



Ministry of the Word

*Sunday 05<sup>th</sup> February 2017*

by Vincent Gannon

**Scripture:** Daniel 2:1-30

**Subject:** Chapter 2, Part 6 – The Dream, the Dilemma, the Deficiency & the Decree

Daniel Chapter 2 is a rather lengthy chapter, to put it mildly! It has 49 verses, and we'll not cover the whole chapter this morning, but we're going to begin to look at chapter 2 versus 1 to 30. I've entitled this - The dream, the dilemma, the deficiency and the decree

George Washington once said, *"Few men have the virtue to withstand the highest bidder."*

He was right. Most people have a price. A truly uncompromising man is a very rare commodity. But this is exactly the kind of man, and the kind of woman, that God looks for to do his work. When it comes to very special tasks, when it comes to very great privileges and opportunities, God wants uncompromising people with character. God wants choice servants for choice ministries and God wants you! Today, we are living in a time when the Lord needs servants not just in name but in nature. Those, who want to work for the Master. It's no time to be hiding your talent but to invest it, as we know the Master will come on a day and time we don't know. Are we ready?

Daniel was a man who had amazing character qualities as we have already noted. God used Daniel as the vehicle through which he revealed the unfolding of the redemptive

plan of the history of the world! Now that's a monumental assignment. To be the vehicle, through which God gives a prophetic perspective, on all of human history. What a calling and what a privilege!

In chapter 2 we begin to see that calling unfolding. Chapter 1 has been preparatory really. In chapter 1 we saw the circumstances that set Daniel in the right place and also something of the quality and character of the man that equipped him to be God's very special man in that particular assignment. Do we as believers want to be used by the Lord? Or are we happy just to use the Lord?

Now looking back at Daniel 1:17, we can draw upon a very important point about these four youths – Daniel and his three friends - Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. And listen to this, God also gave Daniel understanding in all visions and dreams. God still has the ability to give us good things and thank God for those who receive them and use them, Amen!

Now that little statement sets Daniel apart from the rest. Daniel was given the unique capacity to reveal visions and dreams. He was to be the agency of God's revelation and he would be the instrument through whom God would speak. This amazing teenager was in different than any other Old Testament saint. He was given the most complete, the most comprehensive and the most extensive, prophetic picture of human history ever given in the Old Testament. Amazing prophecies, it seems, began to unfold quite quickly as we see in verse 31 of chapter 2

The situation that the Jews found themselves in Babylon can only be described as a human crises for the Jewish nation. But here is where a Sovereign God met with his faithful servant and unnoticed, God met also with His people. This crisis did not need political intervention but Divine intervention. We will see God at work and how he arranged situations to bring about His will both for His people, for this empire and its kings. The hymn writer Isaac Watts got it so right when he penned the following words. These are the last two stanzas of his hymn entitled "The Lord Jehovah Reigns"

**"Through all His mighty works.  
Amazing wisdom shines,**



**Confounds the powers of hell  
And brakes there dark designs.  
And will this Sovereign King,  
Of glory condescend?  
And will He write His name,  
My Father and my Friend?  
I love His name  
I love His word,  
Join all my powers  
to praise the Lord."**

I know that I'm repeating this but it is amazing! Daniel's life was useable because he was in that place with God. As 2 Timothy 2 tells us that we are to be purged in order that we might be vessels fit for the master's use. Such a vessel was Daniel, God would put him in a position to influence the whole world and that is precisely what he did, and what he still does through his book and his prophecies. The whole marvellous plan of God for the nations, the Gentiles, the whole marvellous plan of God for Israel was all unfolded to Daniel.

There are really two things going on here. One is a divine commission given to Daniel to be the vehicle of God's revelation. The other is a crisis for the people both of Israel in the positive sense and for Babylon in the negative. God through Daniel was revealing a message in the midst of a crisis. So he was not only a messenger of God, he was in the thick of this crisis.

