

Survey of the Bible Daniel 2:12-22

The last time we were together Nebuchadnezzar was disturbed with dreams that were so powerful and strange that he was unable to sleep for several days. Having gone to his magicians for their help in interpreting these dreams he imposes what the magicians thought to be an impossible task:

Daniel 2:5 "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap.

Since the magicians were unable to accomplish this the decree went out to destroy all of the counselors tasked with this command, including Daniel and his friends.

Daniel 2:12-13 ¹² Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. ¹³ So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill *them*.

If we have any doubt as to the barbarity of Nebuchadnezzar this decree should lay it to rest. There are possibly hundreds of people associated with this decree, either directly or indirectly. Remember that both the wise men and their houses will be made a rubbish heap.

Whether this includes the actual destruction of the families of the wise men or only their property, either way this will be devastating for all involved.

At this time there was a flurry of activity as the decree went out and the wise men braced for their destruction. And yet, in the midst of this stressful time there was one person who remained calm.

Daniel 2:14-18 ¹⁴ Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon; ¹⁵ he said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king *so* urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter. ¹⁶ So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king. ¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, ¹⁸ so that they might request compassion from the God of

heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Notice in verse 14 that Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch. This is not the demeanor of a man whose hair is on fire. It is a calm and calculated approach to a real problem. The words discretion and discernment are Aramaic words that could be translated counsel and taste, respectively.

The NIV uses the words wisdom and tact, while the KJV uses the words counsel and wisdom. The idea here is that Daniel calmly approaches Arioch, (the instrument of destruction), in such a way as to put the brakes on the momentum of this decree to kill everyone associated with the King's wise men, including Daniel himself.

But after having slowed the process of destruction down to a crawl Daniel goes up the chain of command to the King himself and requests a stay of execution in order that Daniel might in fact give the King what he wants.

After all, this is what the King wanted all along. Daniel does not give the impression that this is an impossible task as the wise men had told the King. As a result, he gets his stay of execution with the understanding that Daniel will approach his God who knows all things.

Now, keep in mind, at this point Daniel has no clue that God will give him the answers, only that he can approach God with his problem.

Daniel 2:17-18 ¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, ¹⁸ so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Notice that Daniel immediately goes to his three friends whose names here are their given Jewish names, not their Chaldean names.

Why do you suppose this is?

This is how Daniel knew them from the time they were all very young, and in the time they have been in the charge of the King of Babylon it is quite apparent that they are still very much Jewish in

their thinking and more importantly very much embracing the covenants of the God of Israel.

And now Daniel approaches the only one in the universe who can give him the answer and that is the one who created the universe and everything in it by the word of His power, the Almighty and omniscient, Jehovah.

Notice too, that Daniel identifies this God as the God of heaven.

Why make this distinction?

Because, Daniel understood that there is only one God who sits above all things as He reigns from heaven, unlike the gods of the Chaldeans.

From the Bible-History website we read this:

“The Babylonians had many gods. Some of these were Sumerian, some Akkadian and other later groups and some imported from the mountainous regions to the north and east of Mesopotamia. These gods reflected the various needs and fears of the different peoples. The Sumerians would have had city gods and gods of the harvest. The desert nomads who invaded Mesopotamia at various times would have had water gods and sand gods. The people of the high mountains may have had gods of thunder and lightning.”

And then they list a number of the names of the gods of the Babylonians:

Anu: the god of the highest heaven
Marduk: national god of the Babylonians
Tiamat: dragon goddess
Kingu: husband of Tiamat
Enlil: god of weather and storms
Nabu: god of the scribal arts
Ishtar: goddess of love
Ea: god of wisdom
Enurta: god of war
Anshar: father of heaven
Shamash: god of the sun and of justice
Ashur: national god of the Assyrians
Kishar: father of earth

No one god stood above all their gods which would effectually make only one god all powerful. Daniel had been trained in all the religious aspects of Babylon and understood this intimately, but he approaches the God of heaven who has no other gods before Him.

And the Lord was gracious to answer his prayers to get understanding first as to what the dream actually was and then its interpretation.

Daniel 2:19-23 ¹⁹ Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; ²⁰ Daniel said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. ²¹ "It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. ²² "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him. ²³ "To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, For You have made known to us the king's matter."

In one short sentence in the 19th verse the entire matter is laid out for Daniel and then Daniel praises his God for being faithful to him.

Starting in verse 29 of this second chapter the entire dream and its interpretation is laid out for Nebuchadnezzar.

But before we go there let me just make note of something that is essential in the life of Daniel as it pertains to his understanding of the God of Israel. Daniel was no mere sentimental servant of God which is to say, that he was not merely religious in his affections for God.

He did not follow "this" God, among many of the gods of Babylon, simply because of his religious upbringing in Judah. By faith, he knew God and he followed God precisely because God revealed Himself to Daniel and his friends.

This revealing, to be sure, was in many dramatic ways in their lives, but the revealing I primarily mean is God revealing Himself to their hearts. Like N.T. saints whose hearts are regenerated by the Holy Spirit from death to life in Christ, so too, O.T. saints also had their hearts regenerated by the Holy Spirit from death to life in Christ.

