

Introduction

- The crises in life often come unexpected, unlooked-for, and from sources beyond our control. In general, our society's reaction to these things is to shout “it's not fair” and look for someone to blame. How does Daniel react when a crisis comes his way?
- ^{2:1a}Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar... This has been an interpretive challenge for ages: how can this have happened in Nebuchadnezzar's second year (reigned 605-582 B.C.) when the events of chapter one start in Jehoiakim's third year (reigned 609-598 B.C.), not to mention the 3-year training period for the Judean youths?
 - A biblical scholarship point of view with a low or non-existent view of Daniel's inspiration (most people in this view believe the book of Daniel to have been written 400-500 years after Daniel's life, if he existed at all) says that the final writer/editor overlooked the dates at the beginning of chapters 1 & 2. It's a mistake of oversight in the text.
 - A biblical scholarship point of view that holds to God's inspiration of Daniel (and that the book itself is about a real person, real events, and was completed soon after Daniel's life) postulates the following:
 - When Nebuchadnezzar is called *king of Babylon* in 1:1, it doesn't mean that he was king of Babylon during the first siege of Jerusalem. It could easily mean that he was king when that part of Daniel was written.¹

¹ Like kings of Israel, Judah, Babylon, and many ancient kingdoms, Nebuchadnezzar seems to have acted as king while his father was officially the king. Co-regencies often explain many seemingly inaccurate dates in ancient texts.

- “Three” or “third” is used in several datings in Daniel.² it has been suggested that it is a figure of speech for “early” (as in “early in king Jehoiakim's reign”). In that case, 1:1 does not necessarily conflict with 2:1.
- As with many challenges to interpretation in the Bible, seemingly unsolvable issues do not mean that there is error in the text. There are many difficulties that remained unsolved for millennia until the last century's archaeological and linguistic discoveries. By faith we confess that Scripture is “without any mixture of error, for its matter” and that “all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy” (Baptist Faith & Message, I).³
- The book of Daniel is not recorded in Hebrew (as is most of the O.T.) from 2:4-7:28, but Aramaic, the language of the Babylonians. We can see this not only as a reminder of Daniel's Exile-life, but that God is not limited to one people group and language.⁴

² 1:1; 8:1; 10:1. For uses in the rest of the O.T., see 1 Kings 15:28,33; 18:1; 22:2; 2 Kings 18:1; 2 Chronicles 17:7; Esther 1:3.

³ Other relevant statements about the infallibility of Scripture and how we handle challenging passages (from the 1689 Baptist Confession): “The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience” (I.1.). “...our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth of Scripture and its divine authority, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts” (I.5). “The infallible rule for the interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself, and therefore whenever there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other passages which speak more clearly” (I.9.).

⁴ Faith & worship of God is not limited by what language we speak or by our culture. There is a popular movement called “Hebrew roots” teaching that the Church must restore the O.T. worship calendar & practices (this includes Saturday, or Sabbath, worship). Related to this

Crisis (2:1-12)

Precursor to Crisis: the King’s Dream (2:1-3)

2:1b...*Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.* 2:2*Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.* 2:3*The king said to them, “I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream.”*

- God’s use of dreams in Daniel’s story reminds us of Joseph. Not only did God give dreams to Joseph himself, but used Joseph to interpret the dreams of those around him.
- God, Who is capable of speaking through the big events, also speaks through things that are seemingly insignificant, like dreams (1 Kings 19:11,12). May God give us wisdom and insight to see His working even in the little things!

Crisis’ Potential: Great Rewards or Great Disaster (2:4-6)

2:4*Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: “O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation.”* 2:5*The king replied to the Chaldeans, “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.* 2:6*But if you declare the dream and its*

is the movement to call God by the name He gives Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:15): Yahweh (יהוה). The great praise & faith expressed to God in Babylon’s tongue in 2:4-7:28 remind us that we don’t have to use Hebrew words, names (Yahweh is NOT used here), or worship practices to be in faithful relationship to God. O.T. worship is described as “shadow worship” in Colossians 2:17 & Jesus tells us to call God “Father,” not “Yahweh” (a Hebrew word with no presence in the N.T.). Please be on guard – this movement has influence in our area!

interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation.”

- Several “dream manuals” from the ancient Near East have been discovered. Those called before the king had recorded dreams and the following historical events, systematically putting them together so parallels could be sought out in new dreams. When they were told a dream, they would search the “dream manual” for the closest parallel and then see what happened next, using this to come to an interpretation. This almost scientific approach was, no doubt, well known to Nebuchadnezzar, which is why he makes matters more difficult for the Chaldeans. That, or he had forgotten the details of the dream!
- What Nebuchadnezzar asks is, of course, impossible; a man’s spirit can only be known by that man (1 Corinthians 2:11).

Bargaining with the Crisis (2:7-9)

2:7*They answered a second time and said, “Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation.”* 2:8*The king replied, “I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm,* 2:9*that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation.”*

- What is the difference between the “bargaining” of the Babylonian mystics and the request in delay we see from Daniel (2:16)?
- The difference is God’s plan: to display the gifts He had given Daniel and his friends before the royal court of Babylon!
 - 1:9*Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials...*

- 1:17 *As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams.*
- Rather than seeking wisdom from the Source of the dream (the God of heaven), the Babylonian mystics hoped delay would make Nebuchadnezzar forget about the whole affair.

