

Daniel Chapter 2A -- John Karmelich

(There are 2 lessons on this chapter. This is #1.)

1. My general-rule is a chapter-per week, but I'm going to break that rule for this chapter, and again for Chapters 7 and 9. Remember that when Daniel was written there were no chapter numbers. These were added centuries later for our convenience.
 - a) Daniel Chapter 2 can be broken down into a couple of sections.
 - i) Part 1: Part King Nebuchadnezzar has a bad dream about his future. He has no idea what it means and needs an explanation.
 - ii) Part 2: The King demands his "wise-men" and occult-magicians to explain 1) what he dreamed and 2) interpret it. Succeed? Lots of rewards; Fail? Death!
 - iii) Part 3: Daniel, who is among "the wise men", has a prayer meeting with his three friends. God reveals the dream to Daniel. Daniel then praises God for answered prayer.
 - iv) Part 4: Daniel, in front of the King, gives the God of Israel all the credit.
 - v) Part 5: Daniel explains the dream.
 - vi) Part 6: The King praises Daniel's God for revealing the dream. Therefore, nobody has to die. Daniel and his 3 friends get top cabinet positions. ☺
 - b) Tonight, we're only going to cover Parts 1 through 3.
 - i) The interpretation of the dream is a lesson all too itself.
 - ii) Most of the commentators I've read emphasize the future-aspects of the prophecy and skip too quickly over the early parts of the chapter. To me, the "reward" of knowing the end-time prophecy is *tied* to the events of the early part of the chapter. Thus it is important to discuss both in detail. (At least I think so! ☺)
 - a) Therefore, we'll cover Chapter 2 over two lessons.
2. The real lesson for this week is about the Power of God and the limited power of man.
3. King Nebuchadnezzar had everything a person could want in life.
 - a) I cannot underestimate the "everything" part.
 - b) He had money, he had power. He had absolute rule. There was no congress for approval. There was no Supreme Court to rule his decisions unconstitutional. There were no "precedents" as required by previous kings.
 - c) To this king, if he says it, it is law. No appeals. End of discussion.
 - d) Yet, despite, this, we'll get the sense it was not enough. The king was wondering what would become of the future. God revealed that to him. The only problem was that he had no idea what the dream meant. He did comprehend that the dream was significant and not just the result of a pepperoni pizza. ☺
 - i) His dream covered the scope of history and Nebuchadnezzar's role in history. Since the king had nothing else to achieve, he simply contemplated what "history" will think of him. I have found this is a common concern among Presidents. People who become American Presidents are driven for success. Once they get to the pinnacle of power, there is nothing left to achieve. They spend a lot of their time focusing on what history will think of them.
 - ii) King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. More like a nightmare. It troubled him. It troubled him enough that he wanted an explanation. I suspect the same dream occurred over and over again, and finally, he needed an explanation.