We're going to see the dream, the dilemma, the deficiency and the decree. This will affect the religious system of Babylon for a short period only but it will have huge consequences, not just for the period of history in which the events take place but right up to the end of ages; and it all starts here in the book of Daniel.

Look at the history in the first three verses.

*"And in the second year of the rain of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams" - notice it's plurality - "and his spirit was troubled and his sleep went from him."*

Let's stop there for a moment. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon at the time. He succeeded his father Nabopolassar. Now Nabopolassar, before he was the king of the whole Babylonian empire as it was known in Daniel's day, he was simply a ruler in a minor area known as Babylonia, which was a southern province of the great Assyrian Empire. Nabopolassar, at some stage, decided that he would rise to a place of total ruler-ship of that area. He didn't know that God was in all of it, but remember it did not negate either him, his people or those who followed after him, of their responsibility and accountability before God for their sins.

He put together an army and began to conquer. Before Nabopolassar was done, he had in effect taken over that whole part of the world. He had dealt with all of the peoples that were involved. This happened because, again, God was fulfilling His word through the prophets, in particular Jeremiah 17:1-6, and used this cruel king to do His bidding at that time.

His son, Nebuchadnezzar, had commenced the deportation of the Jews from the land of the Southern Kingdom, Judah. In that first deportation came the young men which Daniel and his friends were part off. There would be two more deportations which finally made that land nothing more than a wasteland as far as the people of Israel were concerned. He removed for all intents and purposes the vast majority of the population. See 2 Kings 17:24-35.

In the midst of the first siege of Judah, Nabopolassar died and was succeeded on the throne by his son Nebuchadnezzar. Without question, Nebuchadnezzar gets more ink and discussed more than any other monarch in the Old Testament and any other pagan king. He was a masterful man in many areas. He was a genius, he was an educator, he was an architect, he had a great military mind and so on. Amazing man!

Going back to verse 1. *"In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar"* - stop there for a minute. Lots of people get confused about this because they know that Daniel was brought to Babylon to undergo three years of training. Scripture tells us that in verse 5 of chapter 1. They were to be in training for three years and the training ended at the end of chapter 1.

Now if Nebuchadnezzar brought Daniel into Babylon and he was there for three years, how could this be the second year reign of Nebuchadnezzar? It would have to be at least the third year. Do you remember the answer I gave you when we discussed this in chapter 1, verse 1? In the book of Daniel, you do not have Jewish reckoning instead you have Babylonian reckoning. It comes up several times so we might as well get used to it at this point. The first year of any monarch in the Babylonian system was not considered a part of his reign. It was his year of accession. When they dated their kings, they dated them from the first full year to the last, or any portion of which they were still on the throne. So when Nabopolassar died in Babylonian, they would have considered the rest of the year to be still under his reign officially. Also, officially, even though Nebuchadnezzar came to the throne, it was not until his accession to the throne when they counted that the beginning of his first full year. From the Jewish perspective, this would've been the third year and would fit together with the three-year period of training. So there really isn't any problem with that at all but it's just a historical note.

I really believe that the events of chapter 2 happened immediately after chapter 1 but this is not for certain. Some people think there was a long period of time in-between, some people even think that the things that happened in chapter 2 happened some time during the three years of training. I don't feel that way because in chapter 1, verse 17, after they've had all their training, it says,

*"God gave them knowledge and skill and all learning and wisdom and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."*

I believe immediately God moves to establish Daniel's capability in the vision and the dreams.

Now let's look at another thought.

Since when does God reveal great historical prophetic truth through pagan kings? This was really a new thing. Remember this: Israel at this time was morally and spiritually bankrupt they were as bad off as the Babylonians. If you want to really look at it in a Biblical perspective, Israel was worse-off than the Babylonians because Israel had

become apostate. It is one thing not to know the truth, it is something to know it and forsake it.

Remember The Lord Jesus speaks about this in Matthew 24:24 and 2 Timothy 3.

