can't give you understanding and insight? It's interesting how people often turn to, as the king does here, the occult. They turn to fortune tellers, Ouija boards, and palm readers in wanting to know the future and if anything lies beyond the grave as with those who are practicing necromancy in connection with the dead and talking to people that have died. They want to know the future; they want to know what happens.

The king was troubled and couldn't sleep. He calls his astrologers, magicians, sorcerers, these Chaldeans, and they come and stand before the king. They're probably thinking they're going to have the opportunity to interpret the dream, tell the king what it means, and be honored and elevated. They probably had their wise men clothes on and all their incantations, gadgets, and things, coming with all their pomp and circumstance into the presence of the king. "And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. 4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack," a little footnote here for you Bible students is that beginning in Daniel 2:4, the book of Daniel goes from being written in Hebrew to Aramaic all the way to the end of Daniel 7. We don't know why. There are theories, but the Bible itself does not tell us why the first chapter is in Hebrew. By the way, the Old Testament is basically written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. There are only a few exceptions of Hebrew in the Old Testament, and this is one of them. The most common theory is that from chapters 2 to 7, the reason Daniel took to writing in Aramaic was because that was the language commonly spoken in Babylon, and these chapters pertain more so to the people of Babylon than they do the Jewish people. Then, when you get to chapter 7, the prophecies have more of an emphasis and focus on the people of Israel and switches back to the Hebrew language. Again, that's just a theory. People go on for pages in commentaries discussing the pros and cons of why it's written in two different languages. The fact is, beginning in verse 4, the Chaldeans speak in Syriack, the King James Bible says. They're actually speaking in a form of Aramaic. They said, "...we will shew the interpretation. 5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill," I'm going to just cut you in little pieces and destroy your house. No problem, just tell me the dream and the interpretation thereof. Obviously, these wise men are freaking out. They're thinking, "Oh, this has become a life and death situation."

Here's an interesting thing (and I won't spend too much time on it), good conservative scholars debate and differ over whether or not when the king says in verse 5, "The thing is gone from me," did the king truly forget the dream or did the king know and remember the dream but was testing his wise men? He's tired of paying for them if they're charlatans. He wants to make sure they're the real deal. He says, "Well, I had this dream...", he could tell this dream was an important dream pertaining to his future and to his kingdom. As a matter of fact, we're going to see (don't miss it next week) that this dream will actually give us history in advance. It gives us the history of the world from the Babylonian Empire up to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ into the Kingdom Age or the Millennium. This whole span of history is portrayed and conveyed in this dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had. He was troubled, went to bed, and God gave him a dream that showed him what are called by Bible students 'the times of the Gentiles'—the time from Babylon all the way up to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and on into the Kingdom Age or the Millennial reign of Christ.

When the king says, "The thing is gone from me," there are two theories. One is that he actually forgot the dream and needed them to tell him. I don't know how he would know it was the dream if he forgot the dream other than maybe when they told him the dream it would spark something and he'd say, "Yeah, yeah! That's it! You've got it!" My theory is that he knew the

dream and was actually putting them to the test. In the NASB, the phrase 'the thing is gone from me' is actually translated 'the command from me is firm.' In the NIV, it's translated 'this is what I have firmly decided.' That would mean that it's talking about his command to destroy and kill them if they don't give him the dream itself and its meaning. That would lend itself...and in the Hebrew, it could accurately be translated that way, that the king is saying, "This is what I've said. This is firm. I'm not going to change. No if, and, or buts about it. Tell me what I dreamed and tell me what it means, or you guys are all going to be wiped out. You're all going to be destroyed."

In verse 6 he says, "But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. 7 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it." This is not going good. Have you ever been in one of those conversations that just seems to go down every time someone talks? Things get a little more intense, the voices get a little higher, and it gets a little more agro. It's like, "Oooh, this is not going the right direction here." The king says, "Look, tell me my dream, tell me what it means, or I'm going to put you to death and destroy all your houses, your families, and you're all dead." They reply, "No problem. Just tell us the dream. You tell us the dream and we'll tell you what it means." The king isn't very happy with them. "The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me," or the command of me is firm, you're trying to gain time. "But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me," again indicating that he was testing and trying them. He was suspicious that they were fakes and phonies as, by the way, all those who follow satan are. He is an imitator, he's not original, he can only copy, and there is no reality behind them.