4. Chapter 2, Verse 1: In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep.
- a) This chapter only takes place a few years after chapter 1. Most commentators believe it took place right after Daniel and his 3 friends finished “graduate school” and are now working in some capacity for the Babylonian Empire. These 4 men were deported as teenagers. They are not much older in Chapter 2.
 - b) When it says, “(King) Nebuchadnezzar had dreams”, it does not mean this is the first time the King has ever had dreams. It means that the dreams he was having, bothered him, and bothered him greatly.
 - c) The “clue” to the nature of the dreams, we discover later in the chapter.
 - i) In Verse 29 of this chapter, Daniel begins to explain the dream to the king.
 - ii) Daniel said, “As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen.”
 - iii) What does this mean? It means that the King was pondering the future.
 - a) This is a man of power in the ultimate human definition. He was the leader of all the territory in sight and his word was absolute law. So what is left to ponder? The future.
 - b) This dream troubled the king because it was about the end.
 - d) Notice also that God sends messages to non-saved people. The King was not Jewish, nor did he believe in the God of Israel. Yet God gave a vision to this man, and used that vision for the glory of God, as we’ll read later in this chapter.
 - i) The point is that God is not limited to just work through an Israelite.
5. Verse 2: So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, ³ he said to them, "I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means. "
- a) Here we have a group of occultists: magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers.
 - i) They were all under service to the king. Each group probably had special demonic powers. They were kept in high power for divination purposes. Their job was to use their power to give the king advice and warn of dangers.
 - a) In the book of Exodus, the Egyptian Pharaoh also had servant-occultists who could duplicate a few of Moses’ plagues. Thus the Pharaoh was reluctant to pay attention to Moses during those early plagues.
 - ii) Throughout history, Satan has used occultist power to influence government. In Acts Chapter 13, when Paul starts his first missionary journey, the first place he goes to is the island of Cyprus. We learn that the governor of Cyprus has a right-hand-man who was a sorcerer named Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6)
 - a) I’ll talk more about the occult as we go through Daniel. For now, know that God considered it a capital crime for any Jew to be involved with any of these groups. The occult is a dangerous and destructive place. It is an entry point to allow people to become demon-possessed.
 - iii) Here King Nebuchadnezzar says “ok guys, I’ve had some bad dreams. This is your job, tell me what it means.” With that, lets go to the next verse.
6. Verse 4: Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it."
- a) I can almost see the smiles on the faces of these astrologers as they reply to the king. Let me paraphrase and expand upon this verse: “Your highness, long live the king! We’ve spent years in training learning how to interpret dreams. We have this set of encyclopedias that we’ve studied for years. Dreams are listed by category. All you have to do is tell us your dream and we look up the correct response based on our training. We *live* for moments like this. Come king, lay the dream on us!”

- i) I'm stretching the point in this last paragraph, but I suspect you get the idea!
 - ii) This verse mentioned the "astrologers" as opposed to all four categories listed in Verse 2. The reason is unknown. Maybe they were the first to approach the king, or maybe they were the largest class.
 - b) From Verse 4 to the end of Chapter 7, the book of Daniel is written in Aramaic.
 - i) This is a "cousin" language to Hebrew, the same way Spanish and French have the same Latin-roots.
 - ii) Aramaic was the most common language of the day and was considered the language-of-business throughout that part of the world. Much the same way English is today. The vocabulary of Aramaic is much greater than Hebrew.
 - iii) Remember Daniel just spent 3 years in training in Babylonia. Part of the training was learning the language.
 - iv) Why Aramaic? There is lots of speculation, but no definite answers.
 - a) I suspect the reason is that these chapters focus on Gentile kings and their rule over the surrounding "world". The focus is on Daniel and his 3 friends as they interact with the Gentiles.
 - b) Chapters 8 through 12, which are written in Hebrew like the rest of the Old Testament, focus on future prophecy specifically dealing with the nation of Israel, thus the language returns to Hebrew.
7. Verse 5: The king replied to the astrologers, "This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. ⁶ But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me."
- a) The king lays out his "executive incentive plan" more clearly ☺. The king says in effect "Tell you what guys, you claim to have all this magical power. Well, what do you say we put it to the test? You *tell me* what I dreamed, *and* what it means, and then I'll reward you. Oh, and by the way, if you can't do this, what good are you? I'll kill you if you can't do this and turn all of your possessions into a trash heap."
 - b) Remember in verse 1 that this is only the 2nd year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. History records that his father was on the throne, while he was a general out in various war campaigns. He is ordered to come home when his father dies. Therefore, most of these servants were probably inherited from his father.
 - i) Remember further that the "bad-dreams" were about the end of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. He may not have trusted these guys and wanted to test their loyalty to him. (This is speculation on the part of some commentators.)
 - c) Still, Nebuchadnezzar asked an impossible thing for men to do: "Read my mind". He expected these guys to say what he was thinking.
 - i) When you study the Old Testament, this is a new thing. There are several recorded dreams and visions in the Bible, particularly in Genesis. I can think of Jacob's vision of the ladder (Genesis 28:12). Also, Joseph interpreted the dreams of the Pharaoh (Genesis 41). But to actually read-the-mind of the dreamer is a new one.
8. Verse 7: Once more they replied, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it."
- a) I'll paraphrase: "Your highness, that is not how it works. We all majored in occultism at Babylonian U. That wasn't covered in our classes. We want to help. So just tell us the dream, and we promise to look it up and get right back to you". ☺

