Where to Seek Godly Wisdom Part 2

Daniel 2:1-16

Good morning! Please open your Bibles to the book of Daniel chapter 2. Today we are continuing our study of the first 16 verses of chapter 2. In the account that we read last week, and that we will read again this week, the king of Babylon has had a very disturbing dream. This dream was a vision that had been given to him by God to show him what was going to happen in the future. As we saw in verses 1-9 last week, the king consorted with his wise men and demanded that they both provide him a description of the dream as well as it’s interpretation. When the wise men tell him that is an impossible command, he becomes furious and decides that he will destroy all of the wise men in Babylon. Before we move in the passage today, I think it would be appropriate for us to take a few moments to review our applications from last week regarding where followers of Christ should seek wisdom. The first application we shared last week was that we must choose who we listen to very carefully when we are seeking wisdom. The Word of God warns us that there are many false prophets and deceivers from Satan who are working to deceive followers of Christ in an effort to pull them away from the only truth there is, which is the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that the only way to approach the Father is through Him. Our second application last week is that we must turn to God so that He may impart to us the wisdom we need to face the challenges of this life. No one has the ability or the power to emulate the wisdom of God, so when we have questions that need answers, we must seek those answers in God’s Word through prayer and also with the assistance of our brothers and sisters in Christ who can guide us into the truth.

Now that we have reviewed the message from last week, let us once again read this passage of Scripture together. Since we have reviewed verses 1-9, I will begin today with verse 10. **“10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is no person on earth who could declare the matter to the king, because no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any soothsayer priest, sorcerer, or Chaldean. 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.” 12 Because of this, the king became angry and extremely furious, and he gave orders to kill all the wise men of Babylon. 13 So the decree was issued that the wise men be killed; and they looked for Daniel and his friends, to kill them. 14 Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king’s bodyguard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon; 15 he said to Arioch, the king’s officer, ‘For what reason is the decree from the king so harsh?’ Then Arioch informed Daniel of the matter. 16 So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him a grace period, so 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 secret, so that Daniel and his friends would not be killed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.**

Beginning in verse 10 we see the response that the wise men give to the king, which he finds to be an unacceptable response. They claim that they are unable to explain his dream to him because this is information that only the gods can know and also because it is an order that no other king in the history of the world had demanded of his counselors. This was a very brave thing for them to say because they knew that he could order their deaths at any moment. These men were really in a predicament because they knew they could not perform was the king had demanded and they also knew that they had a reputation to uphold. They are trapped between a rock and a hard place because the way they normally took care of such situations was not working this time. They could not just tell the king some random thing that would appease him. They would have to know the truth and share that with him or it would cost them their lives. They have no answer for the king, so he becomes furious with them. They had used up all of their options so they were left with no other alternative but to admit that they did not have the abilities they had always told the king they had.

In verse 11 they then invoke the gods into their excuse for not having the ability to explain the dream. This excuse, as we already said last week, is not holding any water with the king because in the past they had always claimed to have a connection with the gods, but now they are changing their tune when the king called them out to perform. They also make the statement that since the gods are unreachable there is no way for them to provide the king what he wanted. They have, therefore, admitted what we concluded last week. Man cannot do such things, only God has that power.

In verse 12 the king’s anger has now reached the boiling point. This anger had been building up through this account because of three primary reasons. Firstly, he had a very disturbing dream that had already made him stressed. Secondly, his advisors who were supposed to have divine knowledge we unable to help him, which really adds to his frustration. Thirdly, in addition to not being able to do what he commands they are now making excuses trying to buy time so that his order would be delayed. He had been lied to and deceived for long enough. He was not going to stand for it any longer. You and I can definitely relate to this. There comes a point that all of us reach when we get very annoyed and frustrated with others not being honest with us and giving us the run around. The king was done with all of the empty words and deceit. He was now going to take some extreme action. The best solution to the problem, in his eyes, was to kill all of these advisors because he could no longer trust them.

As we continue in verse 13, we are told that captain of the guard began rounding up all of the wise men to kill them. In verse 14 he makes it to Daniel and his friends. When Daniel inquires of the captain why this order had been made so hastily, he is told of the situation. What we need to look carefully at in verse 14 are two words that are provided which are used to describe the way that Daniel approached this situation. In the NASB 20 translation these two words are discretion and discernment. Could I please have a volunteer explain for us what is meant by the word discretion? To be discreet is to approach a situation with care not attempting to cause others to become angry or flustered. So, the first way Daniel approached the situation was by being careful and calm. Secondly, he approached the situation with discernment. What does it mean to practice discernment? When he asked the question of the guard he was seen as being really interested in what was going on so that he could address the needs of the king more accurately. He asked for information so that he understood what was going on. This was a very mature and strong way to respond to the threat of death. Daniel did not immediately beg for his life or start acting foolish with fear, rather he stood confident knowing that God would provide him with the wisdom he needed to handle the situation.

