

# A King Seeks Truth

March 7, 2021

Daniel 2:1-16

We are studying the book of Daniel. We've gone through chapter 1, the easy chapter, the summary chapter at the beginning of the book, the one that gives you the whole point of the book: When God sends you to Babylon, it is because there are things to be done there that you can do that will advance His kingdom. He is not sending you there to punish you, but to advance His purposes, both to you and through you to people there. And it may be the worst of circumstances that has taken you to Babylon, but some really, really good things can come out of it. That is what God is like.

So, that is what we have already learned in chapter 1. Now we come to chapter 2, our next example of the principles laid out in chapter 1. Here, Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream, a troubling dream. And so, he does what kings of those days did, He calls together his advisors, his dream interpreters (wise men) to help him understand this "message from the gods." So far, so normal. What makes this situation so unique is the request made by the king. Before interpreting the dream, these "wise men," these consultants of the spirit world, the magic, the stars, the ones who have direct contact with the unseen world, before they can interpret the dream, they must first tell the king the dream.

Ahh, this clearly takes the whole situation to another level. Anyone can give an interpretation claiming to receive that interpretation from the spirit world. But only one who actually has contact with the spirit world or the god(s) of the

spirit world can tell you the dream itself. And if the story stopped right here, we as students of Scripture and followers of the God of Scripture could tell you already how this would all turn out. Right? This situation is now elevated to a battle of the gods. All of these “wise men” claim to be in contact with the god(s). But we know there is only one true God, who knows all including dreams, including what is in men’s hearts, including the future! Guess who is going to win this battle of the gods? And who do you think might be in the middle, speaking for this God who knows all? Of course, Daniel! We know this from chapter I, we know this from Joseph’s example with Pharaoh, we know this from knowing God. We all know who is going to win!!!!

So, this morning, we are going to begin our study of this chapter. In fact, we will not get to the content of the dream until two weeks! But the point of the text is not the content of the dream but the circumstances that led to the understanding of the dream. And that will be our focus this week and next. Follow along as I read the first 16 verses of Daniel 2.

Main point: Only an all-knowing God can reveal that which is truly hidden.

Even today, there are many who would claim to be able to reveal hidden things, secrets, the future. There are signs along city streets of people willing to tell you hidden things if you pay them some money. They will read your palms, consult the stars, turn over cards, tell you your fortune in a cookie. They may consult the stars, the dead, the magic arts, you name it, but the truth is that only an all-knowing God can actually tell with certainty things that are truly hidden. He is the God of revelation, and He is sovereign over His creation. He controls that which He creates. And so, He KNOWS things in a way that no one else can or does, and it is a connection with Him that allows mere mortals like us to know such things with certainty.

So, as we begin this venture, I suggest that on one hand you don't know the things you think you know. And on the other hand, you can know things you think you cannot know. The question is, how connected are you to the God who knows all? (2 parts)

I. It makes sense that people who claim to have connections with the gods ought to know what the gods know. vv. I-II

That makes perfect sense to me. You can joke about it, but the people who publish your lucky numbers, or can read your palms ought to be winning the lottery every week, right? They ought to be winning gobs of money every week betting on horse races or March Madness. Then why are they still advertising to tell your future for \$25? Or, perhaps they are not as connected as they claim that they are. This is the point of Daniel 2.

v.I- In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him.

It might seem on the surface that the dates here don't add up, since Daniel's schooling was for three years and this is happening in year 2 of the king's reign. But that could be because of the way they counted years of kings. This event likely happened within the first year of Daniel being placed in the king's service. This is the initial test in Daniel as an advisor to the king who is 10 times better than his peers. Or, it could be that such advisors in training were counted as part of the whole.

The event begins with the king having a dream, a troubling dream, one that kept him awake. As is true today, there are dreams, and then there are dreams. Most

dreams are of no consequence. I can't tell you how many times I have dreamt that I am back in college, I haven't gone to class all semester and today I have to take the final. That's just a run-of-the-mill sort of dream. But then, there are dreams that clearly mean something. Some supreme spiritual being was trying to communicate with King Nebuchadnezzar, clearly. But what was He trying to say?

2 Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. 3 And the king said to them, "I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream."

So, the king calls in all of his advisors. Now, by their titles we can tell that they consulted various sources for their "inside" information. And it makes sense from their perspective. Since there are many gods and you don't know which one might send you a message, you keep a variety of "advisors" on staff. Each one had his specialty. The one that is not visible in English is the last one, the Chaldeans. This can be a proper noun for a culture, or it could be a word meaning "astrologer." It seems this later would be the case here. These were the men who consulted the stars for their information. And one of these becomes the spokesman.

4 Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation." 5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. 6 But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation."

They are so helpful, aren't they? Just tell us the dream and we will give you the right interpretation. Surely one of them will recognize the content of the dream and put it in the right context. But the king is firm on this. The one who interprets the dream must first tell the king the dream itself. Now, some might think this is because the king has perhaps forgotten the dream. But that doesn't make sense. He has to know it enough to confirm what they tell him. No, the issue here, unstated but clear, is that if you truly have a link to the spirit world as you claim, then the spirit you represent ought to be able to repeat the content of the dream to you. If the spirit world was contacting me, then this same spirit (or god) could contact you as well, particularly if you claim to be connected to him. And if you can't tell me the dream, then why should I believe your interpretation of the dream? I don't want your opinion, I want the opinion of the one who sent me the dream!

This all makes sense to me. I think this is a great test. But since the king had all of these advisors, it makes sense to me that this was a particularly important and troubling dream to the king. In other words, he did not want to get this one wrong. This was an important dream.