- i) God allows occultists to have some power, but that power is limited. By this verse and many others in the Bible, I don't believe Satan has the power to read our thoughts. I believe he can "plant" thoughts in our minds, but he can't read our minds. Satan can however, observe our lives and give us pitfalls based on his observations.
- 9. Verse 8: Then the king answered, "I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: ⁹If you do not tell me the dream, there is just one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me."
 - a) The king is saying in effect, "nice try guys, but it won't work". He knows that these guys don't have the power to read his minds, and the king isn't changing his mind.
 - b) In Verse 9, you can almost sense the king's disdain or lack-of-trust for this group of characters. The king figures, "if I can't trust your divination powers to tell me what I dreamed, what good are you? Off with your heads!"
- 10. Verse 10: The astrologers answered the king, "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. ¹¹ What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men."
 - a) Partially, these guys are right. They state that no man can do what the king asks. That is biblically correct. Only God himself has the power to read minds.
 - b) These occultists state that "the gods don't live among men". Grant it, they don't understand New Testament theology about Jesus becoming a man, nor about how all believers have God-the-Holy-Spirit living within us.
 - i) Notice they don't call upon their "gods" to reveal such things. It is as if they know the limitations of their gods. They refuse to believe in an all-powerful God who is willing to grant such a request. Thus a major difference between false gods and the true God of the Bible.
 - ii) First of all, how do we know God knows our thoughts?
 - a) God is perfect. A perfect God can not learn. A perfect God knows all things. If he knows all things, he must know our thoughts as well.
 - b) The problem of course, is all the evil thoughts we have as well as our positive thoughts.
 - (1) "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." (Genesis 6:5 NIV)
 - c) In Matthew 9, Jesus is accused of blasphemy. Notice the response:
 - (1) "Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?" (Matthew 9:4 NIV)
 - d) Also notice this verse: Jesus says, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders... (Mark 7:21, NIV)
 - e) The point for this lesson is: How would God know evil thoughts come from our heart if he could not understand our thoughts?
 - c) So what is the "remedy" for the evil of our hearts? Paul said it best:
 - i) The weapons we fight (demonic powers) with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to

Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete. (2nd Corinthians 10:4-6, NIV)

11. Verse 12: This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. ¹³ So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death.
- a) Notice what the king didn't do. He didn't say, "well, ok, these guys power is limited. I have to accept the fact that the power of man is limited.
 - b) The king is angry. He has this dream that shows how one day he will be destroyed, as we'll discover later in the chapter. Not only does he say, "everybody dies" among this group of occults, but also among the "wise-men". Wise men refers to the leading men of the city and presumably, those who have graduated with honors from the same program as Daniel and his three companions.
 - i) The king's fury is like that of a roaring lion; to rouse his anger is to risk your life. (Proverbs 20:2 The Living Bible.)
 - c) I suspect that each "wise man" was rounded up and told why they were being jailed for execution. The leading men were being rounded up and asked the same question about the dream and then be executed after failing to know the meaning.
 - d) This is a situation of hopelessness. Imagine being a "local clerk" or "mayor" in some region of the Babylonian Empire. Things are going well. You're working your way up the corporate ladder. Next thing you know, you are arrested-to-be-killed. Your crime? You didn't know what the king dreamed last night! "How should I know a thing like that and why is it fair I die for not knowing?"
 - i) Most adults know about life not being fair. We all have those moments of hopelessness when everything goes wrong for no apparent reason.
 - ii) This is when I find God does his best work. We can give God the glory in those situations, mainly because there is no other human alternative. Men often turn to God only after they have exhausted every other alternative. God patiently waits for that moment so he, and he alone, can show his wondrous works.
12. Verse 14: When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. ¹⁵ He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. ¹⁶ At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him.
- a) So here is Daniel being arrested for the horrid crime of not being a mind-reader. ☺
 - b) Notice Daniel's boldness. Daniel did not say, "well, I have to accept my fate. I lived a good life serving my god; I was a good witness with the vegetable-thing, and now its time to die. No!!!! Daniel *knew* that God-was-all powerful. Daniel knew that his only hope was through God-himself.
 - i) Give Daniel credit for having the boldness to do 1) what has never been done even in the Old-Testament-to-date, which is to be given the revelation of a dream as well as a meaning. Daniel knew that nothing is impossible for God, and since Daniel had nothing to lose, he might as well step forward in faith. Therefore, he asked for an appointment to see the king to explain the dream.
 - ii) Notice in Verse 16 Daniel asked the king for time so he might explain the dream. I suspect that means he asked for an appointment, as opposed to a stalling technique. The king may have remembered Daniel as he graduated with honors, and therefore, was willing to give him a chance.