As we conclude the passage in verses 16-18, we see that Daniel requests time from the king so that he could go to Gid in prayer to seek an answer for the king. Not only does Daniel pray to God for the answer, but his three friends also join him in prayer. This shows us the importance of God’s people lifting up prayers together and how these requests come before God’s throne. Daniel acted in such a wise and prudent manner, that he gained the respect of the captain of the guard and he also had the king allow him the time to get an answer for him. We see that proper behavior and acting in a wise manner does earn the respect of others.

This leads us now to two additional applications from the second half of this passage that will help us as we seek Godly wisdom. The first point we need to make today is that when we are encountered with a difficult situation where a solution to the problem seems impossible, we need to follow Daniel’s example. He reacted to this challenging situation with discretion and discernment. When Daniel asked the captain of the guard for an explanation, this question was asked so that he understood the situation completely. **In the book of Proverbs, Solomon echoes this wise action when he writes in 18:13 “One who gives an answer before he hears, it is foolishness and shame to him.”** I find this advice to be very applicable to the world in which we live in today because it seems like there are many people who want to serve as the ones who have the answers, but what happens so many times is that the answers that are given are not always answering the question. In my work-study program that I run at Ashland High School we spend a lot of time discussing communication skills because a lack of communication is what has led so many times to violence and misunderstanding not only among students, but among fellow workers in the workplace. Effective communication is 90% listening and 10% speaking. What we see happening in the culture, however, is a desire to be heard and not take the time to listen to the other side. Having a rational dialogue in the world today is not easy because everyone wants to be heard so badly. If we spend a majority of our time speaking, then our ears are unable to hear what the other person is saying. Talking and being able to effectively listen is impossible. Solomon wants his son to become a good listener and make certain to have all of the facts straight before reaching a conclusion. When we speak with others may we also practice effective listening skill. Sometimes the best thing we can do is just listen and let the other person know that we care. I have to admit that being married has taught me this lesson and I know heeding this advice makes life much better.

The fourth and final application we can take from this passage is that we cannot expect that we will always be able to handle a situation on our own. After Daniel requested more time from the king, he then went to his friends so they could all pray with him as well. We also must seek the aid of our brothers and sisters in Christ who can listen to our struggle, pray with us, discuss the situation to consider all options and through it all tighten the bonds that hold us together as a church. It is through difficulty and challenge that the church grows. When we help each other get through those tough times this is when we find out who we can trust and cling to in the hard times. In the book of Esther, we find a verse provided for us that shows this kind of Christian love. When the king of Persia had decreed that all of the Jews in the empire would be destroyed. Esther had become the queen of Persia and decided that she would use the position God had put her in to save His chosen people. In chapter 4 verse 16 she gives the people instructions as she was preparing to go in to the king to ask for his grace. **16 “Go, gather all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants also will fast in the same way. And then I will go in to the king, which is not in accordance with the law; and if I perish, I perish.”** She asked for the people to all fast and pray for three days so that she would have the God’s protection as she approached the king. She was willing to break the law and put her life in danger for the well-being of all of the Jewish people. This selfless act of love and sacrifice was blessed by God because what eventually happens is that the people are spared and the man who deceived the king faced a horrible death and judgment. We learn from Esther’s faith and instruction that when God’s people come together in faith and repentance, He will listen and will act accordingly. This is exactly what Daniel and his friends did when they went to pray to God together. They knew that without His help they would fail in their mission.

Another example of praying together asking for God to intervene is found in Acts 12:15 when Peter was thrown into prison. The church gathered together and prayed for him continuously. This prayer was answered by God with the freeing of Peter from prison. When God’s people come together and petition Him, we have ample evidence from Scripture to assure us that He does indeed hear us and will act according to His will. We may not always understand the way He handles a situation, but we also know that His ways are always best. He loves us and wants what is best for us even when we don’t have the ability to know what is best for ourselves.

As we continue in our study of Daniel, we will now see what the dream of the king was and what it’s meaning will be. This interpretation will bring much needed revelation to the king on what will happen in the future. We will have our first mentioning of Jesus Christ and we will then be able to see how the coming of Christ had paved the way for all those who trust in Him to be in God’s presence for all eternity. I hope you will continue to join us as we unwrap this together. Q/A and prayer.