He says, "You're just lying. You're full of corrupt words, and you speak before me." "...till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream," the king is very adamant, "and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof. 10 The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean." It's not a good idea to tell the king that. They're actually telling the king, "Look, King, what you're asking is ridiculous, if I might say. What you're saying is impossible! There is no man on earth that can do such a thing." They're going to go on to say that no king would ever ask such a thing. Verse 11 says, "And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except..." and I love it (verse 11), "...the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh." Even these wise men, these magicians, these astrologers, these soothsayers recognized, "You know, you'd have to be in touch with God here. You'd have to be in connection with God. God doesn't hang out down here with us. God doesn't really hang out on earth with us. He's in the heavens and we're not really in touch with God to be able to give you that kind of information." Actually, can you imagine if someone came to you and said, "Hey look, I had a dream last night and I need you to tell me what it is I dreamed and what it means."

I have people tell me their dreams all the time. By the way, today God doesn't generally lead us

by dreams. I am 99.9 percent very suspect about getting direction from God through dreams. Can God give you a dream? Yes. Does God use dreams? Not very often, okay? It's pretty rare. It's usually something you ate. If I eat chocolate cake after 11pm at night I get visions, but they're not from God. Here's one of the problems I have with dreams. Anytime someone comes to me with a dream, bless your dear, sweet little heart, it's hard for me because I don't want to disappoint, upset, or bum you out, but your dream is subjective. The Bible is objective truth. When God's Spirit speaks to us through God's Word, and He's leading us according to His Word, we have objective truth. We can know for sure that God is speaking and leading. I talked about the leading of the Lord Sunday morning in Psalm 23 where He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake, but dreams are subjective. There is no way to be sure. Here's another thing. If God gives you a dream, God is going to have to tell you what it means. I'm not a dream interpreter. I don't know what my dreams mean—how would I know what your dreams mean? I'm just going to save you the trouble right now, you know. You say, "Wow, nice guy, Pastor John." Let me save you the trouble. If you have a dream, I'm not the one to interpret it for you, and I can't interpret it for you. I'm telling you right now, I have no idea what it means. If God wants you to know what it means, God will have to tell you. I've had people get upset with me because I wouldn't tell them what their dream meant. It's like, "Have mercy on me!" Don't you think if God wants you to know, God will tell you what it means? I don't know what it means. God will have to show you what it means, but it is subjective and you need to be careful. You need to make sure that you're finding direction by using the Word of God and following the clear objective truth of God's Word.

They say, "no one can do this unless the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh," do you know what that reminds me of? It reminds me of John's gospel, chapter 1, where it says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and in verse 14 it says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," literally pitched His tent among us. There is a wisdom of God found in Christ who is God incarnate—God manifested in the flesh. In the person of Jesus Christ we have the Word made flesh—God dwelling among us. We are going to see that God did give wisdom unto Daniel.

I want you to notice verse 12. They say, "For this cause the king was angry and furious," this is why I said that he was very temperamental and mostly mental. He would just lose his cool. He's not used to being dealt with in this way and was very angry and very, very furious. What a contrast, in a moment, with Daniel who was calm and cool, a man of faith who trusted in the Lord. And so it says, "For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon." The decree was given to wipe them all out (verse 13), "And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain." Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego weren't there. They weren't called in. As I said, they were just "junior" wise men and were new on the block. They were the Hebrews, but the king had already examined them and knew they were superior, even to his other wise men and astrologers. The king is putting them to the test; but when the decree went out, Daniel and his three friends were all going to be destroyed along with everyone else.