13. Verse 17: Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ¹⁸ He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.
- a) Let me paraphrase Daniel: “Hey guys, we’re going to have a prayer meeting tonight, and this one is important!” ☺
 - i) Some of the great lessons in Daniel are on leadership. I believe Daniel was the one in Chapter 1 who lead the vegetable-only diet. His three friends stood beside him and were rewarded for their efforts. God is going to build the faith of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah once again, by using Daniel’s leadership to show that through prayer anything can be accomplished.
 - a) Remember this situation the next time things seem hopeless. Do you thing you have problems? These guys were going to get killed for not having the ability to read the king’s mind. God himself was glorified in this impossible situation. If God can do this for Daniel, imagine the ways God can be glorified in your life if you are just willing to truly and completely turn the situation over to him.
 - b) Daniel does not exclude his three friends in his prayers. Let’s face it, Daniel could have gone off by himself to go prayer for this situation. Why did Daniel include these guys?
 - i) For starters, their lives were in danger too! Daniel didn’t forget his friends. During times of great turmoil and stress, we often turn *together* to God.
 - ii) God encourages group prayer. I define “group” as two or more. I believe God does that for our benefit. Christianity was never intended to be an individual effort. God wants us to work as a community, to work together, to encourage each other, to use our spiritual gifts to help and support each other. Thus, God encourages group prayer.
 - a) Jesus said, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:20 NIV)
14. Verse 19a: During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision.
- a) From verses 20 to 23, Daniel is giving praise to God for revealing the prayer.
 - b) Before I get into those verses, I want to talk about Verse 19.
 - i) God rewarded Daniel’s prayer request with the revelation of Daniel’s dream.
 - ii) Don’t take this lightly. There is nothing else like this in the Bible as an answered prayer.
 - iii) Daniel’s thank-you prayer in Verses 20-23 isn’t just “thank you for saving our lives by telling us what the king dreamed” type of prayer.
 - a) Daniel realized it was something far more important than that: It was an opportunity for Daniel to tell the king just who is the God of Israel.
 - (1) Remember that all of history is centered on God working out his redemptive plan for mankind. For most of the Old Testament, God works *through* the nation of Israel, both collectively and individually. God gives special privileges and information to the Israelites, and God expects them to act on that information, not only in their own lives, but also as a witness to others.
 - (2) The same holds true for us. God reveals *additional* information to Christians. God expects us, collectively and individually, to accept this information to adjust our behavior and our attitude toward those who don’t believe.

- (3) This is why God revealed the dream to King Nebuchadnezzar. Not so he could chop off the heads of all the occult members, but so *someone* could step forward in faith, and use that situation for God's glory. Someone to reveal to the king what life is all about and who is in charge of it to begin with.
- (4) You can find the principal of "God looking for people who will be his witnesses all throughout the bible. Some examples:
 - (a) For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (2 Chronicles 16:9a, NIV)
- c) It is interesting to note that nothing is said about the prayer *for* the dream interpretation. We only have the thank-you-prayer *after* the interpretation.
 - i) I think God designed it that way to get our focus on the thank-you prayer.
 - ii) Also, if Daniel revealed the exact pre-prayer, I would suspect for ages-to-come people would attempt a word-for-word copy in order to expect the same results for their dreams. "Hey guys, watch me read your mind" ☺.
- d) End of Verse 19 and onward: Then Daniel praised the God of heaven ²⁰ and said: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his.²¹ He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.²² He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.²³ I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king."
- e) It's always good to read the prayer-as-whole to get a flavor for it before dissecting it.
- f) Re-read the prayer, and notice the emphasis on the power of God.
 - i) A big purpose of prayer is to remind *ourselves* of what God can do. God himself doesn't need to hear this. He is quite aware of his power. By praying this type of prayer, it helps us not to worry about our situation and get our focus directly on God.
 - ii) Let me comment a little on this verse-by-verse to get a flavor of its impact.
- 15. Verse 20: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his.
 - a) We tend to forget about the eternal nature of God. We get so focused on our life on earth, that we can forget about we will be praising God for eternity.
 - i) I take the view that some people are going to enjoy heaven more than others. As we grow in our relationship with God, we understand his nature better and we want to praise him *more and more* for his accomplishments in our life. Some of the great lessons of a mature Christian is our growing understanding of how bad sin is, and just how dependant we actually are on God. That alone is a reason to praise him forever and ever.
 - a) "So come on, let's leave the preschool fingerpainting exercises on Christ and get on with the grand work of art. Grow up in Christ. The basic foundational truths are in place: turning your back on "salvation by self-help" and turning in trust toward God...But there's so much more. Let's get on with it!" ("The Message" a paraphrase of Hebrews 6:1-2).
 - ii) This verse is also a reminder of humility. The verse says "wisdom and power" are his. All the great things we accomplish in life are only because God allows them to happen for his glory. I emphasize the "we" because God is working all things out in the life of a believer for his glory.

