

**Daniel 2: 1-23; “Seeking Mercies From the God of Heaven”, Sermon # 2 in the series –
“The God Who Reveals Secrets”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on February 12th, 2017, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

The truth that I believe that we should keep in the forefront of our minds as we go through this sermon is this: It is God who knows all things, even the secret things of men's thoughts and their dreams. He can bring to light the secret thoughts of men's minds if it is His purpose to do so. The secret things belong to God, because He alone is great enough and wise enough see them and to judge the consequences of them. He is the righteous Judge of all the earth. He is omniscient and He is omnipresent; His eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good. But it is only the things which He chooses to reveal, which belong to us and to our children forever. (Deuteronomy 29: 29) In other words – It is not normally a good thing for men to know the secret things of other men's minds and hearts, but it is for us to store up in our minds the things that He does reveal in His word the Bible, so that we will learn from Him His righteous way of looking at things and doing things. If we are people who are willing to let God be God, and if we are content to let Him reveal to us what He wants revealed, we will, by His grace and the illuminating influences of His Spirit, come to understand what is necessary to live to His glory, and how we might be helpful to point other men on to Him.

This is exactly what took place in this particular situation. Daniel helped Nebuchadnezzar on to a better understanding of God, even though he was a very selfish, proud, unreasonable, demanding, impatient, and angry man. He was a very dangerous person to displease, and that is proven to us from this text. And yet, we must understand that God raised him up to this high position of being king of Babylon, and the ruler of the 1st World Monarchy, knowing everything about him. He knew that He had raised up this particular man to fulfill all of His holy purposes in terms of revealing to Daniel and his three friends truths that would do them good, and all of God's believing people good, in all generations of history to the end of the world. Let us look at the facts of this situation and pray to learn more about our great God from them. 1st of all, we want to look at the fact that God did speak to some men in revelatory dreams in Old Testament times. (verses 1-3) 2nd – We want to look at the fact that God sometimes uses a very unreasonable man to fulfill His purposes. (verses 4-11) 3rd – We will look at the fact that God even ordained the furiousness of the king to accomplish His good purposes. (verses 12-16) And 4th – We will look at the fact that God only revealed the interpretation to those who sought His mercies. (verses 17-23) May the Lord help us to see how sovereign and wise He is, and may we also see how merciful He is to reveal to His people what needs to be known.

1st - We want to look at the fact that God did speak to some men in revelatory dreams in Old Testament times. (verses 1 and 2)

Here we find Nebuchadnezzar in the second year of his reign having dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. It is true that each of us have dreams every night, and it is further the case that some people remember their dreams and others do not. I am aware that many times I myself have dreams at night, but when I awake in the morning I cannot remember much of them at all usually. In this particular case Nebuchadnezzar remembered his dream, but He did not at all understand it. The reason for this was that it was a revelatory dream. It was a dream given to him by God Himself, and the dream had great significance for all of human history as we shall see in my next sermon. There are ordinary dreams which come to all of us while we are asleep. And then there were revelatory dreams which came to some men in Old Testament times; God's having a purpose in His giving them which relate to His eternal purposes in Christ. These revelatory dreams were not only given to people who knew the Lord. Sometimes they were also given to people who did not know the Lord to show them something about God's sovereignty among the nations; that He rules in the affairs of men. In the book of Hebrews, chapter 1, verse 1, it says – “God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by

His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.” So we understand by this that God in Old Testament times spoke at various times and in different ways. One of those ways was dreams. In Numbers 12: 6 He says to Miriam and Aaron who had sinned against Moses by speaking against him concerning his marrying a Midianite woman: “If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision, and I speak to him in a dream.

Also, the false prophet Balaam, in the days of Moses leading the children of Israel out Egypt, had revelatory dreams. Revelatory dreams are not confined to their only being given to people who knew the Lord. Sometimes they were given to people who you and I would think should not have such dreams. Balak, king of Moab, hired Balaam to curse the people of Israel for him. But it was not God’s purpose to curse Israel. And so it says in Numbers 24: 1 –“Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery, but he set his face toward the wilderness.” “And Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him.” “Then he took up his oracle and said: ‘The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened, the utterance of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, with eyes opened wide: ‘How lovely are your tents, O Jacob!’ ‘Your dwellings, O Israel!’ But Balaam did not know the Lord, and yet He prophesied by falling down; that is having visions given to him in dreams. And Israel and all of God’s people profited from those dreams.