So, he ups the stakes. If you get it right, then you will be handsomely rewarded. But, if you can't get it right, then you will die a most gruesome death. The matter has just been elevated to an issue of life or death. This is a really bad news dream!

7 They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation." 8 The king answered and said, "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm— 9 if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words

before me till the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation.”

So, they plead with the king again. “Just tell us the dream and we will be able to do our job.” I get this. I often tell people my counsel is only as good as the information I am given. But in this case, the king is not interested in their opinion, their perspective. He wants the perspective of the one who sent him the dream. And so, the issue is whether you as a counselor are actually as connected to the world of the gods as you claim you are. After all, how does one prove that he has actual information from God? You prove it by telling the king something that he knows but you couldn’t possibly know. If you can do that, you are connected to the god who sent him the dream. Then he would be willing to listen to your explanation.

The New Testament presents a similar thing with the ministry of Jesus. Jesus spoke with authority. He pronounced the forgiveness of sin! So the only way He could show He had the power and authority to do so was to perform miracles, or signs. The signs proved the authority to speak for God Himself. And so it is here. If you can do the first, you have credibility to do the second.

10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is not a man on earth who can meet the king’s demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. 11 The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.”

I think v.10 is the center of this whole story, certainly of our section of the text for today. The response of the advisors tells it all. It proves that they were phony...and they knew it! We read these words and instantly start grinning!

That's the whole point: no man can do what the king has asked. Right, but you are claiming to not be ordinary men. You are claiming to be connected to the gods. Your position as an advisor is not because you are wise. You are an advisor because you are connected to the gods. If you are not connected to the gods, then I do not want you as an advisor!

Sometimes, I am not very encouraging to people headed into ministry. I know that. I remember having a conversation with a young man some years ago. But this young man was training to be a youth pastor. He was just finishing up his bachelor's degree, excited to put his training into practice. I shocked him when I told him he was dangerous. I told him that as a pastor, people would come into his office seeking his counsel. But the truth was, they would not care at all about his opinion. They didn't want to know what he thought. They wanted to know what God thought! And he hadn't spent enough time with God, studying His word, knowing how God thinks to be confident he represented God well. At this point, it would just be the opinion of man. That put him in a dangerous position, claiming to speak for God but not really knowing God yet.

In essence, that is what these advisors were saying, "we don't really know the gods as we claim we do." "Just let us do our thing!" No, not when the issue is really, really important. When the message comes from God, then the interpreter ought to know God. It makes sense that people who claim to have connections with the gods ought to know what the gods know. It makes sense that those who speak for God actually know the God they speak for. Right?

II. For the one who truly knows God, such a thing is not really a big deal. vv. 12-16

Here, Daniel can't quite grasp the seriousness of the situation. What is all the fuss? Just tell the king what he has asked for. I trust you can already see that Daniel has a foundation under him. He has spent time with God. He has been able to demonstrate an ability to understand dreams and visions as it said back in 1:17.

In other words, what I want you to see here is not some egotistical young man who thinks he's all that. No, Daniel knows God. He knows the God who knows all. He has been given by this God who knows all a gift, an ability that others don't have. Doing what the king has demanded is not impossible for Daniel. It is what he was born to do.

12 Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed.

The stakes are now taken even higher. The time has run out for someone to come forward and present the dream and interpretation. Notice that he deals with the whole group. They will all be held accountable that no one from among them could do what the king asked. I'm not sure how many such advisors the king had, but I am confident there were plenty. But if in this plentiful stable of advisors there was found no one who could actually do what advisors claimed to do, then why have advisors? They were all worthless! In our society we might fire them. But when you are the king of the Babylonian empire, you have them put to death, torn limb from limb as the terms suggest. That's what you do with people who claim to be connected to God but are not actually connected to God.

13 So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.

Finally, word of this situation comes to Daniel. He seems to have been isolated up to this point. Why? We are not told. All we know is that by the time he hears about the situation, the group has failed despite several chances and the decree has gone out that all such advisors to the king be killed. Daniel and his friends were to die like the rest.

14 Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. 15 He declared to Arioch, the king's captain, "Why is the decree of the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel.

What's the big deal? What's all the commotion about? Why is everyone having to die? Not only is Daniel out of the loop, but I take from this that the little information he has doesn't add up. "What do you mean no one can tell the king his dream? Isn't that what you all do? Tell him the dream! That is what you do, right?

Are you catching this? What has everyone over the edge is not seen as a big deal for Daniel. Again, it is not so much that Daniel is an arrogant young man, than that he is used to this situation. This is old hat to him. This is a normal day at the office.

So, the captain of the guard tells Daniel the whole story. He lays out the situation. Remember, this is the man sent to kill Daniel and all the rest. But the picture here is that he is filling in Daniel, treating him not as some criminal but as someone who might actually be able to deal with the problem.

16 And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king.

Again, I see this as a routine day at the office. This is not some insurmountable, impossible situation that ought to cause you all you know to panic. Rather, I can come in on Monday and deal with it. Is this okay with you? This is what Daniel does. This is what he has been trained to do. This is what he has spent all this time with God preparing for. This is why God brought him to Babylon!

If we believe this passage is the Word of God, then what should be different about our lives?

- 1) We will remind ourselves that only the One true God knows all.
- 2) We will stay away from all those who falsely promise a connection with the spiritual world.
- 3) We will make it a priority to spend time getting to know the God who knows all.
- 4) We will be ready for God to use us in the way that He has gifted and sent us.