God's people had degenerated into gross idolatry. Judgment was falling on them in the their captivity. What an amazing rebuke it was to God's people for God to choose the single greatest revelation of the history of redemption that he ever gave and to have as a vehicle a pagan king. What a rebuttal and rebuke for the sins of Israel.

Furthermore, the captivity of Israel began a period of history known as the times of the Gentiles as Luke 21:24 calls it. So it is fitting that the times of the Gentiles began through a prophetic dream given to a Gentile king. But I must hasten to add, that the plan was not just for the Gentiles and the prophecies were not just about the Gentiles, God had not forsaken Israel either.

Now back to verse 1 - so Nebuchadnezzar, this king dreamed dreams. Now how did this happen? Well, go down to verse 29 and it kind of gives you a footnote of it. Verse 28 ends with the statement that he was dreaming on his bed and then verse 29, Daniel says,

*"As for you O King, thoughts came into your mind upon your bed."*

Now notice it's plurality there in verse 1. He had several dreams and apparently these dreams were so shocking and they were so deeply alarming that he was unable to sleep and his sleep went from him. He couldn't sleep but as we know from the text, it was one particular dream that gave him the greatest amount of anxiety.

The word "troubled" (v1) there means a very deep disturbance. Now ordinary dreams can trouble us but not in the intensity that it's meant here. This was a really, really deep trouble of his soul and as we know God had ordained this dream. You might think, "Well isn't it a little strange for God to reveal things in dreams? I mean didn't he usually just write the Bible? Didn't God just tell somebody in their heart and their mind while they're awake? I mean this dream sounds like kind of a cultic thing." But it's not abnormal at all for God to do such a thing, in fact throughout history He has done it a lot. In Numbers 12:6, the Lord said he would speak to Moses face to face whereas with others, such as



prophets, he spoke in visions and dreams. In Genesis, God promised Jacob in a dream that he would have the land of Israel. In a dream God appeared to Joseph. God also appeared in a dream to Solomon. In a dream God spoke to Pharaoh and revealed the seven years of plenty and the subsequent seven years of famine. In a dream God spoke to one of the soldiers of the Midanites and gave a vision for the encouragement for Gideon.

It was not abnormal at all for God to speak in dreams. Even today God continues to use dreams to speak to people. I'm not saying all dreams are from God or even most but God can and does use them and when it happens, it is very powerful and special that you know about it.

Now the king had this dream and it panicked him. By the morning came he was a wreck. And so he asked - verse 2:

*"Then the king commanded to summon all the magicians, astrologers and the sorcerer's and the Chaldeans to show the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said unto them, 'I have dreamed a dream and my spirit is troubled to know the dream.'"*

The king gets all the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, of the Babylonian empire. He appealed to all the intellectuals and occultists because he couldn't figure out his dream and he was troubled. You know, he's not unlike many people who look into the future and they find it very foreboding.

He called for the people who claimed to know the future and were well paid for it. Now the terms here are kind of interesting. The magicians, a term which could refer to fortune-tellers but sometimes we find it seemingly associated with people who are scholars. For the kind of society which Babylon was it's very possible that they were engaged in both.

Then there are the astrologers. The stargazers, the people who charter the course of the stars and determine destinies on the basis of how they arrange themselves like

horoscopes do today. Then there were the sorcerers who were the spiritualists. They are the enchanters, the mediums and the ones that talk with the dead.

Then the Chaldeans. These were the leading group because they did the talking. I suppose, they were the wisest of the wise. The Chaldeans were simply a group of people in southern Babylonia who under Nabopolassar, who himself being a Chaldean, appointed this one particular group of people to be the highest in the courts of Babylon. They were supposedly the wisest and most knowledgeable in all of the arts and sciences of Babylon. Listen this line up is no different today.

