

# The Theological Reason For Hope

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**Bible Text:** Daniel 2:17-30

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Well, as we come to the middle of Daniel chapter two we come to a passage of Scripture that is often subsumed in the overall story of the interpretation of the dream. There is so much drama before it, the drama of the threat against the wise men which ultimately becomes a threat against Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. That drama and that tension draws us in. And then, of course, there is the interpretation of the dream. The interpretation of the dream captures our imagination because of the way that God just unfolds what then was the future, but for us is history. He unfolds history before it happens in the hearing of this great king. And so we want to emphasize the tension that exists and the danger that exists and then we want to get to resolution and especially the meaning of this resolution as it points Nebuchadnezzar and exiled Israel toward the coming of the King of kings and the Lord or lords. And yet in the middle there is our text today that, I believe, is not just slightly important, but extremely important. And here is why.

I believe this section that we are examining today is really the thesis statement for the book of Daniel. I believe that this section here today puts all of Daniel in its theological context. I believe this section here today is crucial to us understanding what we are about to read as we continue through this book. This is the theological framework. This is the theological construct. This is the reason for their hope, the theological reason for their hope. There is a historical reason for hope and the book of Daniel itself stands as this historical reason. We see Daniel as a picture of God's preserving power, of God as the covenant keeper, of God holding on to his covenant people even in the midst of exile, bringing them through that exile and restoring them to himself and for his purposes. And so from a historical perspective we look to that and we have hope.

But from a theological perspective, the question is: Why? Why should that give us hope? It happened. But, of course, we have said before and we will say again, narrative is not normative. Just because something happened doesn't mean that it is going to happen again. It doesn't mean that it is going to happen that way.

There are many things that happen, but they don't necessarily give us a pattern. Ananias and Sapphira happened, but that is not the way we handle church discipline today.

Amen. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. Ok? The pillar of fire and the pillar of smoke, that happened. But that is not the way we get from place to place.

So we have to understand the theological underpinnings in order to grasp the reason for our hope and that is what we have today, the reason for our hope.

I didn't say the reason for Daniel's hope. It is the reason for our hope.

Well, how can the reason for Daniel's hope be the reason for our hope, because, I mean, really, after all, this for Daniel and for exiled Israel, right? Yes. But the universal theological underpinnings have been and always will be the same and, in fact, what we see in the book of Daniel points forward not just to Israel at the end of its exile, but it points forward to the consummation of all things in the person and work of Christ. This is the reason for our hope. This is why you have hope. This is why I have hope, being found in Christ.

So go with me to verse 17 and we will look at verses 17 through 30 here in Daniel chapter two. And remember, up to this point the king has had a dream. And the king has called all of his experts in. We started with the training that Daniel and his friends received. And so we know they have been brought into this school of wise men, if you will. Now we come to a time immediately thereafter where the wise men are needed. The king calls the wise men in. He wants to know the dream and its interpretation.

They say, "Not only can we not do that, but no one can do that. Only God can do that."

He says, "That is really bad for you, because if you don't do that which only God can do, we are going to tear you limb from limb."

By the way, with Nebuchadnezzar and the ancient Near East, that is not an idle threat. I mean just think about what happens to people. You know the story of the first six chapters of Daniel. You don't bow before the statue. You go to a furnace of fire to be burned. You don't worship when you are supposed to, how you are supposed to, we put you in a den full of lions to be eaten alive.

So when Nebuchadnezzar says, "If you don't do this, all of you will be torn limb from limb," he means if you don't do this, literally, all of you will be torn limb from limb.

By the way, that gives us a picture of the historical setting and the historical context of exile. This is not just being home sick. Amen? This is being in a place where terrible men do terrible things. I believe, in fact, that it is because this is a place where terrible men do terrible things that we have this dream sequence.

Can you imagine what Stalin's dreams were like? Lenin? Hitler? Can you imagine how Pol Pot slept or Mao? How about our own president after Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Regardless how you feel about whether or not that was necessary, can you imagine having to pick up the phone and be the person who makes the call that says, "Drop

them,” and then having to sleep the next night? Can you imagine the images in your own mind? This man is serious.

“You will do this for me or I will kill all of you.”

They know him. He means it. And that is where we pick up with Daniel here and his friends in verse 17.

Note also the use of the Hebrew names here. I believe that is significant.

“Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery.”<sup>1</sup>

By the way, that phrase, “the God of heaven,” that is a name used for God that really comes out of the exile, the God of heaven.

“...so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night.”<sup>2</sup>

That is it. You would think that we would get this, you know, whole involved, intricate picture of the prayer. What kind of prayer is this? We are going to die and God has got to come through. We have got to have the vision. What kind of prayer is this?

Do not lose sight of the significance of this fact. This is not about prayer. It is not about prayer. Does that mean prayer is insignificant? No, prayer is significant, but this is not about prayer. The prayer part of it is... we just... that was it right there. Daniel comes in. He informs the guys, “Pray to the Lord of heaven that he might have mercy on us, that we might not die.” And then the next thing you get is not the prayer meeting.

“Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Daniel answered and said...”<sup>3</sup>

We don’t get the prayer, but here is what we get. We get the praise after the prayer. This is not about the prayer. This is about the praise.

Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,  
to whom belong wisdom and might.  
He changes times and seasons;  
he removes kings and sets up kings;

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel 2:17-18.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel 2:18-19.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel 2:19-20.

he gives wisdom to the wise  
and knowledge to those who have understanding;  
he reveals deep and hidden things;  
he knows what is in the darkness,  
and the light dwells with him.  
To you, O God of my fathers,  
I give thanks and praise,<sup>4</sup>

Now he is going from being the God of heaven to the God of my fathers.

How many of you know God of my fathers? When you hear that phrase in Scripture it is always our fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Here he just says, “God of our fathers.” How can we not go to Genesis 41 in our minds?

Genesis 41, Joseph before Pharaoh interpreting dreams, the lynchpin in Israel’s first exile.

“I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king’s matter.’

“Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon.”<sup>5</sup>

I told you he was serious. He had already assigned the task.

“He went and said thus to him, ‘Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation.’

“Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: ‘I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation.’”<sup>6</sup>

Arioch comes in haste. He comes in a hurry. Who wants to kill on behalf of the king? Arioch doesn’t want this. He is ecstatic and in haste he comes before the king.

“The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, ‘Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?’”<sup>7</sup>

Daniel answered the king and said, “Absolutely, I am. I have a spiritual gift that puffs me up.”

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel 2:20-23.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel 2:23-24.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel 2:24-25.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel 2:26.

Daniel answered and said, with all due respect to Arioch and his introduction, Arioch says, "I have found a man."

Daniel says:

No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.<sup>8</sup>

Amen. There it is. There is the reason for our hope, the theological underpinnings, if you will as to why it is that we can hope in God in spite of our circumstances, why it is that we can hope as we look to what for us is an uncertain future. There are four reasons and these four reasons are intertwined both in the praise and in the testimony. They overlap. You put them together and they overlap, these four reasons. Let me give you these four and then we will look at the praise and the testimony and how these four come together.

Number one, all wisdom belongs to God. Number two, God is sovereign over the affairs of men. Number three, men cannot know the mind of God apart from special revelation. Number four, God's revelation to man is an act of mercy. There they are. That is the theological underpinning of our hope. All wisdom belongs to God. God is sovereign over the affairs of men. Men cannot know the mind of God apart from special revelation and God's revelation to man is an act of mercy. That is why we may have hope. That is why Daniel has hope. That is why this book gives hope to all of the people of God.

First, all wisdom belongs to God.

Chapter two and verse 20.

Daniel answered and said:  
"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,  
to whom belong wisdom and might.  
He changes times and seasons;  
he removes kings and sets up kings;  
he gives wisdom to the wise  
and knowledge to those who have understanding;<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel 2:27-30.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel 2:20-21.

In the testimony look at verse 28. And in verse 28 you see:

“...but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.”<sup>10</sup>

The principle is the same. All wisdom belongs to God.

Chapters one through six are basically a battle between human wisdom and man’s wisdom. That is the whole picture here. When you look at chapter one, what happens? It is set up for us by Daniel in the way that he presents chapter one. In chapter one what we find is the type of young men who were brought in. Look with me at verse three of chapter one.

Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king’s palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.<sup>11</sup>

“Find men with the best wisdom that this Hebrew culture can give.

“Now the best wisdom that this Hebrew culture can give is insignificant when compared to the wisdom of our Babylonian culture, but we want to educate some of these lowly Hebrews.