16. Verse 21a: He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them.
- a) "Times and Seasons" is probably referring to the rise and fall of government powers over the centuries. We sometimes think "America" will go on forever. I bet the Babylonians thought the same thing. History teaches otherwise.
 - i) Obey the government, for God is the one who has put it there. There is no government anywhere that God has not placed in power. (Romans 13:1 TLB)
17. Verse 21b: He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.
- a) There is a principal in the Bible that those who seek the knowledge of God will get "additional" knowledge. It is the concept of growing into maturity.
 - i) There are a lot of proverbs that teach this principal. Here is an example.
 - a) Teach a wise man, and he will be the wiser; teach a good man, and he will learn more. (Proverbs 9:9 TLB)
 - ii) The corollary is the principal that God will not violate our free will. If we choose to stop growing as a Christian, God will not take us up to "the next level". God *desires* that we continue to grow, but will not force us.
18. Verse 22: He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.
- a) This is something greater than what is implied in the end of Verse 21.
 - b) I believe this verse refers to the Holy Spirit working in our life. The concept of "light and darkness", Biblically, refers to God and the revelation of "light" unto darkness.
 - i) The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. (John 1:5 NIV)
 - c) One of the great concepts to believers is that the Holy Spirit teaches us "all things".
 - i) Jesus said, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:26 NIV, emphasis added.)
 - ii) This ties into what Daniel is teaching about "revealing deep and hidden things". There is a natural and "supernatural" comprehension of the Bible. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God reveals personal applications to your life when one reads and meditates (i.e. thinks about it) the Bible.
19. Verse 23, the conclusion: I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king."
- a) This is a wrap-up "thank you" verse. God *choose* Daniel to accomplish this action. God is under no obligation to accommodate Daniel. God is sovereign. He simply could have said no, and let Daniel be killed. One can talk about "what if's", but that is irrelevant to this point. The point is Daniel is thanking God for choosing him to be used by God, as we all ought to be thankful to God for what he is accomplishing in our lives.
20. Verse 24: Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him."
- a) Notice Daniel's confidence approaching the king. He is positive the dream was from God and not just his imagination!
 - b) I like that Daniel said "don't execute the wise men of Babylon".
 - i) Daniel could have said, "Don't execute me and my 3 buddies, the rest? Well..."
 - a) There were many "fellow-Jews" among the other "wise men."
 - b) Daniel wanted to show that God himself, and God-alone has the power to interpret dreams. Killing innocent "wise-men" won't change that.