Crisis’ Confession & Consequence (2:10-12)

2:10 *The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. 2:11 Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh.” 2:12 Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.*

- On this side of the Incarnation, we see the truth unwittingly spoken by the Babylonian mystics:
John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...1:14 and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth...1:18 no one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*

Surprised by, then Running Toward the Lion’s Roar (2:13-16).

2:13 *So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them. 2:14 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; 2:15 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. 2:16 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.

The Sentence of Death and Great Opportunity

- Just as the sentence of death for Daniel and his companions served as an opportunity for God’s wisdom to be revealed, Paul uses similar language to describe the situation of his own ministry:
 - 1 Corinthians 4:9 *For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.*
 - 2 Corinthians 1:9... *we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God Who raises the dead; 1:10 Who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on Whom we have set our hope...4:11 for we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*

Requesting Compassion in Crisis (2:17,18)

2:17 *Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, 2:18 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.*

Prayer for Compassion

“Mystery” in Daniel: Foundation for the New Testament

- The word “mystery” (ἔσῃ in Aramaic) plays an important role from here on in Daniel: “In Daniel 2:18 ἔσῃ, as mystery, must include both the *content* of the dream and the *interpretation*...there is a God-given communication to man which cannot be understood

until there is also a God-given interpretation.”⁵ The dreams/visions and their explanations in Daniel focus on the unfolding of human history and the ultimate establishment of God's eternal Kingdom. The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the New Testament unveils the same mystery. In other words, the “mystery” of Daniel and the “mystery” of the New Testament is the same.

- This idea of “mystery” is foundational to how the word (μυστήριον in the Greek) is used in the New Testament, where the New Testament Scriptures, written by the Holy Spirit (through the Apostles and their associates), plays the role of “revealer and explainer.” However, the Trinitarian God further moves hearts to believe in the mystery of the Gospel and its explanation.⁶

Our Commission

Mediator

- Note the difference between Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel. When confounded with something beyond his control, Nebuchadnezzar looked to men just as in the dark as he – men who studied the Creation for signs about the unknown, but had no connection to the Creator. Daniel, on the other hand, when confronted with something beyond his control, gathered his friends to seek their Creator.
- A lost person will do the same thing, seeking superstitions, astrology, luck, the power & wisdom of other human beings who are just as benighted as themselves. We are their only hope, as Daniel was Nebuchadnezzar's only hope: Romans 10:9... *if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe*

⁵ G.K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1984), 14.

⁶ Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; Romans 11:25; 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7; 4:1; Ephesians 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 5:32; 6:19; Colossians 1:26,27; 2:2; 4:3; 1 Timothy 3:9,16; Revelation 10:7.

in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10:10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation... 10:13 for “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.” 10:14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? 10:15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!” ... 10:17 so faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- For a believer, we know there is no mediator between us and God but Christ: 1 Timothy 2:5... *there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...* Christ is never off the job as our Intercessor: Hebrews 7:25 *Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.* In addition, God the Holy Spirit, Who fills and is present with ever believer, helps us to pray and Himself intercedes for us: Romans 8:26 *In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 8:27 and He Who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* We, like Daniel, seek other believers to pray with us, but we do not rely on them as go-betweens on our behalf. They pray alongside us, but not between us and God.

Does God Speak to Us Through Dreams?

- While God is capable of speaking to human beings in dreams and through their interpretations, we should never regard this as normative.⁷ We see that false teachers/prophets often base their pronouncements on dreams rather than the Word of God.⁸
- At the same time, when – as Spirit-filled believers in God through Jesus Christ – we have dreams that “trouble our spirit,” we should not ignore them, either:
*Joel 2:28 “It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will **dream dreams**, Your young men will see visions. 2:29 Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”* (quoted & applied by Peter in Acts 2:17,18).
- Remember this above all: *Hebrews 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 1,2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son...* We do not need “special words,” visions, or dreams. God has finally and completely spoken to us in Jesus Christ’s words and actions (the Gospels) and in the words and actions of the Apostles Jesus disciplined and commissioned (the 23 books of the N.T. after the Gospels). The New Testament perfectly reveals Christ to us and applies Him to our lives. We do not need God to speak to us in dreams. If we feel that He has, our dreams are under the authority of the Scripture.
- *Ecclesiastes 5:7 For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. Rather, fear God.*

⁷ God speaks by dream to Abimelech (Genesis 20:3,6), Jacob (Genesis 31:10,11), Laban (Genesis 31:24), an acquaintance of Gideon’s (Judges 7:13,15), Solomon (1 Kings 3:5), Job (7:14), Joseph (Matthew 1:20; 2:12,13,19,22), Pilate’s wife (Matthew 27:19).

⁸ Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Jeremiah 23:27,28,32; 27:9; 29:8; Zechariah 10:2; Jude 8.

“In this second chapter we are informed how God brought Daniel into a theater, to exhibit that prophetic office to which he had been destined.”

- John Calvin (1509-1564)