

“The Revealer of Secrets”

Daniel 2:1-23

Secrets; they can be fun, or they can be devastating!

It’s fun to plan a special event for someone and be able to surprise them at the right time. It’s fun to give a gift to someone who is completely unsuspecting; to see the joy on their face as they receive it. It’s fun for friends to have special things between them that no one else knows.

But secrets can be devastating too. How many women have been devastated to find out that their husband or boyfriend is secretly enslaved by pornography? Trust is broken; there is emotional pain, rejection, and hurt. They feel disappointment, betrayal, and shock.

Secrets have varying degrees of value. Some are just for fun. Other secrets have life-changing seriousness. Keeping a secret about a surprise party is far different than keeping state secrets from a hostile foreign power! One thing we must remember about all secrets – God knows them! Nothing is hidden from Him.

In Daniel chapter 2, we find the prophet in a very difficult experience. We have a ruthless king who has a dream. We have wise men and court officials, including Daniel and his friends, who are counselors to the king. They have a dilemma. The king has a secret, and he demands his counselors to figure out **what the secret is, and what it means** under the threat of an excruciatingly painful death!

There’s danger, in familiarity with the Scriptures, to lose some of the dynamics of an account like this. We know how the story ends; so, the stories lose some of their “punch.” We should try to read the Scriptures through the eyes of one reading them for the first time. Try to picture in your mind the setting, the scenes, the feelings of the characters as they develop. It will help make the Scriptures come alive in a fresh way!

I invite you to do that with me now as I read our text, **Daniel 2:1-23**.

In this text Daniel refers to God as the “revealer of secrets.” We will observe together the WAYS God used to reveal His plans and show His sovereignty.

The First WAY is,

The King’s Dream

Dreams are interesting things. In different cultures and religions, they’re more significant

than they are to us. For us, they're often related to things we're thinking about during our waking hours. They're often a confusing jumble of ideas, events, places, and people. And fortunately, most of them never come true!

But Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, dreamed. In fact, the text says, "*he had dreamed dreams.*" So, he had more than one dream; and the dreams created such trouble and confusion in his mind that he couldn't sleep! One translator says, "his sleep was done for." I've had dreams where I became instantly awake, with adrenalin coursing through my body. Try going back to sleep after that!

So, Nebuchadnezzar couldn't sleep. There are other times where God used sleeplessness to reveal His will. Think of King Ahasuerus. He couldn't sleep either, so he had the history books read. In them he discovered a service that Mordecai had rendered to the king that had never been rewarded. His sleepless night put in motion a series of events that eventually led to the death of Haman, who was plotting death to all the Jews!

What does a king do when he can't sleep? He awakens other people. Picture Nebuchadnezzar giving the command to rouse his wise men and counselors out of their sleep. I see them hurriedly getting into the required clothing of the royal court and wondering about the urgency of this call. We can assume the level of the king's agitation by the fact that he called for ALL classes of his wise men to be brought before him.

There were the magicians; this word comes from the root of the word pen or stylus. So, these were scholars, intellectuals. Then, we have the astrologers. These men would be better called *enchanters*; those who consulted with the spirits of the dead. Sorcerers were next. They used spells, and curses, and incantations to enlist the power of evil spirits. And last, but not least, there were the Chaldeans.

The Chaldeans were a people from southern Babylonia who eventually conquered the Assyrians. As conquerors, they promoted themselves as wise men. John Whitcomb says these men were particularly accurate astronomers. The term, Chaldean, is sometimes used to speak of all wise men in general.

Keep in mind as we work through this account, the absolute power that Nebuchadnezzar held in the kingdom. His word was LAW! If he made a decree, you had no recourse.

Anyway, the wise men assemble hastily at the king's command. And he announces to them that he's had a dream; a dream that has left him in a troubled state of mind. Notice, after having

dreamed dreams – plural – he’s now focused on just one dream.

Evidently, the fact that the king had a troubling dream wasn’t that big of a deal to the wise men. They spoke up and said “*O king, live forever! Tell us the dream and we will tell you the interpretation of it.*” After the typical, elaborate, oriental greeting they declared their confidence in being able to provide the interpretation of the king’s dream. I imagine they didn’t all speak. They probably had a spokesman for their group or groups. I wonder, later, as this whole scene developed if any of them had the thought, “me and my big mouth?”

Verse 4 provides an interesting detail. The king’s counsellors spoke to him in the Aramaic language. And Daniel’s writing, from here through chapter 7, is in Aramaic also. There’s probably more than one reason for this, but one obvious reason seems to be the prophecies that are revealed in this section. They deal primarily with Daniel’s lifetime and what has come to be called “the times of the Gentiles,” matters of worldwide concern.

Now, Nebuchadnezzar springs a surprise on his counselors. Which leads us to the second WAY God uses to reveal His plans and show His sovereignty.

The Second WAY is,

The Counselors’ Dilemma

The opening words of verse 5 are difficult. The King James Version seems to imply that the king forgot what his dream was. Another possible translation is “it is publicly known.” In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it is translated as “it is gone from me or forgotten.” The verb, however, can mean “gone forth” in the sense of “I have decreed.”

Some scholars believe that the king hadn’t forgotten his dream. They translate this difficult phrase as “the thing is certain with me,” or “fully determined.” Is it possible that the king is testing his advisors? Remember, Nebuchadnezzar is a young king. These wise men were older, his father’s advisors. We learn later that the younger ones, like Daniel, weren’t present at this initial meeting. The king knows that these older advisors long ago learned how to curry favor at the court. Is he testing them to see if they really do have the powers they profess? They were being put to the test of their superhuman claims.