- ii) I also notice Daniel didn't say anything about the magicians and astrologers.
 - a) In the Hebrew Bible, it is a capital crime to perform those things. (Reference: Exodus 22:18)
 - b) Maybe the King already rounded up and killed that group, or Daniel was referring to everyone by this sentence.
 - c) The text doesn't say, we don't know. It's just something to think about!
- 21. Verse 25: Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and said, "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means."
 - a) You can sense the ego of Arioch in this sentence. Arioch said "He" found someone who could interpret the dream! Arioch took the credit for "finding" Daniel. I suspect Daniel wrote this years after it took place. The humor of that little egotistical comment probably stuck in Daniel's head.
- 22. Verse 26: The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?"
 - a) At this point, we are going to stop until next week.
 - b) Next week, is the first of many lessons of Daniel that primarily focus on prophecy.
 - c) We're only half way through Chapter 2, so I could either cut it shorter than I usually write for a week, or make it very long. Luckily, I'm in a good mood. ☺
- 23. Let's pray: Father, we thank you for these lessons you have taught on Daniel. Give us the discipline to stand up for our convictions. We all like Daniel go through times that seem impossible from our perspective. Help us to remember that you are the God of gods, and the difficult situations in our lives just give you another chance to glorify yourselves through us. Give us the boldness of Daniel so that we may be better witnesses for you. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Bonus material... The next 2 pages are the handouts for the class...

Notes for Daniel- Chapter 2 Part 1: (Page 1 of 3)

"Anything Is Possible Through Prayer"

A Summary of Chapter 2:

1. Part 1: Part King Nebuchadnezzar has a bad dream about his future. He has no idea what it means and needs an explanation. (Verses 1-3)
2. Part 2: The King demands his "wise-men" and occult-magicians to explain
1) what he dreamed and 2) interpret it. Succeed? Lots of rewards; Fail? Death! (Verses 4-15)
3. Part 3: Daniel, who is among "the wise men", has a prayer meeting with his three friends. God reveals the dream to Daniel. Daniel then praises God for answered prayer. (Verses 16-23)
4. Part 4: Daniel, in front of the King, gives the God of Israel all the credit. (Verses 24-30)
5. Part 5: Daniel explains the meaning of the dream to the king. (Verses 31-45)
6. Part 6: The King praises Daniel's God for revealing the dream. Therefore, nobody has to die. Daniel and his 3 friends get top cabinet positions. ☺ (Verses 46-49)

Today's lesson only covers #1 through #3. Parts #4-#6 we'll cover next week.

Verse 1

- Most commentators believe Chapter 2 takes place a few years after Daniel finishes "grad. school".
- King Nebuchadnezzar was troubled by dreams. We learn in Verse 29 that the king was thinking about his future: "Daniel said, "As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen." (Daniel 2:29)
- Notice God can send messages to non-saved people.

Verses 2-3

- King Nebuchadnezzar had occult leaders as advisors.
- This is common throughout history:
- In the book of Exodus, the Egyptian Pharaoh also had servant-occultists who could duplicate a few of Moses' plagues. Thus the Pharaoh was reluctant to pay attention to Moses during those early plagues.
- In Acts Chapter 13, when Paul starts his first missionary journey, the first place he goes to is the island of Cyprus. We learn that the governor of Cyprus has a right-hand-man who was a sorcerer named Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6)

Verses 4-7

- From Verse 4 to the End of Chapter 7, the book is written in Aramaic, as opposed to Hebrew. Chapter 1, and then Chapters 8 through 12 are all written in Hebrew.
- Why? Lots of speculation, but no definite answers:
- Aramaic was the common language of the greater territory (much like English today).
- Chapters 2-7 are focused primarily on Gentile kings. Thus a gentile language is used.
- Chapters 8-12 are focuses primarily on the future of the nation of Israel, thus, Hebrew.
- Daniel is asked to read the king's mind. This is something new/unique in Bible history.
- Joseph could interpret dreams, but the dreams were *given* to Joseph (Genesis 41).

Notes for Daniel- Chapter 2 Part 1 (Page 2 of 3)

- Verses 10: The occultists proclaim that nobody can reveal dreams but God alone.
 - Notice the occultists did not pray to *their* gods to reveal Nebuchadnezzar's dream.
 - This means they understood the limitation of their power.
- Verses 10 Part 2: God can read our thoughts!
 - God is perfect. A perfect God can not learn. Therefore he knows all, even our thoughts!
 - God can read our thoughts; all of them, good and bad!
 - "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." (Genesis 6:5 NIV)
 - "Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?" (Matthew 9:4 NIV)
 - Jesus says, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders... (Mark 7:21, NIV)
 - So what is the remedy to dealing with our evil thoughts?
 - "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they (demonic powers) have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete. (2nd Corinthians 10:4-6, NIV).

