

Daniel 2:1-24

Hello! I'm Greg Williams, one of the Elders here at Bethel Church. Our current Anchored Daily podcast series is on the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament. Daniel has long been one of my heroes. I worked most of my career as a civil servant in Washington DC, the capital of the most powerful nation on earth. Daniel was a career civil servant in Babylon and then in Susa, the capitals of the most powerful nations on earth in his day: the Babylonian and Persian Empires. Daniel worked for great kings; powerful leaders with rather mercurial personalities. I worked for some great agency heads, some also with mercurial personalities. As a foreign-born cog in a grand imperial regime, Daniel sometimes found himself in over his head and calling out to God for wisdom. As an Economics major in a scientific and engineering agency, I felt in over my head every day and started each morning in the parking garage praying for wisdom sufficient for the day ahead. So Daniel was and is my role model and hero, and it's a privilege to be able to talk about him today.

In Daniel chapter 2, we find the early-career Daniel working as a junior official among the king's advisors. The king, Nebuchadnezzar, is also new in the job, this being the second year of his reign. Between the immense pressures of the job and that green chili burrito he had for dinner, Nebuchadnezzar "had dreams, and his sleep left him. Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams." The equivalent today might be the CEO's senior staff, the 'yes' men, the lawyers, and the management consultants. "And the king said to them, 'I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream'". And those around the king said "O king, live forever!" [Today, we call that sucking up; but never mind that now.] "Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation."

Well, King Nebuchadnezzar had been to that movie before, and he wasn't about to fall for it again. So he said, "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 ruin." This is the nice thing about living in a modern democracy with good civil service regs—the worst thing my boss could do was fire me. In those days, the king could throw us in the fire!

This, of course, threw the management consultants into a panic. They tried arguing with the king that he needed to tell them the dream, and *then* they could interpret. But the king said "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time...you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation."

The consultants, seeing no solution, try to tell the king he is being unreasonable. “There is not a man on earth who can meet the king’s demand...no one can show it to the king except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh.” This, I suggest, is key verse in this passage. The story thus far has been building up to it, and what comes after flows from it. The stage is set, the crisis point is reached, the stakes are high, the drama is palpable. The king is enraged, there is no man to help, and the gods are distant and inaccessible. What will happen next? Can disaster possibly be averted?

“Then Daniel” says v14 . A man steps forward. And not just any man, but a man whose God is the LORD most High. “Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch the captain of the king’s guard.” Daniel doesn’t panic, he doesn’t flee, he doesn’t plot an assassination. He asks a question. “Why is the decree of the king so urgent?” He seeks first to understand. And Daniel takes an amazing step of faith: he asks for time on the king’s calendar to address the king’s need.

“Then Daniel” says v17. Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to his companions “and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery.” Daniel sought the help of his trusted friends, and that help was to gather in prayer. This is the advantage, by the way, of being in a Small Group. In a Small Group, you have friends who are primed and ready to pray with you. They prayed for wisdom and revelation from God concerning a matter too hard for mortal men. And God provided. We are encouraged to do the same in our day. James 1:5 says “if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” God loves it when we ask Him for wisdom, and He loves to give it.

“Then Daniel” says v19. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons, he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with him. To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we have asked of you, for you have made known to us the king’s matter.”

The three “Then Daniel” statements in this passage are instructive for us. Daniel stepped up in faith and courage. Daniel sought the Lord in prayer with his friends. And Daniel gave praise to God. So, what was the answer? What did the king dream and what did it mean? To find out, tune in Wednesday for the next episode of Anchored Daily!