

## Daniel 2 (Part 1) - John Karmelich

How should we respond to the question, "I'm in a horrible situation and I don't know what to do next?" Many a person has taken their lives out of fear of what they think their future entails. That leads me to Daniel. In Chapter 1 we read that Daniel was a teenager taken from his family and relocated to another country and forced to learn a lifestyle contrary to the way he was raised. In this chapter we find Daniel at the end of his three-year training period, told that the king of the empire decided everyone who went through that training and others on "wise guy payroll" were going to be killed unless they told the king exactly what he dreamed that night as well as what the dream meant! I know each of us have problems, but one has to admit this would be a horrible one, where no solution is possible except accepting death!

When Daniel heard that news he called his three friends who were in the same predicament, and said in effect, "It's time for a prayer meeting and this one's serious!" The good news is God revealed what that dream was to Daniel and what it meant. He spends a few verses in this chapter praising God for telling him what the dream meant, and then went to set up an appointment to tell the king what it meant! This is also a good reminder that turning to prayer is a great first step when dealing with any situation!

OK John, good for Daniel. This was 2,600 years ago. I am glad he survived through that predicament. What does any of that have to do with my life? Obviously, God doesn't give us special visions about a tough decision we must make. While God can do what He wants when He wants, what He still tells us in effect is, "Trust Me, I still have a great plan for your life. Don't give up or call it quits. I know what you're going through and I want you to trust Me as I guide your life for My glory!" One of my favorite promises in the bible is God will never (as in NEVER!) leave us or forsake us! (Deuteronomy 31:6 and Hebrews 13:5). To quote one of my favorite bible teachers, "I think God stays up late at night thinking of ways to test me to ask in effect, do you trust Me now, even through this?" That's the lesson Daniel's learning here in this chapter (he's still a teenager when this chapter occurred) and the lesson God wants us to learn from this part of the chapter.

Before I get into the chapter itself, let me explain why I split Chapter 2 into two lessons. The first part of this chapter deals with the issue of trusting God. The second half will describe a detailed prediction of the future that covers in effect life in Israel from Daniel's time until when Jesus comes and even a bit of life around the time of what Christians call "Jesus Second Coming!" To explain all of that requires a separate lesson, which is why I split Chapter 2 into two lessons. With that said, let me set the scene of the text of the first half of this chapter and then I'll get back to how it affects our lives here and now!

In the first chapter, we learned that Daniel was taken prisoner to Babylon (from Israel to Iraq) and he is being "brainwashed" as a teenager to live that foreign lifestyle. It meant given a new name learning the culture and being trained to be of use to the Babylonian Emperor through three years of training. In the second chapter, the scene picks up at the end of that training period. He now has effectively become an apprentice in the Babylonian school of "wise men" which is for those who are considered very smart as well as consult the gods to give the emperor advice as needed!

With that said, the scene switches in Chapter 2 to the Babylonian Emperor (or king as I use both words to describe this guy interchangeably) named Nebuchadnezzar. A bit of background might help: When he took Daniel and others prisoner, "Nebbie" was the head general and his father was the emperor. He won a big war against Egypt and was in effect returning home to Babylon (again Iraq today) and had to travel through Israel to get home. While he was in the "neighborhood" he wanted to show the Israelites who is really running the Middle East now! So "Nebbie" took some young Israelite men captive and he

set up a new Israel "king" to say in effect, "I'm in charge now, deal with it". Daniel was among the men he took captives. When "Nebbie" got home, his father died so now he's the king over a vast territory.

With that said, Chapter 2 opens three years after Chapter 1. Daniel is finishing or just finished a three year "graduate school" in Babylon where he got placed among a group of people called the "wise men" in Babylon. As I said, think of this group as bright people who gave advice to the king. With that said, the chapter opens with the king having a nightmare and didn't sleep well. Nebuchadnezzar figured in a sense, "I've got these people on the government payroll who claim to be really smart or they claim they access to the gods! I'll make them tell me what the dream was and what the meaning of it was."

As an executive incentive, Nebuchadnezzar said in effect, "Tell me what I dreamed and its meaning, or I will kill you. If you can tell me the meaning I'll reward you greatly!" Daniel along with his 3 friends who were in the same predicament were part of the group told "Tell me what I dreamed or die!" We've got to admit, that's a situation where we'd think, "This is it, we're going to die might as well accept that fact and end it all"! Yes I knew devout Christians who've suffered horribly and died in ways I'd never want to go through. My simple point is we don't know what the future holds and it should never be the end, until God says it is so! That's what Daniel did here. When he heard this news he said in effect, it's time for a prayer meeting and this time it's serious!

I should also point something else out here: From the 4th verse in this chapter to the end of Chapter 7, the text is written in Aramaic. It's similar to Hebrew, and was the "business language" of that day. I'd argue the reason for the switch is these chapters are in effect messages geared for the Gentile (all non-Jewish people) nations as the messages affect their relationship with God. Now that you know that, I'll return to describing this chapter.

The chapter talks about failed stalling techniques from those who were going to be killed. We also get some dialogue between Daniel and the executioner in effect to say, "Sir, I know you're just doing your job, but I'd really like to pray with my friends tonight and then see the king after that! The executioner agrees with this plan. After the prayer meeting, we're don't read any specifics of the vision, just Daniel praising God for giving him the info! After that prayer meeting we simply see Daniel praising God for telling Him what the dream was and what it means.

We get a bit of humor in the sense that the executioner takes credit for finding Daniel, and solving this dilemma for his king. I also give the king credit for saying in effect, "Let's see what this kid has to say about the dream!" As to the specifics of the dream, that will be the topic of the next lesson. I also was impressed that Daniel told the king in effect, "Nobody has to die, as I know the answer even before he explained the dream to the king!" It's a reminder to us that we're not to request the death of those we're not in agreement with about God, but just to witness to them. That's what Daniel hopes, as he's willing to tell the king the truth about who God is and the fact He's in charge of the world and knows the future before it occurs! In fact, for the final part of the text before the dream itself, Daniel "lays it on thick" to tell Nebuchadnezzar exactly who God is and why knowing Him is more important than honoring all of the false gods worshipped in the Babylonian empire.

If interested, the other two links on this section of the book are a more detailed lesson that I did write about twenty years ago. You're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John