

# GODLY LIVING IN A GODLESS WORLD

## Expositional Study Of Daniel

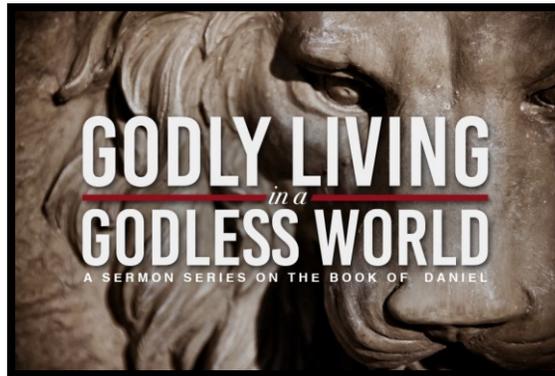
Daniel 2:1-19

Part 2

Written By

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**W**hat do you do when the sea of life suddenly turns against you? Who do you turn to for wisdom, insight, and guidance? Who speaks into your life? Are they a wise person, wise in the ways of God, or are they wise in the ways of the world? Do they place a premium on the Word of God, or do they extol the wonders of psychology?

Some don't turn to people when the water of their world becomes turbulent. They turn to all the wrong things: drugs, liquor, and/or sleeping pills. They withdraw and isolate themselves because they just don't want to face yet another complex situation. So, in customary, predictable fashion they medicate themselves into comfortable, head-in-the-sand oblivion.

Beyond all this, we must ask, How do you behave, or act, when your life suddenly goes south? Do you face the wall of water and just throw your arms up, awaiting the inevitable? Do you start methodically looking at all the pros and cons of what you need to do to tackle the issue? Do you go into freak-out mode, incapable of making any decision at all? Or maybe you just freeze up completely ... you know you just emotionally shut down. That's it. You're done. It's over.

Here's a flash of insight for those facing a figurative tsunami heading your way: God, who is sovereign over every facet of your life (Isaiah 45:7; Lamentations 3:38), is permitting the situation, be what it may, to accomplish His loftier purposes in your life. You might need to read that sentence again because you may not yet fully embrace it cognitively ... and emotionally. God loves you so much he will allow this wave to come your way at supersonic speed to do one of

two things: One, to cause you to turn to Him and His revelation for the first time in your life, or two, to challenge you, as a Christ-follower, to turn in trust to Him with the firm belief He will guide your vessel to a safe harbor.

If anyone learned this priceless spiritual lesson, it was Daniel, his three friends, and the highly educated and powerful diviners and sorcerers of Babylon. When the wall of wicked water loomed above them, when it looked as if death was imminent, each man had to come to terms with how to best sail forward to real life. Yes, each man had to answer the question naturally arising from Daniel chapter 2, verses 1 through 19. It's a question you might be facing as well:

## What Do You Do When A Life Tsunami Is Threatening? (Daniel 2:1-19)

The antagonists of the inspired historical narrative, the so-called spiritual advisors of King Nebuchadnezzar, appear first. They are part of Babylon's upper crust; socially, academically, and spiritually. If anyone should know the gods and how to communicate with them to get much needed answers to life's complex storms, it is them. In their schools they have devised all kinds of complicated means for deciphering the thinking of the gods. You give them some personal information, and they will give you a spiritually illuminated answer by checking out the entrails of a sacrificial animal (the "science" of haruspicy), or by throwing water on an ox and then interpreting what the movement of the ox means, or by consider their black arts, with all of its mystery, ritual, and incantations. Why, they can even tell you whether the gods say "Yes" or "No" by watching which way birds fly on a given day (the "science" of augury), or what falling stars mean in the dark sky above their heads (the "science" of astrology).<sup>1</sup> They even studied and looked for divine messages in fire (the science of pyromancy), the movement of water (the "science" of hydromancy), the study of livers (the "science" of hepatoscopy), and the consultation with the dead (the "science" of necromancy).<sup>2</sup>

These confidants surrounded King Nebuchadnezzar and had given him wisdom and insight for many political and personal storms; however, one day a storm at sea came to beat all storms. And that's the way it usually works, isn't it? Your life is going along just fine, and then out of nowhere a serious squall kicks up. Here's what happened to these antagonists:

<sup>1</sup> Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> The king said to them, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream." <sup>4</sup> 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."