“By the way, if their wisdom was any match for our wisdom, we would not have conquered them. If their God was any match for our god we would not have conquered them. Nevertheless, we are not going to wipe them out. We are going to bring some of them in and give them the benefit of our educational system so that they can be wise beyond anything that their culture could produce.”

So there in chapter one it is set up. The question is: Where does wisdom lie? And in chapter one there is a battle of wills already. Who is the wisest when it comes to how we are to eat and maintain ourselves? Well, chalk a point for God.

These boys end up being ten times better. Why? Because they learned the skills of the Chaldeans 10 times better than the Chaldeans? No, because the wisdom of God far outshines the wisdom of man, because apart from God there is no wisdom.

Proverbs chapter two and verse six:

“For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Daniel 2:28.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel 1:3-4.

<sup>12</sup> Proverbs 2:6.

The fear of the Lord, in fact, is the beginning of wisdom.

James says:

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”<sup>13</sup>

God is the source of all true wisdom. Now let me hasten to say here. This does not mean that men who do not know God do not know anything. There are smart individuals who do not know God. You can ride down south and go to NASA and talk to, you know, literally rocket scientists, astrophysicists, engineers and the like who will spout information to you that will immediately have you wondering why their heads are not larger than they actually are, because the average size brain should not be able to contain such knowledge. And yet if they say in their heart that there is no God, they are no more than educated fools, completely lacking in wisdom that matters.

See, there is a such thing as common grace. And it is common grace that allows people to learn and to conduct themselves successfully. It is common grace that has allowed Nebuchadnezzar to be at the head of a nation that has culture and art and architecture and food and wine and entertainment and the like. His culture has all of these things and yet it is based on a humanistic foundation that sees man as the center of the universe and because of that it is a house of cards.

True wisdom begins with God, because if you do not know God, you do not know the purpose of things and if you do not know the purpose of a thing you will ultimately abuse it. God created the world. If you don't know the purpose of the world you will abuse it. You will either abuse it or you will worship it. God gives us marriage. If we don't know the purpose of marriage we will abuse it. God gives us our families. If you don't know the purpose of a family you will abuse it. God gives us architecture and science and literature and art. And if we do not know the purpose of those things, we will abuse it. And the purpose of those things is to magnify the wisdom of God, to magnify the mercy of God, to magnify the redemptive acts of God. If you do not know that, you will abuse the thing and all of the sudden man becomes the center and focal point of all of your architecture, all of your art, all of your music, all of your science.

Here Daniel reminds us God is the source of all wisdom.

By the way, why does that give hope to you and to me? Because we know God. Amen? I may not have as much information as the rocket scientist, but here is what I know. He can get to Mars, but I can get to heaven. Amen?

Secondly, God is sovereign over the affairs of men. Here look at verse 21.

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<sup>13</sup> James 1:5.

“He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.”<sup>14</sup>

Now, again, back in verse 28.

“[God] has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.”<sup>15</sup>

How can God make known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days? By the way, notice this is not what Daniel says. Daniel doesn't say, “God gave you a dream so that you can make a choice.” That is not what Daniel says. Daniel doesn't say, “God gave you this dream so that you would know that if you go down this road here is what is going to happen to you and if you go down that road, here is what is going to happen to you.”

That happens in Scripture. That is not what happens here. Daniel doesn't say, “God gave you a dream so that he would give you a choice.” Daniel says, “God gave you a dream so you would know what is going to happen.”

And what we are going to find out next week is God gave you a dream about how you are going to be wiped out. But don't fret, because the nation that wipes you out is going to be wiped out. And that is ok, because the nation that wipes them out is going to be wiped out. And ultimately there is only one kingdom that is never going to be wiped out and it happens to be the kingdom of this slave that is standing before you giving you the interpretation of the dream. I am so happy to tell you.

Nebuchadnezzar rebels against the dream. Again, and it is important that we get a little bit ahead of ourselves here, because what we are going to see is that the top part of that statue, gold. Later on Nebuchadnezzar is going to build a statue of himself all of it is gold. He is basically going to say to God, “You are not sovereign in the affairs of men. You can't take me out. I am not just the top part of the statue. I am the statue. I am the kingdom that will live forever.”

But Daniel does not say, “God is issuing a challenge to you to see if you can outlast him.” Daniel says, “God is showing you what will come to pass.”

