

Daniel 2:1-23

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Preacher: Rev. Ryan Spear

- [0 : 00] King Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful man in the world. This should have made him sleep like a baby, secure in his power and wisdom.
- But in the second year of his reign, he started having strange and disturbing dreams. The dreams were so scary and so frequent that he couldn't even sleep.
- A few months after Daniel and his friends began serving the king, King Neb had another nightmare. No! Stop! Get away from me! It's falling! I can't move! My legs are falling apart!
- That dream again. I must know what it means. Guards! Summon my magicians and enchanters!
- Oh great king! Long may you reign! What is your desire?
- [1 : 22] I had a dream. I want to know what it means. My lord, tell us this dream and we will interpret it. I will not! You wizards will just make up some phony interpretation.
- Listen, I want you to tell me what I dreamed and what it means. Or I'll tear you apart and destroy your houses.
- No great and powerful king has ever asked such a thing before. There is no man on earth who could do this. No one but the gods could do this. But our gods don't tell us these things.
- Excuses, excuses! You have no wisdom. You have no power. All you do is tell me lies. Arioch! Come! Gather these people! Destroy them! Go now!
- So Daniel, Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego were also part of the king's court. They would be destroyed too. Unless someone could interpret the king's dream.
- [2 : 41] What would they do? Alright, hey kids. My name is Ryan and I'm one of the ministers here.
- And we're going to talk about what happens next in the story. But first I want to ask you a question. Have any of you ever had a bad dream before?
- Yeah. Yeah. Now what... Yeah, when you were four, when you were really young? Yeah, I used to have bad dreams when I was really little. I still do sometimes. Now, what kind of things do you do when you have a bad dream?
- I'll tell you what I used to do. I used to grab a favorite stuffed animal. Maybe. Maybe. Did you do that? I used to hide under my covers so that only my mouth would be pointing out so I could still get some, you know, fresh air.
- Or I might run to my mom and dad and say, Mom and Dad, I had a terrible dream. Can you help me? Well, this story today is about King Neb and what he did during his terrible dream.
- [3 : 53] Now, you might remember this is from the Clash of Kings Bible story. I think I saw almost all of you there this year. Remember me? I was helping with games. You remember that? Yeah, alright. So, this is the story of a clash of kings.
- And a clash is kind of like a fight. And the kings we're talking about here are King Neb and the gods of Babylon and the king of Daniel and his friends.

So, let's take a moment to remember a little bit about who Daniel was and who his friends were. So, Daniel was still a young man. He was actually probably still only a teenager at this point.

He had been captured along with his friends, Shad, Shack, and Bendy, all the way from Jerusalem to Babylon. You know how far that is to walk? That's 1600 kilometers.

That's like if you walked from here to Winnipeg. That would have taken four to six months traveling 15 to 20 miles a day. That would be like if Will Gray and his family, instead of flying and driving to Winnipeg, if they walked there.

[4 : 55] That would have been really, really far. Now, why do you think King Neb made them travel this far? Well, it's because he wanted them to forget everything.

He wanted them to forget their homes. He wanted them to forget their traditions, their language, even their names. King Neb gave them new names.

But last week, Bishop Mike talked to us about this story before, when they chose to eat food that was approved by God instead of King Neb's food. And Bishop Mike shared with us that God is the true king who gives us what we need to follow him and have true life through him.

And God's in charge, not King Neb. But today, we're going to talk about something else about God that we learn in this story. That God is a God who reveals.

Now, you might wonder, why do I have this bag on stage? Well, I want to reveal something. What is it? I want to reveal what it means to reveal.

[6 : 00] But I need your help with this. I've got to make sure I don't actually reveal what I want to reveal before revealing it. All right. I have something underneath this handkerchief.

What do you think it is? Any guesses? It's a map. The handkerchief is a map. It's a beautiful map of a place we really loved in New York State, Letchworth State Park.

But what do you think is under the map? What do you think? Any guesses? No. Ice cream cone, maybe? No. Do you think it's a hamster?

No. No. No, I need some help. I need someone to reveal what's under this. Would one of you be willing to reveal what's under this for me? How would you do that?

I think you know how. I know you want to. How would you reveal it? Go ahead, Audrey. Oh!

[7 : 05] It's a Highland cow! Would you ever have guessed? Underneath the handkerchief would be a Highland cow. It's one of my favorite animals.

They're so shaggy and cute. So, to reveal is to make known. Now you know what's underneath it. But you couldn't have figured it out on your own.

If you had a hundred guesses, a thousand guesses, maybe you would have gotten lucky. But unless Audrey had revealed it to us, we wouldn't have known. And this is a story about the God who reveals.

