

Daniel 2:1-23

Daniel 2:17-19 Then Daniel went to his house and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from 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...

The story of Daniel's miraculous interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar begins with the troubling dream of the king and his insomnia. The story portrays the king's desperation to resolve the issue and to experience a release from the apparent dread that the dream had caused. The scene itself is troubling and brings to mind the maxim that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon and there was no restraint on his power. Being troubled by this dream he called together the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to "tell the king his dreams."

There was one caveat. The king demanded that these "advisors" tell the dream and then give its interpretation. The demand on its face was irrational and the wise men

came very close to saying so, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things..." There are two arguments that favor the king. First, he was no doubt met with manipulation and flattery whenever he sought the advice of his wise men. Nebuchadnezzar would have brought this on himself as he became increasingly temperamental and capricious in the exercise of his power. He was used to being told just what he wanted to hear. He certainly knew that this was the case and so if he told the dream, the wise men would have devised a calming and complimentary interpretation intended to soothe the king's frayed nerves. But none of this would help the king to know what the dream actually meant.

Second, the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans professed to represent the understandings of the gods to the king. If they were truly the confidants of deity as they claimed then surely one of the gods should be able to know and tell his dream before interpreting it. This would serve a validation that the interpretation was actually accurate. (If you accept a false premise, you can then argue logically toward an irrational conclusion.)

When the king ordered the execution of all of the wise men of Babylon, Daniel and his friends were also targeted. Upon discovering that they were at risk, Daniel sought an explanation, boldly sought time from the king and then prayed to God for the answer to the two questions, "What did the king dream? and, What did it mean?"

Daniel boldly asked God to do the impossible, that is to reveal to him the dream of another man. Daniel was driven to this request by the king's order of execution but he clearly considered the impossible to be possible. At least two factors worked in Daniel's favor. Daniel had previous experience of the revelation of God's secrets to him. Secondly, God had been working in a specific direction in Daniel's life and his untimely execution was inconsistent with this direction. Daniel was right. God did not allow him to be swallowed up by crisis. God revealed the secret to Daniel.

Daniel's immediate response was to give God praise. The revelation of the secret was a validation of Daniel's faith. It was a demonstration of God's specific love for Daniel. The dream and its interpretation was a witness to the power of God and to the limited power of Nebuchadnezzar.