

# The Book of Daniel Bible Study Lesson 4

## Daniel 2:1-16 Notes

### Man's Wisdom Versus God's Wisdom

#### Introduction:

(Wiersbe) As you turn from chapter one to chapter 2, the atmosphere in the king's palace changes radically. Chapter one closes with recognition and security, but chapter two introduces rejection and danger. Because they possessed almost unlimited power and authority, Oriental authoritarians were notoriously temperamental and unpredictable, and here Nebuchadnezzar reveals this side of his character (also 3:19). However, the hero and major Person in chapter two is not King Nebuchadnezzar but the Lord God who "reveals deep and secret things" (vs. 22). As you read this chapter, you witness the God of Israel in complete control of every situation and accomplishing His purposes even through superstitious Gentil unbelievers. Note, the divine activities that protected His servants and brought glory to His name.

#### God Distresses a King:

Nebuchadnezzar was in the second year of his reign and discovering the burdens of the kingdom as well as the far-reaching consequences of his decisions. Some of his concerns were causing him restless nights (Eccl. 5:12), and his mind was unsettled as he worried about the future of his kingdom (Dan. 2:29). How long would "Babylon the great" last? How long would he be the ruler? Shakespeare was right: "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

The Lord gave Nebuchadnezzar a vivid dream that he couldn't understand, and it distressed him. That the Lord God almighty would communicate truth to a pagan Gentil king is evidence of the grace of God. The phrase "dreamed dreams" may suggest that this one dream kept reoccurring. The Lord had given two dreams to Pharaoh (Gen. 41), another Gentil ruler, and Joseph had interpreted them; and He also gave a dream to the magi who came to worship Jesus (Matt. 2:12), and they were Gentiles. When God wanted to give a message to the Gentiles, He usually sent them a Jewish prophet (Amos 3:7). Jonah to Nineveh, for example, or Amos to the neighboring nations (Amos 1-2). But here the Lord communicated directly to an unbelieving Gentil monarch. The Lord in His wisdom planned to use His faithful servant Daniel to describe and interpret the dream, and in this way, God's name would be glorified and Daniel and his friends would be honored and rewarded.

### **Daniel's Use of Two Languages:**

If you notice in Daniel 2:4 *'Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic.'* (Miller) The phrase "in Aramaic" is best taken as a parenthetical notation placed in the text to mark the change in the written language, for at this point in the book until the end of chapter seven the language is not Hebrew but Aramaic. Although the diplomatic language of the empire was Aramaic, it seems reasonable to suppose that the wise men who lived in Babylon, regardless of their original nationality, would have addressed the king in the normal language of the city that presumably was Akkadian.

(Walvoord) An unusual feature of the book of Daniel is the fact that the central portion (2:4-7:28) is written in biblical Aramaic also called Chaldee. A similar use of Aramaic is found in Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26; Jeremiah 10:11; and also in Genesis 31:47. The use of the Aramaic, which was the lingua franca of the period, was related to the fact that the **material concerned the Gentile world rather than Israel directly**. The fact that there are similar portions elsewhere in the Bible should make clear that there is nothing unusual or questionable about the Aramaic section in Daniel. As pointed out by Brownlee, the shifts from Hebrew to Aramaic and back again in Daniel are found in the scrolls of Daniel at Qumran, supporting the legitimacy of this feature of the Massoretic text commonly used in English translations.

Warren Wiesbe states that, 'from Daniel 2:4 to 7:28, the book is written in Aramaic because the focus is on the Gentile nations. Daniel 1:1-2:3 and 8:1-12:13 are written in the Hebrew language.'

### **When Has God Ordained Dreams to Reveal Truth:**

(Wiersbe) Does God still use dreams to communicate His will? Certainly, He can do so if He pleases, but this isn't His usual approach. God guides His children today by His Holy Spirit as they pray, seek His face, meditate on His Word, and consult with their spiritual leaders. The danger is that our dreams may not come from the Lord. The human subconscious is capable of producing dreams, and Jeremiah 23:25-32 indicates that demonic forces can cause dreams that are Satan's lies and not God's truth. It's dangerous to accept dreams as messenger from the Lord.

(MacArthur) Now you say, "Isn't it a little strange for God to reveal things in dreams? Didn't He just have people write the Bible, or speak to somebody in their heart and their mind while they were awake? This dream concept sounds somewhat occultic." Well, it was not abnormal at all for God to do that during periods of revelation. For example, Numbers 12:8 (cf. Ex. 33:11) records that the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, whereas with others, such as prophets, He spoke in visions and dreams. In Genesis, Jacob had a dream that promised him

the land of Palestine (28:13). In dreams, God spoke to Joseph (Gen. 37:5-10), Abimelech (Gen. 20:3), and Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-15), revealed to Pharaoh the seven years of plenty and the subsequent seven years of famine (Gen. 41:1-8), and indirectly provided encouragement to Gideon and his men (Judges. 7:13-15). It was not abnormal at all for God to speak in dreams.