God is sovereign in the affairs of men. Nebuchadnezzar cannot prevent the march of history and the fall of this kingdom. And Daniel could not prevent captivity.

Here is what is interesting. Daniel and his friends come and pray to God and we see that. Later on we are going to see Daniel in this habit of praying three times a day. Did you ever wonder at this? Daniel prays and God answers his prayers and so basically if we take that route, this is eventually... it is all about prayer. You pray. God will answer your prayers. Did you think Daniel prayed that they would get out of exile? Yep. And God answered that prayer. No, not for two or three generations. No.

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel 2:21.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel 2:28.



“I love you, Daniel, and I hear the cry of your heart and I appreciate it, but you are going to die a slave. You are never going to be free again and nobody you know is ever going to be free again. Every one of you is going to die and it is your children’s children who are going to get out of here.”

And no matter how fervent the payers are, God is sovereign in the affairs of men.

So then how come God answers this prayer and not the other prayer? To give you hope as a member of the covenant community in the midst of your circumstances, whatever they are, to give you hope. The hope is not that you are going to get what you want when you want it. The hope is that you belong to the God of the universe and he is going to be glorified and your greatest desire is for him to be glorified. And because he is sovereign in the affairs of men, your greatest desire is going to come to pass whether you see it or not.

We see this in the Scripture, do we not, in the Old Testament, 2 Chronicles chapter 20 and verse six.

“O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.”<sup>16</sup>

Job chapter 23 verse 13.

“But he is unchangeable, and who can turn him back? What he desires, that he does.”<sup>17</sup>

Job chapter 42 verse two.

“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”<sup>18</sup>

Psalm 135:6.

“Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.”<sup>19</sup>

Isaiah 43:13.

“Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> 2 Chronicles 20:6.

<sup>17</sup> Job 23:13.

<sup>18</sup> Job 42:2.

<sup>19</sup> Psalm 135:6

<sup>20</sup> Isaiah 43:13.

Isaiah 46:8-10.

Remember this and stand firm,  
recall it to mind, you transgressors,  
remember the former things of old;  
for I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is none like me,  
declaring the end from the beginning  
and from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,  
and I will accomplish all my purpose.'<sup>21</sup>

And here is from Daniel chapter four verses 34 and 35 from the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar.

At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever,

for his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;  
all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,  
and he does according to his will among the host of heaven  
and among the inhabitants of the earth;  
and none can stay his hand  
or say to him, "What have you done?"<sup>22</sup>

That is Nebuchadnezzar's testimony in just a couple of chapters.

God is sovereign in the affairs of men. God rules and reigns in the affairs of men.

Let me explain what this means. Sovereignty is about authority. This means that there is no authority higher than the authority of God. There is no one who can stay his hand. There is no one who can stop him or thwart him, none whatsoever. God is not in competition. God is not running for God. He is sovereign over all things.

Often times we talk about his providence which is the way that he exercises his sovereignty in the affairs of men. But God has absolute rule and reign and whatever he does is right. Whatever he does is right, because he is God.

It gives us great hope if you know this, but if you don't, if you are here today and you do not believe in the sovereignty of God you have no hope. If you are the type of person, you know, who sits around and twiddles his thumb and wonders whether or not God is going to be able to accomplish things, you have no hope.

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<sup>21</sup> Isaiah 46:8-10.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel 4:34-35.

If a tree falls on your house and you believe it was because God was slumbering and not because the sovereign Lord of the universe in his eternal sovereign plan decreed that that tree would fall on your house, then you have got problems, because if God can't control the direction a tree falls in your yard, what makes you think he can get you to heaven?

If God is twiddling his thumbs hoping against hope, then what makes you think that the future is going to unravel the way he says it is going to unravel? No, no, no, no. The sovereignty of God is what gives you hope. Knowing that God rules all things is what gives you hope.

Now it is a terrible thing at times because there are things that happen to us that are awful. There are things that happen to us and to those around us and people who we love that are absolutely unthinkable. But here is what I know. God is good. He can't help but be good. And whatever has come to pass was for God's glory and ultimately because I am his, it is for my good. I believe that because I trust the sovereign God.

