

Daniel

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[0 : 00] With Daniel chapter 2, and it is one of the most extraordinary chapters in all the Bible, you will see how it contains some very unusual kind of things, particularly the demand that the king made in response to the dream that he had.

And before we engage the chapter, I just want to remind you that as a point was made just recently in a message, which at Grace Sunday morning, actually the last couple of Sunday mornings, we pointed out how it is that in the beginning of humanity, and I'm talking about going all the way back to Genesis, in the beginning of humanity, God often related to men in a very physical, in-your-face kind of way.

There were face-to-face encounters, there were numerous Christophanies, that is, the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ prior to his ever being born in Bethlehem.

Because you will recall, and I don't want to get too far afield with this, but you will recall that while our Lord Jesus existed from eternity past, as the eternal Son of the eternal Father, he did not have the name Jesus, which was not given to him until he was born in Bethlehem.

And the angel instructed Mary, Call his name Jesus, he shall save his people from their sins. Prior to that time, prior to the incarnation, prior to the Son of God being made flesh, he was a spirit being.

[1 : 47] And that spirit being, which is deity, was deity, took upon him humanity, and was born, and he is in a body. But prior to that time, going back even thousands of years, his pre-existence sometimes was revealed in the Old Testament years and years, hundreds of years, before Bethlehem.

And we saw that in Genesis 19, where the three angels supposedly appeared to Abraham, and one of those was none other than the Son of God.

He also appeared to Joshua as the captain of the Lord's host. So we've got numerous Christophanies, and there's going to be another coming up in connection with Daniel's three friends and the fiery furnace.

The fourth figure in there who is unidentified, guess who it is. And that will surface as we get along a little bit further. So right now, we are in chapter 2, and we're dealing with a very primitive kind of situation.

God often, usually, worked through direct encounters, such as with Abraham and with Moses. Many times, these were hands-on, very physical.

[3 : 09] This is precisely why the Old Testament is just peppered with miraculous manifestations and deliverances, one kind after another, because nothing is more physical than witnessing a miracle with your own eyes.

God provided numerous miracles like that for the people of Israel. And the principal reason I think He did that was because this was mankind in its humanity, humanity in its infancy.

And God related to these people in ways that were very dynamic, very in-your-face, very up-front, very concrete, very physical. So that the essence of it and the essence of their belief was in what they saw.

That is a kind of immaturity. When you have to believe because you see, that is not complimentary, that's elementary.

And we find that all throughout the Old Testament. This is why Paul said the Jews require a sign.

[4 : 24] and he wrote to the Corinthians. The Jews require, why did they require a sign? Because they were used to signs. God spoke to them in signs. What were the signs? The signs were miracles.

Physical, visible miracles that you could look at and see. Like the plagues. Like the Dead Sea Crossing. Like the manna from heaven. Like the water out of the rock.

All of these things were visible and physical. Very hands-on. Very concrete. And tie that in, tie that in with what Jesus said to doubting Thomas.

Remember? After the resurrection, Thomas couldn't believe. And then when Christ confronted him and he saw this physical appearance of his same Lord and was invited to put forth his hand and feel his side and so on.

And Thomas' response was my Lord and my God. Well, he was convinced then. But the only reason he was convinced was not because of what the other apostles told him. No, he didn't believe them.

[5 : 36] He believed because he saw, because he felt. And that monumental statement that Jesus made was Thomas, because you have seen me.

there's that Jews requiring the sign again. Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are they who having not seen will believe.

And fellas, that's you. That's me. I've never seen the risen Christ. Why do we believe? We believe on the basis of the testimony of the word of God.

we believe because this is what we have heard. Faith comes by hearing. And hearing by the word of God. So, we believe because credible testimony has been established.

Interesting, we're talking about credible testimony now, given what's been going on the past week. But credible testimony has been given and confirmed and reconfirmed and reconfirmed and if they were available, the FBI could have gone back and examined these guys and gotten their testimony and established it.

[6 : 51] But there was no FBI back then. But anyway, the record stands. And what we've continued to see as we move through the book of Daniel is very physical things.

Very physical things because it still involves Israel. Our thing today is not physical and material. Contrary to what some believe, they think maybe that we should be doing miracles today, raising the dead and all the rest because that's what they did in the Bible.

