

“HEARING FROM GOD”
LESSONS FROM BABYLON
Daniel 2:1-23
February 13 & 14, 2021

Oswald Chambers made a great statement on character building. He said, “If you are going to be used by God, he will take you through a multitude of experiences that are not meant for you at all; they are meant to make you useful in his hands.”¹ God will use situations to mold His servants into people they never thought they could be, if they are willing to trust Him in the middle of those situations and allow Him to work through them.

This is the second week in our series called “Lessons From Babylon” and we’re looking at the life of Daniel and his friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, young Hebrew princes taken captive and living in Babylon under the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. They have already taken a big step in trusting the Lord, by choosing to follow the commands of the Lord God over the dictates of the king. They convinced the guard over them to allow them to eat vegetables and drink water rather than indulge in the king’s food served to the rest of those in the palace. God blessed them for their faith, and because they looked better than all the others being trained by Ashpenaz, Nebuchadnezzar put them into positions of leadership within the king’s court as advisors.

Time passes between the ending of chapter 1 of Daniel and the beginning of chapter 2. The four Hebrew men were now in positions of leadership, and it came to pass that King Nebuchadnezzar was plagued by a dream that disturbed him greatly. Because he was losing sleep over the dream, he became inquisitive about what the dream meant, “*so he sent for his fortunetellers, magicians, sorcerers, and wizards to come and explain the dream to him*” (Dan. 2:2). But the catch was that Nebuchadnezzar not only wants the interpretation of the dream, he wants these “advisors” to tell him his dream. And, of course, that is the difficult part, since they did not have the same dream that the king did.

The king is very stubborn about them telling him the dream that he had, so he tells them, “*I have made up my mind that you must tell me the dream and then tell me what it means. If you can’t, I’ll have*

¹ (PreachingToday.com, *Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2002] pg. 281)

you torn limb from limb and make your houses a pile of ruins” (Dan. 2:5). Talk about a sticky situation! They either had to produce, or die. This would certainly put anyone into a panic because it is hard enough to give a good interpretation of a dream, but to tell someone else what they dreamed – craziness!

When we stop to think about it, this was an impossible situation. And as the advisers replied to the king, *“There is no one on the face of the earth who can tell Your Majesty what you want to know. No king, not even the greatest and most powerful, has ever made such a demand of his fortunetellers, magicians, and wizards. What your majesty is asking for is so difficult that no one can do it for you except the gods, and they do not live among human beings”* (Dan. 2:10-11).

Remember, when God wants to use you, He will put you into seemingly impossible situations to see who you will turn to for help. Will you trust in your own power, your own wisdom, and your own understanding? Or will you trust in One that is much greater than you, the Lord our God? The more impossible the situation is, the more God wants to use it to mold you into His servant.

It is pretty clear that these fortunetellers, magicians, sorcerers, and wizards did not know the Lord God. They were skilled in the dark arts, guided and directed by Satan. So God uses this situation to bring about a revelation to all the people in the king’s palace that there is another one that they can come to know and depend upon to do even the impossible. A true God who does not abide in idols or stone or metal or wood, but who was responsible for creating the universe and everything in it. Enter Daniel.

Daniel finds out that the king intends to execute all of his advisors because these men can’t produce what he wants them to produce. Listen to what happens and to what Daniel does. This is Daniel 2:14-23. (READ Daniel 2:14-23)

Now, remember that God had given *“Daniel skill in interpreting visions and dreams”* (1:17) as a reward for being faithful to Him as he stood up to the king’s edict for their daily meal plan. Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah and Daniel had been given *“knowledge and skill in literature and philosophy”* (1:17), but God had also gifted Daniel with the additional skills concerning dreams and visions. Even before

the event had happened, God had already gifted Daniel for just that purpose, so that he could give glory and honor to the Lord God at just the right time. It wasn't for his personal use, in order to make himself look better than anyone else. God had given Daniel the ability to interpret visions and dreams for the purpose of glorifying God and letting everyone in Babylon know that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the only true God. And in that pagan society where it was common to seek guidance from all the darkness of the world, God wanted to use Daniel for just this case so that the king of Babylon would know that there is a greater god than the idols they worshipped.

But what King Nebuchadnezzar was asking was beyond anyone's ability. And the "advisors" spoke truthfully, that only God can reveal that information to those who seek Him. This terrible situation was set up as a test between the worshippers of the dark arts of Satan, and the worshippers of the One True God.

"In his book, *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer writes: "We should not, therefore, be too taken back when unexpected and upsetting and discouraging things happen to us now. What do they mean? Why, simply that God in His wisdom means to make something of us which we have not attained yet, and is dealing with us accordingly... 'It is often the case, as all the saints know, that fellowship with the Father and the Son is most vivid and sweet, and Christian joy the greatest, when the cross is heaviest.'