Now, I would say it's abnormal today for several reasons, but primarily because God has finished His revelation. So don't go to sleep at night hoping you'll get a revelation from God in your dream. I don't think God is in the business of giving revelations anymore since Hebrews 1:2 says He "*hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son . . .*" But in those former days, God chose to speak through dreams.

### **Additional Scriptures:**

***Ephesians 2:18-22*** *And He (Jesus) came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

***Ephesians 3:4-6*** *By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit . .*

***1 John 1:1-3*** *What was from the beginning, what we (Apostles) have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life--- and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

***2 Peter 2:16-21*** *For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we (Peter, James and John) were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"---and we ourselves*

*heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophesy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

### **The King's Remembrance of the Dream - Two Ways To Interpret:**

(Wiersbe) Here we are confronted with a question that sincere Bible students don't answer the same way: Did King Nebuchadnezzar forget his dream, or was he using this approach to test his counselors to see if they were authentic? I hold to the second position, but let's consider both sides of the matter.

**He forgot the dream.** I find it difficult to believe that such a vivid dream would pass out of the mind of a great leader like Nebuchadnezzar, particularly if the dream occurred more than once. Of course, we do forget most of our dreams, but in this case, the Lord was seeking to communicate His truth to the king. Surely the same God who gave the dream could see to it that the king would remember it. After all, the dream was so agitating that the king lay awake wondering what it meant. Furthermore, if indeed the king had forgotten the dream, how would he be able to verify it even if the advisers could come up with the right answer?

The KJV and the Amplified Bible translate verses 5 and 8 "the thing is gone from me," which can be interpreted "the dream has left me." This is probably the strongest argument for the king having a bad memory. But the NASB translates that same phrase "the command from me is firm," and the NIV translate it "this is what I have firmly decided." The reference isn't to the dream but to the king's edict of judgment. If the counselors couldn't tell him the dream and interpret it, they would be publicly humiliated and mercilessly slain.

**The king was testing his counselors.** I believe that Nebuchadnezzar remembered the dream, pondered it, and realized that it contained a significant message concerning him and his kingdom. It must have brought fear and wonder to his heart when he beheld this massive metallic image smashed to atoms by a mysterious stone that then grew into a mountain. The interpretation of this dream was too important for the king to treat as a routine matter. He wanted to be sure that his "wise men" would give him the correct meaning, for his future was involved in that dream. He didn't want to hear "misleading and wicked things" (vs. 9 NIV) that they made up just to please the king. He wanted the truth.

## **The Servants the King Summoned:**

(MacArthur) Gathering together the brain trust of the Babylonian Empire, the king appeals to them because he couldn't figure out his dream and was afraid. He seeks answers from:

1. **The Magicians** – Basically, the term refers to fortune-tellers, but sometimes we find it associated with people who were scholars. In the society of that time, it is very possible that they were both.
2. **The Astrologers** – These were the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, who charted the position of the stars and determined destinies on the basis of how they were arranged, much like horoscopes claim to do today.
3. **The Sorcerers** – The sorcerers were the spiritualist and enchanter. They were the mediums who talked with the dead.
4. **The Chaldeans** – The Chaldeans were the leading group because they do the talking here in this passage. I suppose they were the wisest of the wise. Originally a group of people in southern Babylonia, they eventually rose to a place of prominence in the courts of Babylon after Nabopolassar, himself a Chaldean, gained control as emperor. They were supposedly the wisest and the most knowledgeable in all the arts and sciences of Chaldea (Babylon).

So, the king gathered together all of the scholarship, the occultism, and the human wisdom that was available, much in the same way that people today inquire of fortune-tellers, futurists, palmist, tea-leaf readers, crystal gazers, and the horoscope astrologers, futility trying to get a hedge on tomorrow apart from the very One who alone knows the end from the beginning (Is. 46:10)

Now, these advisors to the king believed that dreams were very important in that day, so they were very anxious to help the king in this matter. Having devised a dream-reading system, they worked on the principle that dreams and their sequels follow an empirical law which, given enough data, could be established. For this reason, they kept records of all dreams. This enabled a person's life to be charted when his dream could be compared with similar dreams recorded in the dream manuals. This procedure was like what happens in the legal profession today when current interpretations of the law are based on past judicial decisions. For this purpose, an attorney's office will usually contain volumes and volumes of books that contain the law cases of the past. The Chaldeans and these others that the king consulted, also had massive libraries that contained dream manuals, examples of which archaeological investigations have discovered.

### **The Chaldean's Recognition of a Higher Deity:**

(Miller) Nebuchadnezzar's astrologer replied that there was no person on earth who could fulfill the king's request and accused the king of being unreasonable by telling him that "no king, however great and mighty," had ever before asked such a difficult thing of his wise men. . . . In vs. 11 the astrologers confessed that only the gods possessed the information sought by the king, and the gods "do not live among men." In other words, the gods knew, but they were not there. This is a striking admission, for if only the gods knew the dream, whoever revealed the dream must be in touch with the gods. Nebuchadnezzar probably thought, and rightly so, that since these astrologers claimed to be able to communicate with the spirit world, they should be able to discover the dream and its interpretation from the gods.