So everybody came together with all of the scholarship that was available, with all of the occultism that was available, with all the demonism that was available, and with all the human wisdom that was available. Just like people do today, trying to get an edge on tomorrow, trying to figure out what is going to happen. It's amazing that that's what our world does because unsaved people don't know God.

Now they believed that dreams were very important in that day so they were very anxious to help the king in this matter. When they saw, no doubt, how concerned he was, they were even more anxious. Let me add something that I think very is interesting about these Chaldeans. They had a dream reading system. They worked on this principle and I think this is so fascinating. I got into reading about this and it just was amazing to me. They worked on the principle that their sequels follow an empirical (observed) law, which given enough data can be established.

What they did was they kept records of all dreams and they charted after a person who had a dream the way their life would turn out. They were interpreters of symbolisms in dreams as well as what the overall dream meant. They believed dreams held answers to the future. Well, believe it or not, the Chaldeans and all the sorcerers and all these people had manuals. They had massive libraries. Archaeologists have even even found their dream manuals. You could go to a dream manual and you could look up the elements of your dream and they would tell you what it meant. Big, big money today for those who are in this business.



Now of course it's a bunch of hocus-pocus and psychology, they had tried in their human ingenuity to devise a clear system. They had a very systematically arranged, easy referenced dream manual not available on eBay as far as I know!

Now let me tell you something: there were so many of these books apparently and there was such a huge amount of material to follow that they needed some time. We'll see that this time, a little later in the story, that the king wasn't about to give it to them. They had a dilemma, which was the king would not just not give them time, he would not tell them the dream.

That's their problem. That's a little tough. Verse 4:

*"Then spoke the Chaldeans, to the king in Aramaic."*

As a side note, Aramaic was a language used in the Babylonian courts and it later became the common language of that whole part of southwest Asia.

And they said: "O king, live forever. Tell thy servants the dream and we will show the interpretation." What confidence! Just tell us your dream, king, and we'll tell you exactly what it means. We'll go back and we'll get our dream manuals and we'll find out what your dream means. We'll show you the interpretation. All they needed to know was the dream.

The king would not operate on their conditions. Look at verse 5. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "You shall be cut in pieces and your houses shall be made a dung hill if you don't tell me what the dream is." Now he is upset. That dream has really disturbed him and so had the Chaldeans. Ooh, he's putting them on the spot!

In verse 6, however, we see the other side of the King,

*"But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honour. Therefore, show me the dream and the interpretation of it."*



You know, basically Nebuchadnezzar was a bit of a cynic. I believe Nebuchadnezzar was too smart to buy into his own, maybe even it was actually his father's system that he was and he was cynic of it.

There was the dream and the dilemma which leads us now to **the deficiency**. The deficiency is seen in verse 10 which we've read already. The king is asking them to do something that's impossible. The Chaldean group answered on behalf of all others, saying, "There is not a man upon the Earth that can reveal the king's matter." Do you see the significance in that? You want to know something? They were absolutely right, weren't they? There wasn't a man on the Earth that could reveal it. Such truth doesn't come from the Earth.

Listen, if you think that anybody could really predict the future on the Earth, you're wrong. If you think there's anything to that horoscope stuff other than demonic influence and mind control, you're wrong. There is no such thing as reading the future. The only place you're going to read the future is in the Bible when God speaks about it. And so the Chaldeans were right. There was not a man on the Earth that could reveal the king's matter. Therefore there is no king, lord nor ruler that asks such things of any magician or astrologer or Chaldean.

These were Satan's agents: astrologers, mediums, spiritualists, magicians, sorcerers, the whole pile of them and they did not have any experience in revealing dreams that were unspoken. So they try to flatter the king. No King, no Lord and no ruler, no matter how majestic they are, would ever ask this. This is beyond any human ability.

Verse 11:

*"It is a rare thing that the king requires and there is no other that can reveal it before the king" – but note what follows - "except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh."*

They were right again. The only place you could get that information is from a supernatural source, right? It's not available on the Earth. What a dilemma! They are about to lose their life, they're about to lose everything they possess, they have already



lost all their credibility, they are given an impossible thing that they couldn't do. They are trapped in human deficiency.