And the big idea of our story is what God reveals is that he is the true king. And to him alone belong power and wisdom.

And he is in charge of history. Not King Neb. Not his wise guys. And especially not their so-called gods. But the best thing about this God who reveals is that he reveals himself.

[8 : 08] It would be like opening a present on Christmas. But instead of stuff inside, you found your best friend. So that's like the best thing God reveals is himself.

So our story so far, let's recap what we just saw. What King Neb did. He had a terrible dream. And then he calls all of his wise guys, all the graduates from Babylon University. And he makes an impossible demand.

Tell me what I dreamed. And interpret it for me. Now, these wise guys from Babylon University, they actually had methods for interpreting dreams. They would either consult the stars and the planets, because a lot of the Babylonian gods were represented by the sun or the moon or things like that.

Or they would consult really big books. And they would look through these books. And they would say, okay, you dreamed about darkness.

Darkness. And I'm under D. Darkness. Oh, you either had too much ice cream last night before bed. Or your kingdom will be destroyed. One of those two things will happen.

[9 : 11] But they could basically tell the king anything to make him believe it. And feel how heavy this is. Oh, can you feel it? Whew. So they had all these books. But it's just like those fortune cookies you might get or other things you read about that tell you things you kind of want to hear.

And they might even have told King Neb things like, oh, your dream means you should give us all raises. Oh, yes, that's what your dream means. So King Neb was, he knew, he knew what they were about. And he would not stand for it.

So that's what happened. He realizes in this moment, the most powerful man in the world, that he has no power to interpret his dream. And his wise men have no wisdom to tell it what it means.

And he's so scared. And what he wants to happen is he turns to the only thing he knows what to do, which is violence. He says, if you don't tell me this, I'll rip you limb from limb and destroy your homes.

But if you do, he promises great riches. So that's a pretty, pretty stark choice. The best thing ever or the worst thing ever. So what happens next?

[10 : 16] Well, what happens next in our story, as we heard Ambrose read, is that the king's captain, Ariok, comes to Daniel. And Daniel discovers what's going on. Daniel asks an interesting question.

He says, why is this request so urgent? And then, look what Daniel does next in our story. It says the first thing he does, as he doesn't run... Remember, Daniel had the same education as the Babylon University people.

He could have run to the same books and tried to outsmart them. He could have looked at the same planets and tried to figure out. But no, he doesn't do that. In the story, it tells us that he turns around, went to his house, and made the matter known to his friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Who are these guys? I thought we talked about Chad, Shaq, and Bendy. They're the real names? What kind of names are they? They're their Hebrew names, right?

Yeah. And there's something interesting we understand about their names. We don't learn yet until chapter 3 that the king of Babylon has given them new names. And the new names he gave them were actually names that kind of mock them.

[11 : 24] To take the God they worship out of their name and put his gods in instead. You know what their names mean? Hananiah means God is gracious. Mishael means there is no one like God.

And Azariah means that God will help. So he turns around when he knows the terrible thing that will happen to all the wise men, including him and his friends, and he says, we need to pray.

We need to pray and ask for God to show us mercy to reveal this great mystery to us. And right after he prays, guess what happens that very night? Daniel has a dream. And in the dream, God tells him all about King Neb's dream.

It's pretty remarkable. And right after Daniel prays, right after the dream is revealed, what does Daniel do next? If I was Daniel, you know what I think I would do next? I might run to Ariok and say, I've got it.

I've got it. I know the dream. I want all those riches and power. So let's get this show on the road. Get me in there and let's tell the king what's going on. But is that what Daniel did? No.

[12 : 29] He wrote a song. After he prayed, he praises God. And he praises God for several things. What he reveals about God to us is so very special.

First, he calls God the King of Heaven. He says, blessed, it says Daniel blessed the God of Heaven. Which is like his way of saying, God is God over all of these so-called gods the Babylonians serve.

And he says, blessed be this name of God forever and ever. Which is like saying, God, you are the greatest of all time. And I want everyone to know it. So Daniel then reveals four wonderful things about God and his song.

First, he reveals that God is in control of history. Not King Neb. Not these so-called Babylonian gods. But his God.

Only he is in control. He secondly reveals that he's in control of all the kings and kingdoms. Even King Neb. Even though they were taken away from their homes. They were far, far away.

[13 : 36] God was still in charge of King Neb. He then reveals that God alone gives wisdom and knowledge. Not all the fancy dream books of the Babylon University graduates.

