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© I. Chris Imoisili, E-mail: [imoisilic@hotmail.com](mailto:imoisilic@hotmail.com); [imoisilic@gmail.com](mailto:imoisilic@gmail.com)

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## **ARE ALL WHO DREAM DREAMERS?**

**Today's Text: Daniel Chap. 2**

**Extracts:**

*Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before him (and said to him) "Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation." The king answered, and said to the Chaldeans, "My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap." ... Daniel went to his house, and made the decision (of the king) known to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret... Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven [Dan. 2: 1, 2, 4, 5, 17, 18, 19]*

*There is the story of a night watchman who approached his boss one morning to warn him not to travel that day because he had dreamt the night before that his boss died in a ghastly motor accident. A few minutes later, the watchman got a sack letter for sleeping on duty! In another story, a beautiful fan of the former World Heavyweight Boxing Champion, Muhammad Ali, reportedly told him that she had had a vivid dream that they got married. Ali tapped her gently on the shoulders and said to her, "Wake up, honey!"*

*Dreams are images, sounds, ideas, emotions and other sensations that we receive while we are asleep. In all cases, they are beyond our control. The night watchman saw an accident in which his boss died. Was that a projection of his bad wishes toward a wicked boss or it was a timely warning to save a life in danger? The young lady saw herself married to a famous boxer. Was that a projection of her fertile imagination or heart's desire, or that she was in deed meant to marry him? Many of us do not pay attention to dreams which they consider to be extensions of their hectic lives while awake. They see it in the same light as the activity of a mammal which stores up food in her stomach during the day and spends the night chewing the cord! There are also many of us who see dreams as messages from God. When they cannot interpret them, they rush to mediums or prophets to help them. A more fundamental issue is whether we are all dreamers just because we can or do dream. Who is a dreamer? Where do dreams come from? How do we know dreams that come from God? Those and more are the issues that we shall examine in today's lesson.*

## 1. Of dreams and dreamers

Most of us would recall quite vividly their toilet habits when they were younger. You would dream that you were urinating into the toilet bowl. It would be so real. Then, you would wake up and find your bed all wet! However, now that you are grown, you would have the same dreams but wake up with your bed dry. So, if dreams are thoughts visualized in sleep, why did your dreams on urinating come to pass at one stage but no longer do so now?

That simple analogy underscores the complexity of dreaming and dreams. For experts, dreams are mere extensions of our thoughts and desires while awake; and training and upbringing can influence them. But how does that explain dreams that have nothing to do with our thoughts or life experiences? For people of faith, dreams are messages coming from God. The word of God says, “Trust in the Lord *with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding*; in all your ways acknowledge Him, *and He will direct your paths*” [Prov. 3: 5-6]. But is every dream a message from God? Today’s study will assist us to understand the subject more clearly.

## 2. Nebuchadnezzar dreads his dreams!

In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams “and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him” [Dan. 2: 1]. There are several explanations for the king’s troubled spirit. For example, he could be having nightmares. For a man of war who had conquered and annexed the then known world, there would be much on his mind. He could be wondering how to maintain law and order in a vast empire of diverse peoples and cultures. He could be haunted by the wickedness that his troops had perpetrated against the conquered peoples. The word of God says “a dream comes through much activity” [Eccl. 5: 3]. Therefore, his dreams could have been mere projections of the reality that he had to deal with each new day.

On account of the demands of modern living, some of us find ourselves in Nebuchadnezzar’s position. Due to much anxiety and depression, they experience nightmares and even dread to sleep! In their dreams, they see themselves pursued by snakes and demons. They fight to avoid one danger after another. When they wake up, they sweat profusely and dread to go back to sleep! Sometimes, the dreams tantalize their hearts’ desires. Isaiah characterizes such dreamers “as when a hungry man dreams, and look- he eats; but he awakes, and his soul is still empty; or as when a thirsty man dreams, and look- he drinks; but he awakes, and in deed he is still faint, and his soul still craves” [Is. 29: 8].

However, Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction suggests something deeper than nightmares or mere projections of his heart’s desires. Note the following developments:

a) *Nebuchadnezzar turns to his dream experts but they cannot help him!*

He sent for the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers and others to tell him his dreams [Dan. 2: 2]. Apparently, the king had forgotten the details of his dreams. Did he have one dream or several? Hear what he told his wise men, experts in the interpretation of dreams, “I have had *a dream*, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream.” Oh, it is one! They threw the puzzle back at him, that they would give him the interpretation after he had told them the dream. The king was so furious that he threatened them, saying, “If you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap” [vv. 3-5]. The Chaldeans (part of the wise dream experts, obviously) bluntly made it clear to the king, “It is a difficult thing that the king requests, *and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh*” [v. 11].

It is instructive that the “lying and corrupt words” [v. 9] and practices of so-called wise men that surround pagan kings are never discovered until they are pushed to the limit of their tricks. For example, during Moses’ face-off with Pharaoh, the king’s magicians sustained his resistance for a time. When Moses threw his rod and it became a snake, the magicians threw their sticks and they became snakes (but they used enchantments to divert onlookers’ attention from their magic!) [Ex. 7: 10-11]. They achieved the same feat with blood on the Nile and frogs in the land. However, when God through Moses brought lice upon man and beast, the magicians and astrologers tried it with their enchantments and failed. They then turned to Pharaoh and said, “This is the finger of God” [Ex. 8: 1-19]. Clearly, sorcerers, magicians and astrologers do have spiritual gifts that they then use to acquire money and power for themselves and win souls for the devil, their mentor. Of such, Moses warned the children of Israel [Deut. 13: 1-5]:

*If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods ... and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, ... but that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God.*

Nebuchadnezzar was about to be introduced to a higher authority than Babylon’s false gods that had been sustained by his deceitful wise men!

b) *Only Daniel’s God can help him!*

As time passed by and the captain of the king's guard, Arioch, was about to start killing the wise men, Daniel went in to the king to ask for a little more time to find the king his desired answer. Daniel went to his house and asked Meshach, Shadrach and Abed-Nego to join him in fervent prayers "to seek mercies from the God of heaven." Then, in a night vision, God revealed the dream and its interpretation to Daniel [**Dan. 2: 14-19**]. You see, Daniel asked for God's mercies. It is God's *prerogative* to reveal or hide *strictly for His purposes*. We cannot force Him.