Folks, this is the only way that you have hope in the midst of dire circumstances. It is the only way. And this is not theoretical. This is Daniel in the midst of exile. Daniel has probably seen members of his family killed. Daniel has been hauled off in chains. He is a slave. He sits here in the midst of a pagan culture serving a pagan king, reading pagan literature, reading things that probably makes his flesh crawl. He is despised. He is a little thing. He is of absolutely no importance in this culture. He is not a big man. He is not an important man. He is a slave. He is not free. He can't go run on the hills that they ran on when he was a boy. He is not even free to sing the songs of his youth, to worship God in the sanctuary. This is Daniel's lot in life and yet God uses this man and his circumstances to say there is hope.

What?

He is taken off with the eunuchs.

You have no future beyond yourself, Daniel. No wife. No family. No children. And yours is the story of hope. And if you don't get that, it is just because you haven't been in a valley yet. But when you are in the valley... trust me. When you are in the valley the last thing you want is to be surrounded by people and circumstances that have never looked anything like a valley.

But do you know what gives you hope when you are in the valley? Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaal, Azariah. God is good. God is in control. God is sovereign over the affairs of men.

I am in the valley right now, but, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

Do you believe that? On your worst day are you able to say, “You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life”? Can you say that on your worst day? You can only say that on your worst day when you know and understand that God is sovereign over the affairs of men, because here is Daniel. He is a slave, a eunuch, no future, not going back to his homeland and he is grinning from ear to ear. Why? Because God says, “We don’t get to die today.” God says, “We don’t get to die with them.” And God says, “We don’t get to get torn limb from limb.”

Stuff is bad, but it could be worse. Amen? And that is good news. We don’t get to die today. That takes me back to the garden and here is Adam and Eve and the serpent standing there and here are the curses that are being handed down and Adam and Eve have been told that in the day you eat of that fruit, dying you shall die.

We are standing before almighty God and he looks to the serpent and he says to the serpent, “You are going on your belly. You are going to eat dust. I am going to put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed.”

Eve’s heart is leaping for joy. Why? Because God just said I am not dying today. I am going to be a mother.

Daniel’s heart is leaping for joy. He is in exile and he is never going to get out. But he is not going to get torn limb from limb today and God has just reminded everyone of who is sovereign. You need that, saints. You need that, because there are people who have authority over you and there are people who will lord that authority over you. There are people who will mistreat you and who will abuse you, but here is what you need to know. God is sovereign over them.

And so we submit ourselves to authority gladly.

Thirdly, man cannot know the mind of God apart from special revelation. Here in verse 22.

“He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.”<sup>23</sup>

Isn’t that... what a beautiful turn of phrase. God knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with him. The dark, the foreboding the sinful, the awful, God knows what is there and the remedy for it dwells with him.

Then look at verse 27.

“No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Daniel 2:22.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel 2:27.

The Chaldeans know this. Nebuchadnezzar was not a fool, but he could not interpret his own dreams. God shows him that you need special revelation. He was not a fool, but he could not interpret his own dream. He had a dream in his own head, in his own mind and he could not interpret it. He was absolutely helpless and he loses control over it.

“Go and get my guys. Go and get the guys who are trained to do things like this.”

By the way, the Chaldeans, in spite of their training, could not interpret the dream.

Chapter two verses 10 and 11.

The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is not a man on earth who can meet the king’s demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.”<sup>25</sup>

They get that. They can’t do it. They are trained. They have been to school for it and they can’t do it. Nebuchadnezzar is the most powerful man in the world at this point and he can’t do it. The men who serve him in this capacity, they can’t do it. But watch this. Daniel, in spite of the fact that according to chapter one and verse 17 says he has the ability to interpret dreams, he couldn’t do it.

But wait a minute, he did it. Yeah, but what did he do first? He goes to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah and he says, “Here is what is going on. Pray.”

Pray for what? Go back again. Verse 18.

“...seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.”<sup>26</sup>

Daniel doesn’t say, “Pray that I can exercise my gift.” Daniel says, “Pray that God will be merciful.”

He can’t do it. It is not possible apart from special revelation of God. You cannot know the mind of God apart from special revelation.

Oh, yes:

“The heavens declare the glory of God.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Daniel 2:10-11.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel 2:18.

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 19:1.

Oh, yes, because of what God reveals we are without excuse, Romans chapter one. That is absolutely true. But it is completely and utterly insufficient to save you. You can't get there from here. You need God's Word.