Not how they could interpret the stars and the planets. And he finally reveals that God can see what's in the dark. Because he is light. He is light.

So this is a really big contrast with King Neb, isn't it? King Neb tried to get everybody he knew who was the smartest to interpret things. He threatened them with terrible punishment or with amazing reward.

But he could not bring out the truth of what was happening. This reminds me of living day to day. I don't know if you listen to the news much. Or you might hear your parents talk about it or see some headlines.

But sometimes it feels like the world is pretty scary, doesn't it? There are some scary things going on. Really important politicians and leaders. You can feel like, who's really in charge?

[14 : 36] You might feel like, where do I turn to figure out how to live in this life? Do I turn to all of the books and the schooling and the best education around me? Maybe I get really strong and if I have the most money or power, then I'll be safe and I can trust in those things.

Well, our story today shows us that we serve a God who is the source of power and wisdom. Who is still in charge of these things. We can take great comfort and courage in this. So let's find out from our characters what happens next, right after Daniel knows that he has the interpretation for the king.

I present to you Daniel. Stand before me, Daniel, who is called Belshazzar. Can you tell me my dream?

[16 : 29] But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to me both your dream and its interpretation. Go on, then.

And that stone became a great mountain that filled the whole earth. That is what I saw. But what does it mean?

[17 : 50] And there will be lots of other kingdoms that come that are less great and less powerful than you, just as bronze and silver and iron are less valuable than gold.

Truly, truly, your God is the God of all gods, and the Lord of all kings, the revealer of mysteries.

[18:55] Well, thank you, O King. Also, my friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they played a part in calling out to our Lord. They too will be given high positions in the land.

So what did you think about that? What did you think when King Neb asked Daniel if he could interpret it? What did Daniel say first? He said no.

He said no. That's a pretty bold thing to say, isn't it? I think I probably would have said yes, of course I can. I really like my arms and legs just where they are. Thank you very much. But why did he say no?

[19 : 53] Why did Daniel say no that he couldn't do it? That's right. He had prayed to God and God told him what it meant.

He wanted to give God the glory and the credit. So let's also notice something about that interaction. If any of you have your service book, if not, we see a beautiful piece of art that Hudson and Julia did for us.

And it's about this very scene. I want to talk a little bit about what you notice about this scene. So first of all, can you see this? What do you notice? Who do you think that is up on top? I don't know.

Daniel. What do you notice about Daniel's face? What kind of expression is Daniel making? He's smiling.

Huh. I wonder why he's smiling. And what is the content? It looks like there's a speech bubble coming out. What does it look like he's describing? That's right.

[20 : 52] This is the content of the dream. And now, who's this guy down here? That must be King Neb, right? All right. What do you notice about King Neb's face? What kind of expression is that? It's a wow face, isn't it?

Wow. He's amazed. And I know something interesting. I wonder if Julie and Hudson did this on purpose. But who's below who in this story? I don't know. Who's on top?

Daniel. And who's below? King Neb. Interesting. That seems to be the reverse. King Neb was the most powerful person in the world. He should be the one on top.

But Daniel, a teenager, an exile from Judah, he was the one who had the insight from God, not from Nebuchadnezzar. Isn't that amazing?

No. I think it is a lovely story. Oh, just kidding. And, well, let's talk a little bit more about what happens next.

[21 : 53] So we talked a little bit about their faces and what King Neb says. But remember, what Daniel says to King Neb is that God is really the one in control, even over King Neb, that if it weren't for God, that King Neb wouldn't have done anything that he does.

Remember how the Babylonian wise guys said that no human can do this and their gods don't even live with them? Daniel just showed something really important about God, that through God, through prayer and through praise to him, he reveals to us great mysteries.

And God's greatest revelation of who he is came to us in Jesus. All of the power and all of the wisdom of God is in the fullness of Jesus Christ.

And we live in a kind of Babylon today, don't we? In a place where we're kind of like exiles, where our true home is with Jesus in heaven, but we're living here for now. There are other kings and there's other rulers.

And these same kings and rulers want us to forget about our God too. They want us to forget all about how great God is, about where wisdom and power come from and who's in charge.

[22 : 56] But we serve a great God who we don't have to guess, like guessing under the handkerchief, what's underneath. God in his greatness and graciousness gives us insight into who he is.

So when the world feels out of control, boys and girls, when it feels like it's scary and you don't know who's in charge, you can remember, like Daniel and Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah, that we can pray and praise our great king.

He is the one who's in charge. He has the power and the wisdom. So we can take great comfort in this and great courage in this. Wow.

Let's pray. Amen. Thank you.