The Bible tells us satan comes to kill, steal, and to destroy. I believe that this is satan's attempt

to kill Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The devil is trying to actually destroy and wipe them out, but God protects and exalts them. We move from God distresses the king (God gives the king a dream and he can't sleep) to God disgraces the wise men. They can't answer the problem with the king to give him his dream or the interpretation thereof. Thirdly, we move (verses 14-23) to God discloses the dream to Daniel. We're not going to get into the actual content of the dream and its interpretation until next Wednesday, but notice beginning in verse 14, "Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom..." or wisdom and tact, "...to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: 15 He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel." Daniel is getting arrested, and they're taking him off to death row with his three friends and he's going, "Uh, do you mind if I ask what's going on here?" I mean, he wasn't party to anything. He didn't even know what was going on.

What would you do if you were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? What would you do if you found out that you were being taken off to death row, you're going to be sentenced to death, you're going to be destroyed? Freak out, right? It says in verse 16, "Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation." Man, that took faith! It took boldness, courage, and faith on Daniel's part. I want you to notice what Daniel does (verses 17-18), "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah," the Hebrew names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, "his companions: 18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." Now, instead of panicking, instead of freaking out, instead of running for your life, instead of running to the wise men and say, "Hey, you guys got any books on dream interpretation that we can do some study on and figure this out," trying to escape, trying to figure it out, freaking out, they got on their knees and they prayed.

The first thing is that Daniel sends word unto the king. It's possible, there in verse 16, that he didn't actually go in to see the king yet, that it wasn't until about verse 25 when Arioch brought Daniel before the king, but he actually through a messenger sent word unto the king. Here's an interesting thing. The wise men, the Babylonian, Chaldeans, soothsayers, and astrologers, and the wise men (in the New Testament they were called Magi. They were the ones that saw the star and came to see the Baby Jesus.) asked the king to give them the dream. Daniel asked for time. He's not asking, "Tell me the dream and I'll give you the interpretation," he just says, "Give me a little time." Then he makes a promise, "I will give you the dream and the interpretation." I believe that's one of the reasons why the king allowed Daniel to have this extra time in this situation. So, Daniel went in and desired of the king that he would give him time and he would show the king the interpretation—just give me some time.

Make a point of this, this took faith on Daniel's part. Daniel trusted and looked to God in faith to believe that God would give him the dream and the meaning of that dream. What does Daniel and his three friends do? It says in verse 17, "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: 18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not

perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.” Daniel grabs his friends, and I can almost hear them saying, “You said what to the king?! Are you crazy? Are you insane? What are you thinking?” What options do you have, right? If you do nothing, you die. If you don’t get the dream and the interpretation, you die. So, you might as well take a stab at it. You might as well buy yourself some time. You might as well do what you can to try to work a situation out.

Let me say a couple of things quickly about, I believe, that they prayed at this point, turned to the Lord in prayer, when it says in verse 18, “That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.” He doesn’t record their entire prayer for us, it records (verses 19-23) their response to the fact that God answered their prayer, but I believe that when you are faced with a crisis, and they are faced with a crises...Maybe tonight you’re faced with a crisis. When you’re faced with a crisis and you turn to God in prayer, your prayer is going to be affected by two things: your view of God and your view of the problem—how you view God and how you view the problem. If you believe that God is all-wise and all-powerful and all-loving, that God is sovereign, God is in control, and if you believe that God answers prayer; if you believe that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much then you’re going to respond properly when you face a crisis. You got that? You won’t be going to pieces, going crazy, freaking out, or running for your life. You’re going to be calm, cool, and collected because you know that God is all-wise, all-powerful, God is in control, and God answers prayer. You know that you can rest in God’s providential care. They prayed that God would be merciful—I love that! They turned to God, “God, show mercy,” and they prayed to the God of heaven.

In verse 19 it says, “Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. 20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: 21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: 22 He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. 23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desire of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king’s matter.” When Daniel received the answer to his prayer what does he do? He prays, and his prayer is actually worship. He prayed (the background for that is verses 17-18) to the God of heaven, that God would have mercy and give them this understanding. Then God gives them this understanding and he worships. Worship is different than petitioning in prayer. Worship is ascribing to God praise, thanksgiving, and adoration. That’s what takes place in verses 19-23. God revealed to Daniel in a night vision. It wasn’t a dream, it was actually a vision. Daniel was awake. When you have a dream you’re asleep, but when you have a vision you’re awake and God gives you this vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. In verse 18, he is referred to as the God of heaven as opposed to the false gods of the pagan, Gentile Babylonians. By the way, this is kind of the battle of the gods as well showing that the gods of the heathen are vain and the God of Israel is the God who dwells in heaven—the all-wise, all-powerful God. They blessed the God of heaven.