Verse 12: Nebuchadnezzar is saying in effect: "you can't read my mind? What good are you? Why should I have you as consultants?, Off with all of your heads!"

- Yes this is an over-reaction to a problem. Kings and governments often over-react to problems. We have to deal with their actions!
- The king's fury is like that of a roaring lion; to rouse his anger is to risk your life. (Proverbs 20:2 The Living Bible.)

Verse 17: Daniel, arrested for the crime of not being a mind-reader, calls for a prayer meeting!

- Why did Daniel include his friends in this prayer meeting? Couldn't Daniel pray by himself?
- Their lives were in danger too. Daniel was being a witness *to* them.
- God encourages group prayer. Christianity was never designed to be a solo-act.
- Jesus said, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." (Matthew 18:20 NIV)

Verse 19: God reveals Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel in a vision that night (after the prayer meeting)

- (1) Notice the words of prayer to reveal the dream was not disclosed in the text.
- I suspect it was left out so we would not use it as a model of how to read minds!
- Only the post-revelation prayer of gratitude is given in verses 19-23.
- God wants us to focus on worshipping *Him*, not the methodology of the prayer of "how to read a king's mind!"
- (2) Notice the dream-revelation was given to Daniel only.
- I wonder if the others were disappointed that they didn't get the revelation as well.
- God revealed the dream to Daniel only as God *appointed* Daniel to be a witness to King Nebuchadnezzar. Remember God is sovereign and *he* decides who gets the revelation.

Notes for Daniel- Chapter 2 Part 1 (Page 3 of 3)

Verse 19: God reveals Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel (cont.)

- (3) Notice the purpose of why God gave the revelation of the dream.
- It wasn't just to keep Daniel alive.
- It was for Daniel to have an opportunity to be a witness to the king.
- God *designed* this whole "give Nebuchadnezzar a nightmare" scenario. God loves all people, including pagan kings, and wants them to turn to the living God.
- If God gives *you* a special privilege or talent, He expects you to act upon it for His glory!
- For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (2 Chronicles 16:9a, NIV)

Verses 20-23: The praise-prayer of Daniel and his three companions:

- (1) The emphasis on the power of God.
- God is quite aware of how powerful he is. ☺ We pray this prayer for our remembrance.
- (2) The emphasis on the eternal nature of God.
- We do this to get our focus out of the momentary-crisis on to the "big picture".
- "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28 NIV)
- (3) God is in charge of the rise and fall of kings and kingdoms (including the United States)
- Obey the government, for God is the one who has put it there. There is no government anywhere that God has not placed in power. (Romans 13:1 TLB)
- (4) God gives "wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning" (Verse 21)
- This is a call to grow in maturity in our faith and relationship to God.
- The corollary is that God will not violate our free will. If we choose *not* to grow in our relationship with Christ, God leaves us at the level we are at.
- "So come on, let's leave the preschool fingerpainting exercises on Christ and get on with the grand work of art. Grow up in Christ. The basic foundational truths are in place: turning your back on "salvation by self-help" and turning in trust toward God...But there's so much more. Let's get on with it!" ("The Message" a paraphrase of Hebrews 6:1-2).
- (5) God reveals "deep and hidden things" (Verse 22). This is the work of the Holy Spirit.
- It is only through the illumination of the Spirit can we understand how God is working.
- The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. (John 1:5 NIV)
- One of the great promises to believers is that the Holy Spirit teaches us "all things".
- Jesus said, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:26 NIV, emphasis added.)
- "All" means all things. Next time you're confused about a Bible verse, ask God to reveal the meaning of that verse. God promised to teach us all things!

Verse 24: Daniel goes to the king and says in effect "Hold the executions, I've got your answer".

- Daniel asked that all the executions stop, even of the occultists.
- In Exodus 22:18, it is a capitol crime for a Jews to get involved with occultism. Still, Daniel asked to stop the executions. Daniel wanted to show all that God is the God and let the influence of the king (and those in his court) have an opportunity to repent.

We'll finish Chapter 2 in the next lesson.