Yes, they did. But that was humanity in its infancy. And today is the dispensation or the administration of the grace of God, not of the miraculous and the physical.

So there is a progression of doctrine that needs to be understood. Now we are reaching back into history, dealing with the physical again, and we need to keep that in mind.

So in the second year, chapter 2, the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.

[7 : 54] Let me inject something here. Nebuchadnezzar is the king, at this time, of Babylon. Babylon is where the very seedbed of evil sprang up.

That becomes very apparent in Revelation chapter 17 and 18. And by the way, Babylon is going to be rebuilt and it's going to be destroyed again, decimated, I mean flattened.

And there will be a new king at that time, but it certainly won't be Nebuchadnezzar. But Nebuchadnezzar is king over an area that is referred to as the mother of harlotry.

The mother of harlotry. And this is not talking about sexual impropriety. It's not that kind of harlotry. This is idolatry.

It is the worship of false gods. And we're going to see that surface again here in Daniel 2 because all through history, back from Genesis onward, man has had difficulty with idolatry from the get-go.

[9 : 08] And that is going to be prominent right here in chapter 2. So let's move on. Keep in mind this guy, Nebuchadnezzar, is going to be the king over the singular superpower that existed at that day.

And he is one brutal individual. But there is a bright note. Later on, in the book of Daniel, by the way, we are going to see Nebuchadnezzar in heaven, which is quite a stretch.

It is just a picture of the grace of God in the Old Testament. Nebuchadnezzar is going to be in heaven. But let's, before I get ahead of myself, in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, he had dreams, and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him.

His spirit is his immaterial inner being. It is the seat of human emotions. And when we experience something in our spirit, it is a feeling.

There are lots of things that take place in the human spirit, and emotion is one of them. We feel sorrow, we feel elation, we feel gladness, we feel regret, remorse.

[10 : 35] All of these emotional feelings surface in the human spirit, and then they are expressed outwardly in body language.

And this is why you can often tell what's going on inside of a person by looking at their facial expressions. They may be smiling, laughing, crying, angry, angry.

Sometimes you can interpret what's going on inside of a person just by looking at their body language. And this king had a dream that really troubled him.

His sleep left him, tossing, turning, couldn't sleep. And then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers, and the chaldeans, all of these people belonged to a cultic kind of group that was nothing more than demonized.

This is Satan operating back here in the hearts and minds of these evil people. And fellas, I don't want to get too far afield with this, but just let me say this. I am absolutely convinced, from Genesis 3, with the temptation that came from what was referred to as the serpent, from Genesis 3 to this present day, Satan, the adversary, has his finger in every piece of human pie there is.

[12 : 16] No, I am not blaming all of the evil on Satan. I am not talking about the devil made me do it, because we have the capacity, unfortunately, within ourselves to be downright evil.

We don't need help from the adversary. But there are those who are open to his advances. And these people were among them.

They are all false teachers, false prophets, conjurers up of all kinds of evil that people were dabbling in at this time, and they represented, hard as it is to believe, they represented the intellectual, educated, elite of their day.

And by the way, we have some counterparts today. Lots of them are serving in our universities and are drawing six-figure salaries. So that's something to think about.

The king gave orders to these people to tell the king of dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. And the king said to them, I had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream.

[13 : 31] king. Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic. Oh, king, live forever. Now what is this live forever business? That is standard protocol.

It is something that these people had a habit, a custom of saying when they approached the king. When you approach royalty, you're supposed to think of something nice to say when you address the king.

And this is kind of like a God bless the king, this kind of thing, you know, your royal majesty, and so on.

So, oh, king, live forever. Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation. And they knew that they would be able to take the elements of the dream and fashion some kind of a response to the meaning of the dream.

And, when they did, the king wouldn't know any difference whether it was right, wrong, or anything else. They knew that, and you know something? Apparently, the king knew that too.

[14 : 44] Because there is good reason to believe he didn't have a whole lot of confidence in these guys. And I suspect that one of the principal reasons why he didn't, was likely because on more than one occasion they had been proven wrong.

So he had reason to lack confidence in them. But on the other hand, they were still the best that was available. And all of these people constituted a kind of cadre of advisors, not exactly maybe cabinet members, but close.