In verse 20, “Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever,” there are two things that Daniel thanks God for. He thanks God for His wisdom and for His power. In my King James Bible it is translated “might;” that is, that God is omniscient and omnipotent. Those are two big words to describe the idea that God knows everything and has all power. God is also omnipresent which means there is nowhere God is not. You can’t go anywhere in the universe and get away from God. You’re at a spot and say, “This Godforsaken place.” No. God is everywhere. All of God is everywhere all the time, but I love the idea that they gave thanks for God’s wisdom and might, or God’s power. Those are two amazing attributes of God that we need to remember—God knows all things and has all power. That will affect your prayer life and how you pray.

By His wisdom and power He “he changeth the times and the seasons,” God is in control. “he removeth kings, and setteth up kings,” do you know that God is in control? Do you know that God wasn’t surprised that Donald Trump got elected to President of the United States? God isn’t freaking out either. God isn’t freaking out over Russia or China or North Korea or Iran or Iraq or any other part of the world where there is trouble, or Syria. God isn’t freaking out. Do you know that God is completely in control? We are! From the human perspective, it was an impossibility the thought that anybody could give this king what he dreamed and what it means, but from God’s perspective God is the all-wise, all-powerful God. It’s not an issue, and “He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.” And the thanking God (verse 23), “I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me...,” he closes verse 23 by just thanking God for giving him, personally and individually, this wisdom, insight, and understanding, “...made known unto me...,” and at the end he says, “...made known unto us the king’s matter.” He includes his three friends as well as himself.

God’s wisdom is found in Christ for us today. You know, we don’t have the wisdom of Daniel. We may not have the training and the wisdom that Daniel had, but you know what we have that Daniel didn’t have? We have the fulfillment of God’s promise in sending His Son Jesus Christ. Do you know what the Bible says in the book of Colossians? It says, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” and “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” God wants to reveal to you the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and that wisdom and knowledge is found in the Person of Jesus Christ given to those who are humble.

Daniel, in his great faith, trusting in God and not looking to himself, got on his knees in a time of crisis and prayed that God would show him mercy. God answered the prayer because He is the God of wisdom and power. Someone said, “Faith is putting all your eggs in God’s baskets and counting them before they hatch.” I love that. Faith doesn’t scheme. Faith rests. Faith trusts. Did you notice that Daniel didn’t go running off trying to figure out the problem. He said, “Let’s get on our knees and let’s pray. Let’s trust God.”

I don’t know what problem you’re facing tonight but I’ll tell you where you need to go. You need to get on your knees and pray. Trust God, look to God, and turn to God. Pray to the God who is all-wise and all-powerful; and He will guide, direct, and take care of you. God gives His wisdom

to those that are humble. Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Let me give you some quick closing application. Since God will be awake tonight and God doesn't sleep, God doesn't slumber, guess what you and I can do? We can go home and sleep. Since God is awake we can go to sleep. Secondly, face your problems with faith in God and pray to God. Don't freak, don't fret, don't panic, have faith in God. God is all-wise and all-powerful. He is in control. The fact that God knows everything and the wisdom and power to control everything, we can rest in God in faith. Thirdly, since the whole world is in God's hands, your world is in God's hands also. Amen? We sing that old song, "He's Got The Whole World In His Hands." If He's got the whole world in His hands guess what? He's got you and me, brother, in His hands; He's got you and me, sister, in His hands. I'm not going to sing it (thank God), but we need to be reminded of that—He's got the whole world in His hands. We can rest.

This is a cliffhanger kind of ending. It's almost impossible to stop right here because we need to find out what was the dream and what's the interpretation thereof? It's spectacular! Let's pray.