"Packer then suggests two ways of handling the trials of life when we cannot, for the moment, see God's purpose in them. '**First, by taking them as from God**, and asking ourselves what reactions to them, and in them, the gospel of God requires of us. **Second, by seeking God's face specifically about them**. If we do these two things, we shall never find ourselves wholly in the dark as to God's purpose in troubles.'"²

J. I. Packer seems to be taking this right out of Scripture, because that is precisely what Daniel did. Arioch, commander of the king's bodyguard, went to Daniel informing him of the king's order to kill all his advisors. Daniel was not afraid, but asked why the king's decree was so urgent. Arioch says

² (Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000] pg. 740)

to him, “You are classed among the wise men, and our orders are to take you out and execute you.”

However Daniel goes to the king and gets permission from him for more time “*so that he could tell the king what the dream meant*” (Dan. 2:16). He considers that God has something going on here by giving Nebuchadnezzar this troubling dream, and he goes to his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to tell them about what is happening, too. He trusts that God will supply him with the needed information so that he might witness the greatness of God to Nebuchadnezzar.

However, King Nebuchadnezzar didn’t have to grant additional time to Daniel and his friends. He had made a decision, and he wanted information so badly that he was willing to force the hand of anyone who could supply it. But I am convinced that since Daniel went to him with the request for a little more time so that God could supply him with that information, Nebuchadnezzar was willing to wait another day in order to get the dream off his mind and resolved in his heart. God gave the king enough trust in Daniel to allow him one more day to get the results he needed.

You see, Daniel and his friends were not among the fortunetellers, magicians, sorcerers, and wizards. They were advisors in the king’s court, so I’m sure that Nebuchadnezzar’s anger at the others was not directed at Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, or Azariah. But because the king’s edict went out that “*all the royal advisers in Babylon*” were to suffer the fate of the fortunetellers, magicians, sorcerers and wizards, Daniel and his friends were lumped into it.

So what did the four Hebrew advisors do? Daniel “*told them to pray to the God of heaven for mercy and to ask Him to explain the mystery to them so that they would not be killed along with the other advisers in Babylon*” (Dan. 2:18). These four knew that on their own they were not able to give what the king demanded. They knew that it was outside of their information and ability. So they sought a higher source of power and authority – Almighty God.

When we come up against impossible situations, much like today is throwing at us, what do we do? Where do we turn to for help? Are we quick to seek the advice or counsel of other people, or do we turn to the Lord our God for His help? Do we share promising informational emails or text messages,

trying to get others to agree with us so that we can get something moving? We humans only have limited wisdom, and understanding, but God is all-knowing and all-powerful to do supply us with so much more than we could ever give.

Yet, we need to wait for God's timing, knowing that He has put us in that particular situation to show Him off as the only One who can bring about the resolution. He has already gifted us with just the right skills and abilities to allow God's glory to shine through us, but we must go to Him and seek His counsel so that He may use us at just the right time.

So Daniel and the others pray to God all night, calling out for Him to intercede in this situation. They are on their knees, asking the God of the Universe to grant them the information that King Nebuchadnezzar is asking for. They are not afraid, but desperately want the Lord God to show Himself through them. It may have been the first prayer meeting in all of Babylon. They dealt with this threatening message of the king in the same way that King Hezekiah had dealt with the threatening message of the king of Assyria a hundred years before that. They "*placed [it] there in the presence of the Lord*" (II Kings 19:14). They asked God to reveal the secret things to them.

Have you ever prayed all night for someone or something? Have you ever poured out your heart to the God of Heaven asking Him to dispense His knowledge to you so that you might bring Him honor and glory in the middle of that situation? Have you ever sought out the Lord God's presence in your life so that He might make you His servant, even in the impossible situations you encounter? That is a distinctive character qualification that all Christians should have, yet we have so many distractions around us that it prevents us from even getting onto our knees before the Lord. It is so needed in our day, today, to pray for God's will to be done here among us, and that He might use even us to bring about His purpose. Prayer is so important in the life of the servants of God!

So diligent is Daniel in his prayers that he falls asleep at the footstool of God. He trusted that God knew the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, and that He would reveal it to him. And it came about that "*that same night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision, and he praised the God of heaven.*"

(Dan. 2:19-23). This is so important for us to understand folks. God desires us to come to Him with our prayers and petitions, so that He may be glorified in giving them to us. But once God supplies us with what we are asking of Him, we are to praise Him for revealing the answer to us, or supplying us with our request. Praise to the Lord God is our proper response to Him because it once more shows our hearts as His servants and reveals to us the need to turn to Him in prayer. Our praise to God is the acknowledgement that God is the one who supplied us with the answers, or the resolution, or the healing, or the guidance.

Daniel's praise is good for each one of us to pray, because it is so true of the Lord our God. It comes straight out of Psalm 103:1, "*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.*" He was so full of gratitude for God answering his prayer that he lifts up God as the only God in honor and praise. He says;

"God is wise and powerful! Praise Him forever and ever. He controls the times and the seasons; He makes and unmakes kings; it is He who gives wisdom and understanding. He reveals things that are deep and secret; He knows what is hidden in darkness, and He Himself, is surrounded by light. I praise You and honor You, God of my ancestors. You have given me wisdom and strength; You have answered my prayer and shown us what to tell the king" (Dan. 2:20-13).