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<sup>1</sup> Erica Reiner, "Fortune-Telling In Mesopotamia," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 19, no. 1 (January 1960): 23-35.

<sup>2</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, divination.

This historical episode has tsunami written all over it; however, before we take a look at it so we can learn form, it we must pause and consider the supposed chronological problem posed by verse 1.

Since chapter one concludes with Daniel and his friends graduating from Babylonian University's Black Arts program after three years, how can this passage chronologically follow since it explicitly states it occurred in the second year of King Nebuchadnezzar. Higher biblical critics who do not hold to the veracity and inerrancy of the Scripture, who, by default, hold the Bible as guilty until proven innocent, are quick to shout out their mantra, "Inconsistency! Untrustworthy! Unreliable! Contradiction!" Without sailing out too far into these deep interpretive waters, I think the solution (for the sake of time) is best provided by Old Testament scholar Edward J. Young. His time chart is most helpful (I've added a few details to make it clearer for lay people):

Year of Daniel's Training	King Nebuchadnezzar
First Year (605 B.C.)	Year of Accession (605 B.C.)
Second Year (606 B.C.)	First Regal Year (606 B.C.)
Third Year (607 B.C.)	Second Regal year (607 B.C.)

Based on this plausible model, there is no chronological discrepancy between the chapters. Instead they flow one after the other as the Spirit of God intended. For the liberal, highly critical viewpoint, I would direct you to John J. Collins' commentary titled *Daniel: Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*.<sup>3</sup> Basically, Collins has to argue in this fashion because he does not accept the highly exact prophetic value of the book. Because he holds this tenuous position, he must, by definition, relegate the book to being composed by some unknown author redacting and arranging Daniel's thought some 366 years after Daniel in order to substantiate his anti-prophetic view of prophetic books like this. When you, conversely, embrace the presence of a living God who can, and does, speak in real-time history, you do not encounter a conundrum with seemingly contradictory statements. You, on the other hand, find reasonable and logical textual proofs to support the inspired biblical text like Young does. I don't know about you, but I am standing with Young.

Now back the dilemma at hand. Who do you turn to when a troublesome wall of water comes your way? From this pericope (viz., verses 1 through 13), we encounter what happens in the majority of secular educated, post-modern, New Age, guru-sensitive, all-religions-are-true minds:

### The Foolish Seek Man's Mind (Daniel 2:1-13)

I heard not long ago of a Christian young woman who had left her husband on non-biblical grounds. It was something like they weren't compatible. You know the drill. Instead of turning to her Christian friends for wisdom and counsel in her unhappy marriage, she immediately surrounded herself with the godless, carnal, partying friends she had met while in school. You can just imagine how they counseled her. A storm hit her life after she married, and instead of turning to God, she sought godless counsel in order to justify her selfish actions, and to keep her

<sup>3</sup> John J. Collins, *Daniel: Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 154-155.



distinct passages together. In the Genesis narrative, Joseph will be the young “slave” who will bring divine interpretation to a complex dream to Pharaoh, while in the Daniel narrative, Daniel, another young Jewish “slave” will also step forward and bring complete revelatory illumination (Daniel 2:14ff).

The message should not be missed at this rhetorical juncture. God employs dreams at the highest levels of secular government to chip away at the false belief systems of the supposedly all-powerful rulers. He will use graphic, vivid, ominous dreams to teach these narcissistic leaders that their common methods for understanding life are sadly lacking and in dire need of real divine illumination provided by the most godly but inconspicuous people, Joseph and Daniel. That God can employ dreams to accomplish His lofty and eternal kingdom purposes is a given from the Old Testament (Jacob, Genesis 28:10-15; Joseph, Genesis 37:5-11; Solomon, 1 Kings 3:5-15; Joseph, the father of Jesus, Matthew 1:20-24). Really, God, the omnipotent One, can use a variety of means to chip away at a hard heart in order to call and draw them to Himself.