By the way, you do need God's Word, because Hebrews chapter one verses one and two makes this very clear. God, after he spoke to the fathers and the prophets and many portions in many ways in these last days has spoken to us. It is a completed act. Has spoken to us through his Son. The final ultimate revelation of God is the person and work of Jesus Christ. We don't trust in the vision of the night. As our confession says, "These former ways now having ceased."

By the way, if these former ways had not ceased, we would have to have three ring binders instead of leather bound Bibles. We have God's Word and it is utterly sufficient.

Finally, the revelation of God is a merciful act. God does not have to reveal himself to us. God does not have to condescend to us. God could just do what he does. God could have just done this in Daniel's life. He could have done this with Israel. He could have done... All that we have in the Old Testament God could have done without it ever having been recorded. All that God did in the New Testament in the person and work of Christ God could have done without it ever having been recorded. Yet, that is not what God did. Mercifully, God communicates to his people. He speaks to his people. Through his Word he continues to do that.

In their circumstance, God was merciful to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. They didn't get to die today. Amen. It was merciful and they prayed and asked that God would show mercy and that is precisely what God did. But here is the second thing. God was merciful to the Chaldeans.

How many of you know that the people around you are blessed because you belong to God? How can you live here, for example, in this land and not recognize the fact that just the residue of people who serve God is a good thing? Just the historical benefit of walking and living in the shadows of people who love and serve God is a blessing. And here the Chaldeans have brought these lowly Jews, whom they despise. They despise the way they look, the way they smell, the way they talk, the way they dress. They despise everything about these people and think that they are superior to these people. These people are absolutely nothing. In fact, when everybody gets called in, do you notice Daniel doesn't get called in the first time? Because these are the outsiders. They are the tainted ones. They are the ones who just sort of come in to the understanding of who we are and what we do. They are sort of junior Chaldeans and they are worse than junior Chaldeans because they are foreign Chaldeans. We have been bathed and immersed in this stuff.

So when the king needs something he calls on his boys, not those low lifes. And if it wasn't for those low lifes every one of us would have been torn limb from limb. Thank God for the low lifes.

God reveals himself to his people. And it is an act of mercy not just to them, but to those around.

Children, listen to me. All around me I look at children who don't yet know the Lord. And yet you are being raised in a home with a mother and a father that knows God and they know God's Word and they continue to saturate your life with the Word of God and you are blessed even though you don't know it. And you won't know it for a long time, children.

By God's grace I pray that you come to repentance and faith, that you come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and then you look back over your life and there will come a moment where you as an adult will be overwhelmed with the desire to pick up the phone and thank your mother and your father for bathing you in the Word. And if you don't believe me, just ask your mom and dad, because some of them just reached that moment right now.

You are grateful for the people of God that surrounded you when you did not know God. You are grateful for the blessing that you received when you did not know God, simply because of people who did, because of people whose lives were altered, transformed and changed by the Word of God and by the person and work of Jesus Christ who is the Word of God incarnate. And because of that, your life was touched, your life was blessed and eventually you came to repentance and faith by God using people to whom he revealed himself in his Word.

God's revelation to man is an act of mercy. Even a lost man who finds the Word of God is blessed, first and foremost because he can find God there. But, secondly, it is better than anything else he is ever going to find. Amen.

There is a reason for your hope. And the reason for your hope is not just because of what God has done. And that is good. The reason for your hope is not because of how much you impress God, because you don't. The reason for your hope is alien to you. The reason for your hope is the same as the reason for Daniel's hope that we see here in this section. The reason for your hope is the fact that all wisdom comes from God, that God is sovereign over the affairs of men, that you have absolutely no hope of comprehending what is in the mind of God apart from God's revelation. But, praise be to God, he has revealed himself and that is an act of mercy.

And on next week what we will see is that what he reveals brings even more specificity to our hope, because it points us to the fact that the person and work of Jesus Christ is not an afterthought. And it is because of the sovereignty of God that he was able to bring about your redemption through the person and work of Christ in the fullness of time. And he told us so long before it ever happened, because he is God all by himself. And if God can superintend those circumstances, to bring about Christ's redemptive work, then you and I need to know that God can superintend the rest of history and bring about the consummation of all things in and through our Lord and Master, Savior, King and friend, Jesus Christ. That is why we have hope.