They had a lot of influence with the king. And they said, you tell us the king and we'll tell you the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeus, the command from me is firm.

In other words, I'm giving you an order and I am not going to rescind it. It is firm, it stands.

What I'm telling you now is not subject to negotiation. The command from me is firm. If you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be made of rubbish even.

[16 : 02] Now, I think this kind of confirms my suspicion that he didn't have a lot of confidence in these guys. But still, who else was there? Nobody else as far as they were concerned.

And he doesn't know a thing at this point in time about Daniel. By the way, this torn limb from limb is to be interpreted literally.

What they did was they took four horses and they tied a horse to a human limb, arms and legs, and the horses were all going in different directions at the command of whoever was driving them.

And the horses pulled and heaved and pulled and you just cannot imagine the agony of what anyone being drawn and quartered would be going through.

It's unimaginable. And fellas, this is a picture of human brutality. reality. And we're going to see it, and we've seen it today.

[17 : 17] We've seen it today with some of the terrorist executions of people, how unspeakably brutal they can be. Where does this come from?

It comes from the fallenness and the heart and the evil of the individual prompted and agitated and encouraged by satanic influence. you will be drawn and quartered or torn limb from limb and your houses will be made of rubbish sheep.

But, if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor.

Therefore, declare to me the dream and its interpretation. Now, they're stalling for time. They answered a second time, verse 7.

Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation. The king answers and said, I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm.

[18 : 37] And if you do not make known the dreams of me, there is only one decree for you, for you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed.

Therefore, tell me the dream that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation. Wow! You talk about stress, talk about pressure.

These guys are sweating like they have never sweated. They know that all this king has to do is point his finger and say, off with his head, and that's the end of him.

This is brutality at its worst. And what the king is saying is, I don't trust you guys. I know you'll all get together, and you'll conjure up something, and you're just buying for time now, and oh yes, you want to be able to come back, and after you put your heads together, you'll come up with some cock and bull story, and you'll all agree to it, and you'll try to sell it to me.

But listen, my position is this. If you are really able to interpret what this dream means, then you ought to be able to tell me what I dreamed.

[19 : 59] Otherwise, your phoniness is going to be put on display, and you're going to be executed. And you talk about sweating, and this comes across as the most unusual, unfair kind of demand from the king.

But look at the king's reasoning process. He is actually saying, if you possess the wisdom that you say you do, and you can tell me all that this dream means, then there's no logical reason why you shouldn't be able to tell me what the dream was.

Now, between a rock and a hard place, these guys are really up against it. I mean, they are looking at each other, and the sweat starts to pour.

And the Chaldeans answered the king in verse 10, 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.

And Nebuchadnezzar's saying, not until now. Not until now. And that's the man. You talk about a no-nonsense monarch. This guy is a no-nonsense guy.

[21 : 25] And they are pleading, what they are doing is they are using an attempted legal ploy by saying, your majesty, there is no precedent for this.

We cannot point to anything in history where any king has ever made this kind of a demand on anyone. And the implication is, this is an unreasonable request, but they're afraid to come right out and call him unreasonable or overly demanding, so they are just pleading and stuttering their case.

Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult. No one could interpret it except God's, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh.

And because of this, the king became indignant and very furious. That means you could see his face turning red and you could see the veins in his neck pop out.

This guy is mad. I mean, he is really angry. And these guys are standing before him, trembling in their boots for their very life.

[22 : 42] The king became very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill him because they were considered part of this group of advisors.

They had been brought as prisoners from Israel and they had been carefully selected as the cream of the crop among these Jewish boys and had been placed in positions of authority and responsibility and they are going to go down with all of these phony guys.

And Daniel replied, verse 14, with discretion and discernment to Ariok, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had come forth to slay the wise men of Babylon.

This guy, Ariok, is the head executioner. He's the chief guy that's going to order these executions, supervise them, see to it that they are carried out.

And do you think for a moment that he's going to renege on this? Not on your life. If he refuses to carry out this order of execution, it means his neck. I mean, he'll be on the chopping block.

[24 : 14] And he knows that. And when he comes to Daniel and his friends, and he says, sorry guys, but orders are orders, and I have to put you to death.

And they were prepared to do so. And Daniel answered in verse 15, and said to Ariok, the king's commander, this commander would be kind of like, he would be kind of like the present day chief of staff.