All of this logically leads me to ask some personal questions, what is God doing in your life right now to chip away at your false thinking? What is He doing to get your attention that your normal avenues for finding help in adversity just don't (and won't ever) cut it? Who are your magicians, conjurers, sorcerers and Chaldeans?

And if you don't think this group of seedy, satanically inspired people do not still exist, think again. Psychic Counseling is readily available on the internet for a fee from “reputable” and effective psychics, like those associated with *LifeLeap Institute*. It's a leap all right, and pricey too at fees ranging between \$120 to \$540 per hour. Yikes! (I think that's a Hebrew word). According to the Huffington Post, 1/3 of women consult their horoscopes for life direction, and 40% check their husband's horoscope as well.<sup>7</sup> Also, according to a National Science Foundation study, 50% of all Americans believe celestial bodies have a direct influence on their lives, with the majority of Americans between 18-24 thinking astrology is “sort of” scientific.<sup>8</sup> Josh McDowell and Don Stewart point out in their book *The Occult: The Authority of the Believer Over Powers of Darkness*, that “there are more than 3,000 publishers of occult books and magazines with a combined revenue of one-billion dollars in annual sales.”<sup>9</sup> Just what people are getting into in order to secure esoteric information about life are detailed in the book: automatic writing, chakras, channeling, spirit guides, clairvoyance, crystals, cartomancy, crystal gazing, dream analysis, numerology, Ouija boards, palmistry, psychometry to name a few. If you are seeking

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*hidden* = teller of hidden things; Wied <sup>44</sup>: thinks Heb. word perhaps imitating an Egypt. *cher-tem-t*, he who holds the book; FCCook 'Speaker's' i. 279 proposes *cher-tum* = bearer of sacred words.

<sup>7</sup> “One Third Of Women Horoscope Users Consult The Stars Before Making Major Financial Decisions, According To iVillage Study,” Huffington Post, last modified March 18, 2010, accessed February 10, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/12/10/one-third-of-women-horosc\\_n\\_386900.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/12/10/one-third-of-women-horosc_n_386900.html).

<sup>8</sup> “Majority of Young Adults Think Astrology is a Science,” UPI, last modified February 12, 2014, accessed February 10, 2016, [http://www.upi.com/Science\\_News/Blog/2014/02/11/Majority-of-young-adults-think-astrology-is-a-science/5201392135954/](http://www.upi.com/Science_News/Blog/2014/02/11/Majority-of-young-adults-think-astrology-is-a-science/5201392135954/).

<sup>9</sup> Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *The Occult: The Authority of the Believers Over the Powers of Darkness*, 1st ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 19.

life guidance to pressing, complex problems and storms from any of these types of sources, you are, in essence, consulting the same misguided, Devil-inspired magicians of ancient Babylon. Only naïve foolish people who do not know what they are dealing with would dare head down this perilous road.

From the biblical text, it is apparent King Nebuchadnezzar had used these enlightened occultic men before with some degree of success. Believe it, there is power in the occult or people wouldn't use it. In any event, from what we read in the ensuing account, he was starting to have his reservations about their complete truthfulness and interpretive ability. They said they could contact the gods but could they, really? So what did he do? Read on and you'll see:

<sup>4</sup> 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." <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> "But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation."

Sounds like Kim Jong Un, the ruthless and unpredictable leader of North Korea, took lessons from Nebuchadnezzar. Either you help me get the coveted interpretation from this dream, without me disclosing the dream to you, or you will be dismembered. The word "limb" in the Hebrew text is most emphatic since it appears at the head of the clause

הַדְּמִין . . . תַּחֲעֲבֹדוֹן וּבְחִיכּוֹן נוֹלִי יְהִשְׁמֹוּ:

I think he got their collective attention. "What did he say? Did he say LIMB?" How would you have liked their job?