The Babylonians were famous for their astrology, but it could not help these "astrologers" in their time of need. Over a hundred years earlier the God of Israel had challenged the wise men of Babylon to deliver their nation from his power by their sorceries, spells, and counsel from the stars (Isa. 47:12-13). Such practices could not save in ancient times, nor can they deliver today. Only the true God possesses wisdom, power, and salvation---gifts granted to all who call upon his name.

### **Acts 17:15-34 - Athens: Mocking the Word Warren Wiersbe Commentary:**

Paul came to Athens as a sightseer and became a soul-winner! This famous city was a center of religion and culture, but all Paul could see was sin and superstition; one ancient writer said it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens. Paul disputed with the Jews in the synagogue, but had little or no success. He then followed the pattern of the Greek teachers and took his message to the market (agora) where the men assembled to discuss philosophy or to transact business.

Two main philosophies controlled Athens at that time. The Stoics were materialistic and almost fatalistic in their thinking. Their system was built on pride and personal independence. Nature was their god, and they believed that all nature was gradually moving toward a great climax. We might say that they were pantheistic. The Epicureans desired pleasure, and their philosophy was grounded in experience, not reason. They were almost atheistic.

Here we have two extremes in philosophy, and Paul confronted them both with the Gospel of Christ. The Athenians scorned him, calling him a "babbling," which means "a seedpicker." They thought he was preaching two new gods when he spoke of "Jesus and the resurrection." ("Resurrection" in Gk. is anastasia, and perhaps they took this for a proper name.) The Greeks led him to the Areopagus, their official court, also called Mars' Hill. There Paul preached a great sermon.

He began politely by saying, "I see that you are very religious" (not "too superstitious" as in kjv). He called attention to an altar dedicated "to the unknown god," and he used this object to preach to them the True God about whom they were ignorant. He presented in his sermon four great truths about God:

A. He is the Creator (vv. 24-25).

The Greeks believed different theories about creation, and even held to a form of evolution. Paul clearly stated that God created everything and did not live in temples made by men. God gives life to all; man can really give nothing to Him.

B. He is the Governor (vv. 26-29).

He appoints the boundaries of the nations. Through His government of the nations, He seeks to make men seek Him and find Him. Paul even quoted a Greek writer (v. 28) to show that God is the sustainer of life. This does not mean the Greek poet was inspired, but rather that his statement agreed with divine truth. Again, Paul diplomatically pointed out that their temples and images were foolish and ignorant. We need this reminder today!

C. He is the Savior (v. 30).

Paul wipes away the great Greek culture by calling it "times of ignorance"! With all their wisdom and culture, the Greeks failed to find God (see 1 Cor. 1:18ff). God has commanded men everywhere to repent; and if they repent and believe, He will forgive.

D. He is the Judge (v. 31).

God has appointed a day of judgment, and the Judge will be His Son, Jesus Christ. God proved this by raising Him from the dead. If we trust Christ today, He will save us; if we reject Him, tomorrow He will judge us.

The reactions of the listeners were mixed: some mocked (this is often the attitude of pagan culture and philosophy); some delayed; but some believed! This chapter presents three different attitudes toward the Gospel, and we find these same attitudes in the world today. Some people openly oppose the Word; some mock it or postpone making a decision; and some receive the Word and believe. Paul kept right on going as a faithful servant, and so must we, "for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).

**Conclusion:**

(Miller) Three primary theological truths are emphasized in this chapter. First, God is sovereign over kings and the affairs of this earth. J. Boice comments well: "If God does not control our lives---from the actions of kings and others in positions of power to the most minute circumstances---then everything in life is uncertain. We are victims of circumstances, and whatever happens will happen. Que sera, sera! But if God is sovereign, as the Bible declares Him to be, and if He is our God---if the promise He makes and the actions He takes are certain of

fulfillment---then we can be confident of the future and know that we will be able to live our lives in a way that will please God.

Second, God is omniscient. He knows all things, including the future, and at times chooses to reveal the future to human beings.

Third, empires will arise until the end, but the glorious kingdom of God will surely come, and all the wickedness of earthly regimes will cease.

(Wiersbe) Throughout Bible history, you find occasions when God exposed the foolishness of the world and the deceptiveness of Satan. Moses and Aaron defeated the magicians of Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt (Ex. 7-12), and Elijah on Mount Carmel exposed the deception of Baal worship (1 Kings 18). Jeremiah confronted the false prophet Hananiah and revealed his wickedness (Jer. 28), and Paul exposed the deception of Bar Jesus the sorcerer (Acts 13:1-12). But it was Jesus who by His life, teaching, and sacrificial death declared the wisdom of this world “foolishness” with God, and that includes all its myths and false religions (1 Cor. 1:18). The statement of the advisers in Daniel 2:10-11 wipes out astrology and other forms of human prophecy! Out of their own mouths they condemned their own practices! ***‘The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh.”’***

#### References:

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