Having started first by recognizing that God had given the dream to Nebuchadnezzar, and then taking the situation to God in prayer, Daniel was then able to receive the answers he needed to inform the king. He made his way to Arioch, the commander who had been given the order to execute the royal advisors, and tells him, "*Don't put them to death. Take me to the king, and I will tell him what his dream means*" (Dan. 2:24). And it is at that time that Daniel's heritage is lifted up as being a Jewish exile whom God had given the ability to interpret dreams.

He stood in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, and like Joseph before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:16), before proceeding to unfold the dream, he gave glory to God: *Your Majesty, there is no wizard, magician, fortuneteller or astrologer who can tell you [what you dreamed]. But there is a God in heaven, who reveals mysteries. He has informed Your Majesty what will happen in the future. Now I tell you the dream, the vision you had while you were asleep. While Your Majesty was sleeping, you*

dreamed about the future, and God, who reveals mysteries, showed you what is going to happen. Now, this mystery was revealed to me, not because I am wiser than anyone else, but so that Your Majesty may learn the meaning of your dream and understand the thoughts that have come to you” (Dan. 2:17-18).

And then he proceeds to tell the dream to the king, of an enormous statue, awesome in nature, *“terrifying to look at, with a head of the finest gold, with its chest and arms made of silver, its waist and hips of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay”* (Dan. 2:31-33). And at each description, the king’s eyes grow larger, flashing with recognition, “Yes, that is what I saw! It’s all coming back to me.”

But there was more, about a great stone falling from a cliff without anyone touching it colliding with the statue and grinding it into dust, but the stone growing into a mountain (Dan. 2:34-35). D. L. Moody describes it like this; “And then, amidst deathlike stillness, Daniel went on to unfold the interpretation, and he told the king that the golden head of the great image was none other than himself. *“You are the head of gold”* (Dan. 2:38). He went on to tell of another kingdom that would arise – not so beautiful, but stronger, as silver is stronger but less pure than gold, that described the Medo-Persian empire (silver tarnishes, while gold does not). But the arms of silver were to overthrow the head of gold.

“Daniel himself lived to see the day when that part of the prophetic dream came to pass. He lived to see Cyrus overthrow the Chaldean power. He lived to see the scepter of the empire pass into the hands of the Medes and Persians. And after them came a mighty Grecian conqueror, Alexander the Great, who overthrew the Persian dynasty, and for a while Greece ruled the world. [They were the waist and hips of bronze.] Then came the Caesars who founded the empire of Rome, which was symbolized by the legs of iron, the mightiest power the world had ever known, but containing many impurities (iron rusts very easily). For centuries Rome sat on those seven hills and ruled over the nations of the earth. And then, in its turn, the Roman power was broken, and the mighty empire split up into ten kingdoms corresponding to the ten toes of the prophetic figure.

“I believe in the literal fulfillment of Daniel’s God-given words and in the sure fulfillment of the final prophecy of the stone cut out, not with hands, that by and by will grind the kingdoms of this world into dust and bring in the kingdom of peace.

“Even though the feet were of clay, there was some of the strength of the iron remaining in them. At the present day, we are down to the toes – and even to the very tips of these. Son, very soon, the collision may occur and then will come the end. The ‘*great stone that broke loose from a cliff without anyone touching it*’ is surely coming – and it may be very soon.”³

Surely, this fifth monarchy is coming soon, and it will be the monarchy of God through Jesus Christ. Long has the Bible prophesied His second coming, and soon the cry will ring out from all corners of the earth, “Christ is come!” “*At the time of those rulers the God of heaven will establish a kingdom that will never end. It will never be conquered, but will completely destroy all those empires and then last forever*” (Dan. 2:44). Everything is falling into place for the reign of God, which is greater than any other kingdom of man, to come onto the earth, and God desires that we are all ready for it. So we must also come to understand the dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had, for it pertains to all of us.

Because of his faith and because of his interpretation of the king’s dream, Daniel was rewarded by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel had made God known to the king and he acknowledged, “*Your God is the greatest of all gods, the Lord over kings, and the one who reveals mysteries. I know this because you have been able to explain this mystery*” (Dan. 2:47). So God also rewarded Daniel and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah because of their faith, by lifting them up to high positions as leaders in the province of Babylon. “And God will exalt us also when the right time comes. We don’t need to try to promote ourselves; we don’t need to struggle for position. Let God put us in our true places. It is better for a man to be right with God even if he holds no position down here. Then he can look up and know that God is pleased with him. That is enough.”⁴ It is ours to remain faithful to God always.

³ (D. L. Moody, *Daniel, Man of God*, [Abbotsford, WI: Aneko Press, Revised Edition, 2018] pg. 14-15)

⁴ (D. L. Moody, *Daniel, Man of God*, pg. 17)

Let's pray; Father, we do not know the reasons that hardships and trials come to us, but as we trust in You to guide us through it, we can bring honor and glory to You as you use us in whatever situation we find ourselves in. Give us the courage and the faith of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, so that we, too, may make Your will known to all those around us, even as we are. Keep us true to our faith, even as persecutions and threat of death come to us, so that we may live for You. This we pray in Jesus' great and glorious Name. AMEN.