At any rate, he informs them that they must tell him what his dream was and then give the interpretation. What a dilemma! Their failure to obey the king’s command will result in a violent, excruciatingly painful death for them and their families. Both the Assyrians and the Babylonians

were known for the cruelty. If, however, they were able to fulfill the king's command, there would be rich rewards and great honor.

Once again, with proper respect and protocol they request that the king tell them what his dream was. Now, if the wise men believed that the king had truly forgotten his dream, why didn't they just make something up? It would have allowed them to "save face" as well as save their lives. They must have suspected that the king was withholding information from them.

At this appeal, Nebuchadnezzar says, "I certainly know that you're stalling for time." Then there's the same phrase used in verse 5; "*because you see the thing is gone from me.*" Or, as the NKJV translates, "*because you see my decision is firm.*" It seems like the king was warning his counselors that he could detect any invented interpretation of his dream.

In fact, he specifically mentions that in verse 9. He said "*...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.*"

If the king had truly forgotten the dream, he wouldn't have offered great reward for announcing it, nor threatened such severe punishments for failure to announce it. If he had forgotten the dream, he wouldn't know whether his counselors were telling the truth or if they were making it up as they went along! Yet he warned them about that very thing.

So, once again, these Chaldeans try to reason with the king. Remember, they had told him earlier (quite confidently) that they could interpret the dream. Now, they're saying it's impossible to know what the dream was. No king has ever asked his wise men to answer such a decree. They suggest, politely, that Nebuchadnezzar's demand is unreasonable. Only the gods could reveal such information to mortal men; and the gods do not dwell among men. Earlier, these wise men had presumed to be in touch with these gods.

This failure of their gods sets the stage for Daniel's divine revelation of the king's dream and its meaning!

Nebuchadnezzar is now absolutely furious! His decree goes out for the slaughter of all the wise men in the city, including Daniel and his friends. In verse 13, the round-up begins. A search is being made for all who are part of the official group of counselors! Which leads us to the next WAY God uses to reveal His plans and show His sovereignty. Enter, Daniel!

The Next WAY is,

Daniel's Decision

Imagine the panic that must've broken out among the wise men at the king's decree. Yet, when Arioch, the captain of the king's guard comes to arrest Daniel and his friends, Daniel raises his questions with counsel and wisdom. Why would the executioner pay attention to one so young and inexperienced? As in chapter one, Daniel's character, his calm demeanor, and his trust in God shine through. He must have impressed Arioch. His appeal for an audience with the king shows his confidence that God would provide a solution to the problem.

With candor and tact, Daniel approaches the king and requests more time. He states with conviction that he will shew the king the interpretation of the dream; and by extension, the dream itself. With his request granted, he immediately went and told his friends of the reprieve. He asks them to join him in prayer, appealing to the mercies of the God of heaven; that He would reveal the secret of the king's dream. God's mercies stand in stark contrast to the merciless decree of death for all the wise men of Babylon!

Five times in this chapter God is addressed as the God of Heaven. The Babylonians worshipped the heavenly bodies as gods; but God, as Creator, is sovereign over all the heavens! It is to Him that Daniel and his friends make their appeal.

Can you imagine the urgency with which these men prayed? Have you and I ever been moved to prayer by such extremities? Their intercession before the God of the heavens saved their lives and the lives of many others. We know they weren't afraid to die. But they were convinced that God was ultimately the one who was in control here, not Nebuchadnezzar.

What do you and I do when we find ourselves in a position that seems hopeless? Do we whine and complain; "O God, why me?" Do we remind God of how good He should be to us because we try to be faithful to Him? Or do we, like Daniel and his friends, cast ourselves on the mercy of God? Do we understand that God has the power and the authority to do whatever He wills in us, through us, with us – or even without us? Can we confidently place our lives in His hands and say, "God, I trust you, even though I can't see the end?" Can we allow God to give us His directive? That's the last WAY God uses to reveal His plans and show His sovereignty.

The Final WAY is,

God's Delight

“Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision.” God delights to answer the prayers of His people! Second Chronicles 16:9 remind us *“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.”* This promise is given in the context of King Asa, who, unlike Daniel, chose to place his confidence in men, instead of God.

“So, Daniel blessed the God of heaven.” God gave a clear answer to the prayers of Daniel and his friends. In response, Daniel calls us to bless the name of God forever and ever because wisdom and power belong to Him. In Holy Scripture, the name of God stands for His nature and His revealed character. It isn't merely label or title. It's found frequently in the Old Testament as synonymous with God Himself in relation to man.

Daniel acknowledges that the times and seasons are under God's dominion. If He wants to change them, He can. He controls the destiny of nations too; setting up earthly rulers to accomplish His purposes and then removing them when their work is complete. He gives wisdom and understanding to those who seek Him, because He sees everything, whether it's in darkness or in light.

And finally, Daniel's humility shines through in the final verse of our text, verse 23. Notice, he praises God that the king's secret, the matter, has been revealed to *us*. Daniel credits the unified prayers of his friends for moving God's hand and revealing the secret of the king's dream. Daniel received the vision, but he acknowledged the role of his friends in receiving it. What a wonderful example for us to follow.

My friend, some people in other parts of the world are experiencing visions and dreams that lead them to faith in Jesus for salvation. But, unlike Daniel's time, today we have God's complete revelation to us through His Word, the Holy Scriptures. They are the source of determining the WAYS of God in our daily walk of faith. But prayer and obedience are still keys to understanding God and His plans for our lives.