You will also remember that Joseph had revelatory dreams where he dreamed that his brothers and his mother and father were all bowing down to him, and you will remember that his brothers hated him and spoke evil of him, and sold him to the Midianite traders who took him down to Egypt where God’s will was fulfilled in his becoming the highest ranking official in Egypt next to Pharaoh, after he had suffered being unjustly imprisoned for a number of years by Potiphar after his wife had falsely accused Joseph of taking advantage of her sexually. All this was in accordance with God’s good will, not only for Joseph, but also for Jacob and all his descendants, and indeed the whole world of that day during the time of famine. God did not approve of the sins of the participants in these situations, but rather He would see to it that the lessons He that intended would be learned by his people, would be learned. Joseph was released from prison when these good lessons were learned, and God would use him to reveal great and secret things, because Pharaoh had dreams and he could not interpret them. His dreams would affect the whole known world of that day.

This was a very similar situation. Daniel and his 3 friends have been taken captive to Babylon to be given a good Babylonian education so that they would actually forget God and worship the false gods of Nebuchadnezzar, and be transformed into being his useful servants and counselors. But God had other plans; plans to give them a secure future of knowing Him and being useful to Him right in the place where they were. This time it is Nebuchadnezzar who was having the dreams. And those dreams were very troubling to him. He thought that they were saying something about Himself; something about his own greatness and his kingdom, but he was not sure that it would all work out well for him. He could not even remember exactly, all the details of the dream. And so, he gave command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to command them to tell him his dream. He could remember impressions and things conveyed in the dream, but not enough to relate them entirely.

And so, since he thought that they were extraordinary dreams, he thought it would be good time to find out whether his counselors, those who dealt in the occult, and who claimed to interpret dreams, were really worth what he paid them. Could they actually tell him what the dream was that he dreamed, as well as the interpretation of it? This would prove to him whether they really had the extraordinary powers that they claimed to have. So let us understand that there were revelatory gifts in Old Testament times; dreams which do not take place in the day in which we live. I am quite sure that there are dreams nowadays which God can use to cause men to awaken to His will and purpose; that people would awaken to righteousness and see their need to believe in Jesus Christ. But there are

no longer revelatory dreams given by God which are incorporated into the Scriptures, neither should they be seen in any way as adding anything of value to completed canon of Scripture.

2nd – We want to look at the fact that God sometimes uses a very unreasonable man to fulfill His purposes. (verses 3-11)

Verse 3 says: “And the king said to them, ‘I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream.’” And of course, the Chaldeans, all of these men who were magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers said to him, “Tell us the dream, and we will give you the interpretation.” But the king answered them and said – “My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap.” “However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor.” “Therefore, tell me the dream and its interpretation.” And so, we find by threats of violence and the promise of reward, he demands that they tell him what his dream was; a very unreasonable thing to do. These Chaldeans try to remain positive and upbeat about the situation. They say in verse 7 – ‘Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation. The king answers and says: “I know for certain that would gain (buy) time, because you see that my decision is firm.” “If you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you!” “For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed.” “Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation.”

Now, this is quite amazing discernment for a man who does not know the Lord. He is saying that they would be punished for speaking lying and corrupt words, because if they could have him relate his dream, they would make up some answer of interpretation that would not really satisfy him that they had understood the dream’s meaning. He thought that if they truly had supernatural knowledge, they would be able to relate his dream as well as the interpretation. In this, he was right theoretically. But it was a very unreasonable request to do this upon the pain of death. But then we must understand what dabbling in the occult deserves. It does deserve death. In Exodus 22: 18 it was said to the children of Israel – “You shall not permit a witch to live.” And in Deuteronomy 18: 9 it says: “When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations.” “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, one who interprets omen, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.” “For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you.” You can see from this, that God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to see that all of his unbelieving counselors, who dealt in the occult, were indeed worthless. They all really did deserve to die. But unfortunately Daniel and his 3 friends were numbered with them as being “wise men”. There were others who Nebuchadnezzar had among his counselors who were spokesmen for the whole group. And so we find them saying in verse 11 – “It is a difficult thing that the king requires, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.” God had used the unreasonable request of the king to narrow down the field as to who could tell the king his dream. Let us take notice of this fact; that God knows how to so order events, that he is able to use an unreasonable man’s request to show forth His glory, and wisdom, and power.