All men are born in sin and are thus dead in their trespasses and sins unable to rebirth themselves from death to life. Only a birth

from above, a born again experience from above, will turn the heart of stone to a heart of flesh.

It was an O.T. saint who first made this claim.

Ezekiel 11:19-20 ¹⁹ "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

This was a prophetic word concerning the future status of the people of God. But it was not a status of how one simply came to Christ in the future, but an ongoing miracle of how one comes out of darkness into the light in any age including Daniel's.

To suggest that Daniel knew God because he was either a Jew, or that he was smarter than most, or that he simply had an affection for God as he sought God on his own, again denies the depravity of man in any age.

This was precisely the message Christ gave to Nicodemus, in an O.T. setting, where the Temple and its sacrifices were still legally and biblically being enacted by the high Priest in Jerusalem.

In that setting Jesus said this to Nicodemus.

John 3:3-10 ³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Keep in mind that Jesus was speaking to a Jew under the Old covenant of God. Jesus was simply stating what every O.T. saint was required to understand and that is to enter the Kingdom God must do something in you which is to give you new birth.

If He were speaking of only a future phenomenon, (after the death, burial and resurrection of Christ), of being born from above, this statement could not apply to Nicodemus. It would have made no biblical sense to tell Nicodemus that this is what must be presently done to enter into the Kingdom for which every Jew longed.

But like most Jews of Nicodemus's day they simply ignored the teachings of the O.T. that taught the Jews that God chooses a remnant to seek Him and follow Him by faith, what Jesus is calling, being born again.

In fact, Jesus seems to become incredulous at Nicodemus's ignorance of what should have been obvious to a leader in Jerusalem who was supposed to be teaching the people the promises of God.

John 3:6-12 ⁶ "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." ⁹ Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, "***Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?*** ¹¹ "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. ¹² "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

What things does Nicodemus not understand that he as a teacher of Israel should understand, according to verse 6?

That the Spirit of God must do a work on the flesh to raise it spiritually from the dead to give it new life, a new birth.

Daniel understood that God had chosen him and given him life.

By the way, though Ezekiel addressed how the Spirit of God would take out the heart of stone and give His people a heart of flesh, he did speak to a unique relationship that the O.T. saint did not share in the same way as N.T. saints would.

Ezekiel 36:26-28 ²⁶ "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. ²⁸ "You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

What is added to this passage that is not specifically pointed out in the earlier passage of Eze.11:19-20?

The phrase, "I will put My Spirit within you.."

Here is a future prophecy of the work of the Spirit who does not simply cause a person to be born again, in either an Old Testament or New Testament setting, but will do something new according to Christ Himself.

John 14:16-17 ¹⁶ "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and ***will be in you.***

This is a future phenomenon to be experienced exclusively for N.T. saints after the resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ.

John 7:38-39 ³⁸ "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

All of this to say, that though N.T. saints experience a unique indwelling of the Spirit of God that O.T. saints did not, it does not preclude that the Spirit of God was not instrumental in bringing His people to Himself as He turned their hearts of stone to hearts of flesh as He caused them to be born again.

So, Daniel was one chosen of God and given life and now he is exercising that life by going to the source of his life in prayer as he seeks and receives the answer to Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

And after receiving his answer he breaks out in praise and adoration.

But what is instructive in this time of adoration is Daniel's acknowledgement of God's decrees that determines not just redemption for His people but His involvement in His entire creation to accomplish all His will.

Daniel 2:21-22 ²¹ "It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. ²² "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.

There is a tendency, even among some Christians, to think that men have a sovereign and free will that determines their own

futures. To suggest otherwise, they say, only undermines the will of man or at worse makes him a puppet in the hands of God.

Not to give man full reign of his own will subverts the justice of God on the final day since, if God moves men a certain way, they are therefore then not culpable for their actions.

This could not be further from the truth.

In our text Daniel makes it clear that no man determines the will of God, either for His people, or for any aspect of His creation including both unbelievers and the universe itself.

What do you suppose Daniel means when he says that God “changes the times and epochs;”

God does not simply have foreknowledge of the future, he determines the future. He, as Daniel says, “removes kings and establishes kings.”

Does this apply only to Kings who happen to be directly involved in the plans relating to His redemption? In other words, does he raise up kings and princes like Pilate who had a direct hand in the death of Christ, but not leaders like Abraham Lincoln who was some 1800 years after the death and resurrection of Christ?

A better question might be, who does God not raise up and remove?

But this does bring us to a troubling spot.

If God is sovereign over all things and people, then who can resist His will, and if they can't is God not unjust?

Paul addresses this when pointing to the ultimate King who was established by God to redeem a people for Himself.

Romans 9:11-21 ¹¹ for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that ***God's purpose according to His choice would stand***, not because of works but because of Him who calls, ¹² it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." ¹³ Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." ¹⁴ What shall we say then? ***There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!*** ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I

HAVE COMPASSION." ¹⁶ So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. ¹⁹ You will say to me then, "***Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?***" ²⁰ On the contrary, ***who are you, O man, who answers back to God?*** The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹ Or ***does not the potter have a right over the clay***, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

We'll pick up here next time and move through this portion of Daniel as he finally confronts Nebuchadnezzar with the truth and we along with him will discover what implications that dream had for the **King and us**.