The crux of the problem for these professional soothsayers is readily apparent. They firmly believed in the power of man's trained mind to analyze data, be what it may, to arrive at logical and possible conclusions regarding what the given god or gods might be thinking. But they desperately needed to hear the story, to have something to go on, much like a modern day palm reader, so they could get to work with their brains coupled with their black arts. They needed stats. They needed a flow chart. They needed data. They needed to hear the content of the dream in question.

Stalling for time to save their necks, we aren't shocked to read:

<sup>7</sup> They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation."

You can sense their frustration. "Come 'on king, just give us the dream and we'll plug it into our ancient dream interpretative templates and spit an answer out to you we think you'll like."

Sensing they just might be charlatans, after all, Nebuchadnezzar upped the ante:

<sup>8</sup> 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, <sup>9</sup> 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.”

I'm sure they gulped hard. Why? They knew they couldn't connect with the gods. They knew they had major limitations with accessing real information like this. They knew they were out of their esoteric depth. They intrinsically knew all they ever did was give seemingly pious guesses dressed up in fancy, spooky, whispered tones.

Being pushed to the limit of their understanding, they had nothing else to say but the truth.

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> “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.”

All I can say is “Wow!” How utterly embarrassing for these upper crust, highly intelligent, seemingly esoterically gifted, and wealthy leaders of wisdom for the nation. Within a few moments, their entire Ponzi scheme of hidden interpretation came crashing down like a compromised house of playing cards with one divinely ordered dream. Their gods, really, were quite limited ... and helpless ... with a test of this nature. With a whopping 1,179 temples to help them worship and tap into their pantheon of gods, all they could really hope for on this one was cosmic silence.<sup>10</sup> Doesn't their statement sound much like that of the magicians of Pharaoh when they couldn't replicate the third divine judgment of lice in Exodus 8:19? There they turned to Pharaoh and said, “This is the finger of God.”

What was the living God attempting to do in this emotionally charged Babylonian regal situation? Several things, I'm sure. At one level He attempted to reduce the faulty, erroneous, and heretical thinking these so-called spiritual leaders to dust in order to force them to consider Him. Yes, He reduced them, He leveled them so they would have no option but to look at the unique revelatory power one lone Jewish teenager possessed, a power which could only come from the one true God. I don't know but perhaps the most recent tsunami of your is a God-ordained event to accomplish the same purpose. Will you listen is the question? Will you seek Him? It remains to be seen.

How did the king respond? Just like he said he would:

<sup>12</sup> Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. <sup>13</sup> So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them.

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<sup>10</sup> Georges Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, 3rd ed. (London, England: Penguin Books, 1992), 390.

The participle for “should be slain” is Hithpael passive can grammatically classified as a true passive, underscoring that the action is durative and in progress.<sup>11</sup> Translated into English, this means he didn’t just send out an execution team to start eliminating these leaders. No. When the team showed up at Daniel’s doorstep, they had already dismembered many of these magicians. Had Daniel been privy to what was going on around town, which is highly possible in a town of 100,000, it makes his demeanor and reply to the executor all the more amazing. More on that in a moment.

Don’t you know the Devil was behind this anti-Semitism, as he always is. From the murder of godly Abel to the crucifixion of Jesus, the Christ, his goal is to obliterate divine truth and divine deliverers of truth by any means possible. I’m sure he is behind ISIS and their bloodthirsty Christophobia. I’m sure he’s behind the de-Christianization of Europe and the United States too. And if a good old execution won’t silence the voice of God to a godless culture, he’ll resort to twisting and distorting laws to accomplish his pernicious purposes.