Are we all dreamers just because we all dream? Not at all! That we can drive and carry a driver's license does not make us professional drivers. There is still a class of drivers who are legally entitled to that title on account of their special skills requirements. In like manner, dreaming is a gift of God like prophesy and ability to see visions [**Joel 2: 28**]. God told Miriam and Aaron, "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision, I speak to him in a *dream*" [**Num. 6**]. Prophecy is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, like wisdom, knowledge, speaking in and interpretation of tongues, and discerning spirits [**1 Cor. 12: 8-10**]. Therefore, to be called a dreamer is to be a spiritually gifted channel of communication in the hands of God. In that capacity, He can show you dreams (about you or others) and interpret them for you.

Joseph popularly called the dreamer was one such person. When Pharaoh's baker and butler were imprisoned concerning their work, it was Joseph who interpreted their dreams for them. Just as he had told them, Pharaoh's chief butler was restored and the baker was hanged in a matter of three days [**Gen. 40: 8-22**]. Two years later, when the Pharaoh had dreams of prosperity and famine, it was that butler who brought Joseph to his attention after his magicians had failed to explain the dreams. Joseph told Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Joseph's interpretation was so precise that Pharaoh had no choice but to appoint him governor of Egypt to implement his economic blueprint [**Gen. 41: 1-46**]. That was the same privilege that God gave Daniel in today's lesson

Nevertheless, you do not need to be a 'certified' dreamer for God to speak to you in your dreams. In general, God uses dreams to:

- *Warn*, such as when He warned Abimelech not to touch Abraham's wife, Sarah [**Gen. 20: 3**], or Laban not to hurt fleeing Jacob and his family [**Gen. 31: 24**], or Joseph to accept Mary, his wife's pregnancy [**Matt. 1: 20**], or to take baby Jesus into safety in Egypt from Herod's persecution [**Matt. 2: 13**];
- *Reveal the future*, such as when He showed Pharaoh the coming famine [**Gen. 41: 1-13**], or Nebuchadnezzar about the future of human kingdoms vis-à-vis the Kingdom of Christ [**Dan. 2: 1-13**];

- *Confirm a prayer or specific request*, such as when He appeared to Solomon in a dream to confirm that his prayer for wisdom had been granted [**1 Kgs 3: 5-10**].

Some of the dreamers in the examples cited above were not even ‘believers’ but God still appeared to them in order to protect His loved ones. Pilate’s wife was not a follower of Christ but while her husband stood in judgment against Jesus, she “sent to him, saying, ‘Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him’” [**Matt. 27: 19**]. So, God can speak to your enemies in their dreams and they may turn around to bless rather than hurt you the following day!

Daniel was quite magnanimous to save the lives of the king’s magicians and astrologers when he told the king, “The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers *cannot* declare to the king. *But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.*” He then went on to tell the king his dream and its interpretation [**Dan. 2: 27-45**]. The king was so overwhelmed that he fell on his face before Daniel and said, “Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets.” Then, he promoted Daniel and his companions (on Daniel’s recommendation) [**vv. 46-49**].

From the forgoing analysis, we can draw the following conclusions:

- 1) We all dream but some of us dream nightmares! Nightmares are experienced mainly by people with reprobate minds, those who spend their awake hours in sin and disobedience;
- 2) It takes peace of mind to have a sound sleep, out of which productive dreams come. The peace of God comes to those who are anxious for nothing but, in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, they make their requests known to Him. In return, the God of peace speaks to them because they practise whatever is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report and praiseworthy [**Phil. 4: 4-9**]. He speaks to them to warn, to confirm their prayer requests or to give them future direction on a matter.
- 3) As we grow older, when we are less able to be active and tend to sleep more, God speaks to us more through dreams than visions as He has promised, “Your young men shall see visions, *your old men shall dream dreams*” [**Acts 2: 17**].
- 4) Interpretation of dreams comes only from God. Therefore, just as we can earnestly desire the best gifts [**1 Cor. 12: 31**], we can ask Him to explain the dreams that He shows us, just as He did for Joseph and Daniel.

- 5) In all cases, the exercise of the gift of dreaming or the privilege to hear from God through dreams is for His glory, not for our self-aggrandizement.

**3. Conclusion: Pay serious attention to God's message from Nebuchadnezzar's dream!**

Let us not lose sight of God's message to king Nebuchadnezzar in the dream under consideration. He was a powerful ruler over a mighty kingdom. Nevertheless, according to the interpretation of the dream shown him, his kingdom as well as those that would follow would all crumble and fall. The Greek Empire that came after the Babylonian-Persian Empires fell. The Roman Empire came and ultimately crumbled. Recently, we had a British Empire in which the sun never set. Today, it is confined to a small island on the north-west coast of Europe. The Soviet Communist Empire is already history. The revived Roman Empire called the European Union has an expiry date! America? Islam? Secularism? China? India? Brazil? Nigeria? They will *all* come and go.

But "in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms; and *it shall last forever*" [**Dan. 2: 44**]. That is the Kingdom of Christ into which only the righteous shall enter. The righteous are those who live by faith in Christ Jesus. Are you one of them?

Dream about it!