So now we come to the fourth point - the decree. Because they couldn't tell the dream - the decree is given again in verse 12 - "for this caused the king was angry and very furious." Now it would've been enough to say he was angry or furious, but just to make sure you get how mad he really was it puts both of them in there. He commanded to destroy **all** the wise men of Babylon.

Now that's the stupidity of anger. Anger never knows any limits. Anger never draws any parameters. Anger just smashes everybody who gets in front of it. He was mad. He was mad, number one, because he's afraid. He's scared to death about the dream he had. He is mad because he couldn't trust his wise men and if he can't trust his wise men to tell him the truth now, maybe it filled him with doubt with the things that they told him in the past, he was upset because they questioned him and referred to him as being unreasonable. And he was mad, he was furious, he has stooped to the depths that some monarchs go to when their particular wills are crossed. So he gave an execution order for all wise men before him as well as those in the city of Babylon.

Verse 13

***"And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain."***

Why? Because Daniel and his fellows were part of the core of court advisors. They were part of the "wise men." They may have just completed their training but nonetheless, they fitted into the category and so the executioners moved out to take their lives.

What was happening here? God was at work but not in an obvious way, not so that this king or his court could see. Not that the exiled people would know even if they knew about this situation, which is unlikely. But the Sovereign God has hold of the reins of history, events, people and nations. Yes! He even has hold of you.

The chosen rejected Him, but He did not reject them. He pleaded with them for a long time but they refused to listen, they were in a place they did not want to be, exiled suffering the loss of everything.

A pagan king had a dream, God given, and changed things. The knowledge of God will come to the forefront and the evil that had gripped the hearts of this people will be loosened though only for a short time but in that time span when, the Gospel, went forth to the empire.

We can so quickly forget the true story behind this situation. The people of Israel had fallen into idolatry, they had in effect dethroned God. Firstly, from their hearts, then with their mouths and followed by their actions. The privileged had in fact become pagan. The knowledge of God was not practiced. Did you get that! That's how you become an idolater. No doubt they seen the Babylonians in this light, but they did not have the truth in the same way the Jews had. God began to move there in a breakthrough, yes it was only a crake but that was all that was needed. God can be trusted to do the rest.

When God reveals to us that we are heading down the wrong road we need to not only take note but do something about it. It's not enough to know the Gospel if we are unwilling to live by it. Paul prayed more for the believers then for the unsaved. His prayers are revealing.

Just look at Philippians 2:9-11. Did the Jewish people know how to pray to God? The answer is yes, but they did not continue to fellowship with Him and so became cold in heart then rebellious, then outright war like to the point that they stoned and killed the prophets. It's so easy to get caught up in the events here, that we forget the WHY!

The age of the Gentiles, a light begins to shine, and we as believers think of those verses in Matthew 4:15-17 (cross reference with Isaiah 9:1-2).

**15 -**  
***"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,***  
***By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,***  
***Galilee of the Gentiles:***

Note verse 16,

***The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,***  
***And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death***  
***Light has dawned."***

we know only too well that this describes us.



Ah verse 17

*From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

This shows us our Light.

We were in a spiritual dilemma and we too had the sentences of death on us, and justly so. We can't and won't boast for we have nothing to glory in of ourselves. We were no different spiritually than those standing before the king. Except a greater than Daniel came to our rescue. Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, the Son of righteousness, Our great high Priest, our Redeemer. We are what we are by His grace alone.

The danger is we could be no different than the Jews. We can fall as bad as they, we can allow our hearts to freeze by not putting on the Lord, not wanting to communicate with Him who loves us more than we can fathom. I'm so glad God had His man in the right place when the need arose. The message may be simple but do you see the ramifications in it?

*Amén.*