We need not fear, however, for God is in control of every detail and He will win the day. His kingdom shall come. But until it comes, I must stop and ask the Nebuchadnezzar-types among us a simple, probing question: Who are you turning to as the wave looms above your listing vessel? Will you turn foolishly to people, books, videos and so forth which can offer you no divine insight into your situation? Are you starting to sense, as Nebuchadnezzar did, that your old standbys for tough times are, well, full of logical and lasting holes? What should you do? Simple. Turn to the living God and He will hear and help you. We learn that much from Daniel and his God-fearing teenage buddies.

## The Wise Seek God’s Mind (Daniel 2:14-19)

Mark the contrast between the lives of the antagonists and the protagonists. Facing a wall of water destined to literally bury them in the sands of Babylon,

<sup>14</sup> 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; <sup>15</sup> 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.

The prepositional phrase “Then” (בְּאַתָּה) in Hebrew is emphatic being composed of a preposition at the head of a sentence instead of a verb. Daniel’s reaction is most emphatic and pivotal in the passage since he, and his friends, faced immediate death itself. When he should have been begging for mercy, he asked the captain of the king’s bodyguard,<sup>12</sup> Arioch, for insight into the King’s murderous motivations. What tact! What courage! What would you have done in that situation? Daniel was calm, cool, and collected because he, of all people, knew that the living God stood with Him even in this tense trial.

What is amazing is Arioch, as with Ashpenaz (Daniel 1:3ff), actually took the time to listen to this young Jewish “magician.” Don’t you know others had pleaded for mercy and

<sup>11</sup> Unpublished Hebrew class notes from Dallas Seminary, *An Outline of Hebrew Syntax*, 59.

<sup>12</sup> The Hebrew for “bodyguard” is from the root “to slaughter or execute” tab’bah (טַבַּח). Wilhelm Gesenius and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles. *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2003), 317.

received none. Now, mercy and time is given to one Jewish teen. Don't tell me God doesn't go before His people as they face their enemies when they purpose to follow hard after him (Proverbs 16:7).

Don't think it a fluke, either, that Captain Arioch appeared at the doorstep of Daniel's abode with his buddies. God made sure the right man appeared at the right door so that Daniel could win a brief audience with the enraged and ruthless king.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

What a jaw dropping verse. Daniel asked for and received an audience with King Nebuchadnezzar. When the king's "proven" diviners and necromancers stalled for more time, they received nothing but the sword; however, when Daniel asked for some additional time to ascertain the meaning of the king's dream, the king acquiesced. Again, I cannot stress enough that when you trust God's sovereignty even in a storm of all storms, when you have faith He is with you no matter what He will go before you and do the most spectacular things to show you His reality and to deepen and solidify your growing faith.

I would have loved to have been there when the events of verse 17 transpired:

<sup>17</sup> Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter . . .

Hold it right there. I wonder what the other three friends said when Daniel told him what he did? No conversation is recorded but we can wonder, "You told King Nebuchadnezzar what?"

Ostensibly, what did Daniel do upon his return from the palace? He gathered his three prayer partners for one reason only:

<sup>18</sup> 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.

They, who worshipped the living God who actually created the heavens by the word of His powerful mouth (Ezra 5:11; 7:12, 21, 23; Daniel 2:37, 44), asked Him for one thing: compassion. Think about it. These young men didn't fold like a lawn chair as they faced death. No. They stood strong and true in their faith. Here they were alone in a foreign land, cut off from friends and family, being brought up on trumped up charges and they have the wherewithal to believe that the God their parents introduced them too cared enough to listen to and to help them. It would be the first student prayer meeting Babylon had ever seen, and it was a powerful one at that.

Parents. Don't lose hope in the biblical training of your teens. Teens. Don't ever lose the knowledge that God has His eyes upon you and stands ready to help you as you navigate the streets of Babylon. Don't be afraid to pray to the God who is there and He will answer in the most profound fashion to help survive the tsunami. That's what happened to these young Jewish believers:

<sup>19</sup> Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven ...

When the tsunami is headed your way is when you bow in prayer to the God of heaven. He can and will hear. He can and will help, and His supernatural word will blow away the false naturalistic thinking you formerly relied on.

So, stop panicking and start praying.