This is the guy who is right next, right next to the king. This is like the king's right hand man, like his chief of staff. And he's the one who's going to supervise all of these executions and then be able to go back to the king and tell him, the deed is done.

They're all dead. So, Daniel went in, Daniel, in verse 15, Daniel answered and said to Ariok, the king's commander, for what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?

Then Ariok informed Daniel about the matter. He told him the whole thing. So, Daniel went in and requested of the king. obviously, he had access to the king as being one of those in a trusted, exalted kind of position.

[25 : 39] Daniel went in to the king and asked that he would give him time in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.

And I can see this king sitting there stroking his beard and wondering, what is it with this kid? He's asking for time and he seems rather confident that he can actually tell me what the dream is.

I have my doubts but I can always off with his head if he doesn't deliver. So, okay. Okay, kid.

I'll give you some time. And may I suggest that Daniel was able to make a respectful and a kind of convincing kind of appeal to the king so that the king was going to go along with it.

And Daniel went to his house and informed his friends Ananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. By the way, these are their original names.

[26 : 55] These are their Jewish names. These three guys here are the same as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They're identical. It's just the difference between the names being Hebrew or Babylonian. Yes.

It looks like Daniel was going out with a lot of faith, you know, in the Lord, that the Lord was going to come through for him. Absolutely. It looked like, but in the second, if you look at it again, though, he had nothing to lose.

True. If God didn't come through for him, he was going to have his head taken off anyhow. Right. Absolutely. So I thought at first, he had a lot of faith in going to the kingdom doing this, but then I didn't have to say, no, he really didn't have to have that much faith because he's going to have it done anyhow, so I might as well, try.

Daniel's choose to come through for us, you can, if you don't, you know what the result's going to be.

And he goes to his three friends and he advises them in order that, verse 18, that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

[28 : 14] And God, we know, is going to come through for Daniel. But do you know sometimes he doesn't? Sometimes he doesn't come through. What do you make of that?

When Peter is miraculously released from prison, in Acts chapter 12, the angel, and he goes on his way, and God came through for him, sent the angel and delivered him, but not too long after that, Peter is going to be crucified, and God does not come through for him.

And God came through with Paul and Silas when he miraculously delivered them from the jail in Philippi, but a few years later, he won't come through because Paul is going to be executed after his second imprisonment.

so what do you make of that? And the only thing we can make of it is sometimes God delivers from death, sometimes God delivers through death, but for his people he always delivers, in accordance with his wisdom.

Joe, what? God is really the best for that person. You think it's best for that person, and also best for God, your relationship with Christ, to have that happen.

[29 : 43] He's drawing you closer to him through it, and it's good for him because of his plan, and it's also best for others. If you read that scripture where everything works out together for good, you've got to read the verses right after that verse in order to really understand that verse.

There you do. You've got to read those verses after it to understand it. So, we are going to see how the mystery is revealed in 19 with Daniel in a night vision.

Beautiful, beautiful thing. Now, I'm not suggesting that God cannot work through visions today. God can do anything he wants to do, anytime he wants to do it, any way he wants to do it.

I'm simply saying that working through visions today is not the norm. And when and if it happens, it is an extraordinary situation.

We find numbers of visions, particularly in the Bible, in the Old Testament, and we find them in Peter's case when he saw the vision, let down the sheet, let down from heaven three times, and others have visions in the Old Testament.

[31 : 00] So, I've never had a vision. A vision is not a dream. A dream is when you're sleeping and you see something, some pictures in your dream.

But a vision is when you're wide awake and you see this panorama before you that is completely different from what you're looking at, like I'm looking at you guys and that wall and those quilts, and if I were seeing a vision, it would be superimposed on over that, just like a giant TV screen, and I would see something not you, that I would see whatever is in that vision.

I've never had a vision. And not to say that I never will, or you never will, but I say it's extremely rare. Well, no. I guess people can attest to this who have experimented with LSD and stuff like that.

Seriously. I mean, you can have all kinds of hallucinations, but a hallucination that is induced by an illness or by a drug is not a God-given vision.

That's an entirely different thing. Hey, we'll get into the interpretation of this and continue on to chapter 2, but thanks a bunch for joining us this morning. Thank you.