3rd - We will look at the fact that God even ordained the furiousness of the king to accomplish His good purposes. (verses 12-16)

Verse 12 says: “For this reason the king was angry and very furious and gave a command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.” So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.” Now, you must ask yourself, why was it that Nebuchadnezzar got so furious over this; so unreasonable, and angry, so demanding and so cruel over not being able to obtain what he wanted. It was because the Lord left him to the depravity of his own heart so that His own wise and holy purposes would be fulfilled. Sometimes God does leave men to the depravity of their hearts. He did it with Pharaoh; He is doing it here with Nebuchadnezzar

here. God can do these great and awesome things and be entirely sinless Himself. No unrighteousness in God. He can ordain these things and yet, there is no unrighteousness with God in this regard. There was no other way that Daniel's giftedness in interpreting dreams would come to the floor, except through this awful means. God's ordaining these things and providentially ordering things in the way that He did accomplished His purpose of Daniel's coming forward to make a request of the king. Verse 14 – "Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon; he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, 'Why is the king so urgent?' "Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel." "So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation."

It seems that Daniel may have already heard about this matter and the threat to his own life if he could not come up with what the king was looking for. It appears to me that he had already been praying about the matter, because it says, "With counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch. It is always good to pray about matters of greatest concern before you answer them. Now, sometimes you may not have time. But in many cases you do. Just take a few minutes and pray and God will give you the counsel and wisdom that you need. The question that Daniel asks Arioch is pretty much the same as the other wise men had asked: Why is it that the king cannot be reasonable about this. But, if you will notice there is a slight difference in Daniel's answer from theirs. It is: Why is it that the king is so urgent about this matter? (verse 15) Daniel doesn't want to avoid the question. He knows that God can answer it, and give the interpretation if that is His purpose. Let us see that nothing is impossible with God. But in times like this one, it was best if Daniel could be allowed a little time to come up with the answer. Daniel went in and asked the king himself to give him time, that he might tell the interpretation. Some people, looking at the impossibility of a request like this might think – It is impossible; why ask? Why try? But faith remembers that God has said that nothing is impossible with God, and knows that it is not wrong to ask. Remember that, my brethren, in the things that you think impossible.

And this is my 4th point – We will look at the fact that God only revealed the interpretation to those who sought His mercies. (verses 17-23)

Verse 17 says: "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." "Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision...." Daniel and his companions were diligent to pray, and the way that their prayer is described is "seeking mercies from the God of heaven, concerning this secret". Listen to Joseph Benson, the commentator concerning this. "In applying to God for any blessing, all our dependence must be on his mercy and compassion, for we can expect nothing by way of recompense for our merits." "Concerning this secret — Namely, that it might be discovered unto them." "Observe, reader, whatever is the matter of our care, or occasions us trouble or fear, we must spread (it) before God in prayer; for God gives us leave to be humbly free with him, and in prayer to enter into the detail of our wants and burdens." "The danger here equally threatened Daniel and his friends, and therefore it was fit they should all join in prayer for the averting of it." "And here we see the power and efficacy of united addresses to Heaven, and the important benefits which the fervent prayers of a few holy men may sometimes bring down upon a multitude." "Daniel's prudence, and his piety, with that of his friends, were the means of saving the lives of all the wise men of Babylon!"

And so let me close this sermon with this thought; that when we do receive answers to our prayers; when God does give us wisdom, and answers us in accordance with His great wisdom and power, let us be sure to thank Him for it. Let us say as Daniel did: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His." Let it not be assumed that wisdom will come to you without asking for it. And do not think that it will be something that comes to you automatically because you know the Lord. God is One who has great and mighty purposes which are far beyond your understanding. "He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and

knowledge to those who have (already have) understanding.” “He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.” No, Daniel was careful to thank the Lord and praise Him for what was given him at that critical hour, and you should remember to do so also. “I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to us the kings demand.”