

Lifeworld.org

“He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him” (Daniel 2:22).

Occult Counsel or Divine Revelation

L562. Date: June 1980. **Text:** Daniel 2:1, 2, 10-12, 19-23, 27-29.

Topic: Doctrine: Heresies In; God: Revelation of.

Central Truth: The wisest of men obtain their wisdom from God’s Word.

A tidal wave of interest in the occult is sweeping the land today. Seances, tarot cards, astrological horoscopes, and like practices are common. Classes are taught; books are written; columns are printed in newspapers; motion pictures are shown. They are testimonies to a rising interest in the occult. What does it all mean? The term occult is defined as “hidden; concealed; secret; esoteric; mysterious; beyond human understanding.” It is used to designate the practice of certain mystic arts (such as magic, alchemy, astrology) by which the future can be determined by interpretation of signs which have hidden meaning.

What is the purpose of it all? (1) Every person wants some assurance concerning his welfare in the future. (2) Each one will seek that assurance in the revelation of God or by occult means outside divine revelation. (3) The rise of the occult today is an indication of increasing uncertainty concerning the future and the failure of the present generation to seek assurance from the Lord.

The problem is not a new one. The practice of the occult reaches back into very ancient times. It was faced by the prophet Daniel in the land of ancient Babylon. His experience shows that the revelation of God makes all forms of the occult senseless and sinful.

Today's lesson should be studied in the light of this word from God through the prophet Isaiah, *“And when they shall say unto you. Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? . . . To the law and to the*

testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:19, 20).

I. LIFE SITUATIONS CALL FOR SUPERNATURAL HELP (2:1-8)

Sooner or later, every person meets circumstances which he cannot handle. He needs help beyond himself at those times.

King Nebuchadnezzar, ruler in the Babylonian empire which had taken the Jews into captivity from Judah, faced such an occasion. He dreamed a very disturbing dream, the meaning of which he could not determine. To compound the problem, he forgot the dream upon awaking and could not call it back to mind. There was a deep inner impression that the dream was of great significance. He lay awake through the night, distressed in his spirit but could not recall the dream. He needed help beyond himself.

The king sent for his advisors: “magicians, enchanters and Chaldeans.” While it would not be wise to press exact detail in that list there is a reflection of the various types of sooth-saying and fortune-telling in the Babylonian empire at that time. The magicians were the writers of the “sacred” literature of the Babylonians (like the scribes of the New Testament period). The enchanters were those who used herbs, charms, and various potions to gain knowledge, and were considered in league with evil spirits. The Chaldeans were the class of priests and wise men among the Babylonians. (Chaldean was also a title which referred to all the people, as did the title Babylonian. but is used in the more restricted sense in Daniel 2.) They came at the king’s call. The intellectual and religious resources of the kingdom were at the king’s command when that group gathered before him.

The king told them that he had dreamed a disturbing dream which he had forgotten. He presented a two-fold challenge to them. (1) They must tell him the content of the dream which he had dreamed. (2.) They must tell him the meaning of the events he had seen in a dream. It did not occur to the king but that he could find the help he needed from those men. It never occurred to him to call for a man who knew the Lord God. He felt the occult was sufficient for his needs.

II. THE OCCULT IS LIMITED (2:8-12)

The magicians, enchanters, and Chaldeans could hardly believe their ears. The king wanted them to tell him what he had dreamed plus the meaning of the dream. Twice they said to him, *“Let the king tell his servant the dream, and we will shew the interpretation”* (verse 7; see also verse 4). The king repeated his demand that they tell both the dream and its interpretation.

Solemn consequences were warned if the wise men of Babylon failed to meet the king's command. They would all be destroyed in death. That was most unusual, since rulers were commonly afraid of the wise men (diviners) in their kingdom, lest some supernatural punishment fall on them. King Nebuchadnezzar was not afraid to threaten the wise men of his realm.

The king was already suspicious that the wise men of Babylon were fakers. He accused them of agreeing to speak lying and corrupt words before him in an effort to hide their ignorance and protect their position of power.

The wise men grew bold. They said to the king, *“There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, ruler, that asked such things of any magician or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh”* (verses 10, 11).

How true! The occultists of ancient Babylon admitted two great truths. (1) They were unable to meet the needs of their ruler. (2) There is a God who can do so, but they did not know how to contact Him. Those two principles are true of all who dabble in the occult today.

Millions of people in America read their horoscopes daily and are affected by what they read. What do the horoscopes have to say? The horoscope in the paper published on the day these comments are being written has comments such as these. *“The sun, Venus and Neptune are in the sign of Sagittarius now. Sagittarian attributes—independence, unconventionality and intelligence—will affect everyone. . . . Find a way to squeeze in time for a friend. Talking relieves anxiety and gives you new insight. . . . Recognize that you don't have to be perfect. Allow yourself more freedom to pursue a hobby. . . . Let grandparents spoil children today. . . . Loneliness is half your own fault. . . . Compromises are wrong. . . . Demands alienate others; use charm even when you don't have to. Cooperate with other parents to save time doing chores. . . .”* And the list goes on. Such trivial statements mean nothing. The planets have no influence on your life. Astrology is unspiritual and un-Christian. Flee from it.

Think back to the words of the prophet Isaiah, *“Should not a people seek unto their God?”* (Isaiah 8:19). Indeed they should. Away with the

occult! Listen to God as He speaks through His written Word, the Holy Bible.

III. GOD IS AVAILABLE (2:13-23)

A. God is available in times of danger (verses 1:1-16). King Nebuchadnezzar classed all the wise men in the kingdom with the charlatons and fakers who had appeared before him. He sent forth a decree that all the wise men of the kingdom should be killed immediately. He did not remember Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, or Abed-nego. The death sentence fell on them as on the others. They were in dread danger. The officers came to deliver the four Hebrews to the executioner.

Where is God? Why is He permitting His faithful servants to come into such danger? Does He not remember their commitment regarding the food and drink (1:8)? The Hebrews need not despair. God is working things out to show himself to the pagan king, and to his court, as the sovereign God.

It is safe to trust God. Even in your times of distress and danger, God is available. You do not need to seek occult counsel; God is near.

B. God is available in response to prayer (verses 17, 18). Daniel called his three companions and told them the situation. He besought them to pray and “*desire mercies of the God of heaven*” that he might know the king’s dream and its interpretation (1:17; 2:18). They spent the night in prayer, and the thing was revealed to Daniel in a night vision (verse 19). Prayer is the wise recourse for every servant of God. Why should anyone seek a horoscope, or fortune-teller, or wizard, or any other, when God is available through prayer?

C. God is available to the joy of His people (verses 19-23). How Daniel and his friends rejoiced! He spoke forth a doxology of praise to God who hears and answers prayer, saying, “*Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever. . . . I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee*” (verses 20, 23).

Have you experienced it? Have you had problems beyond your ability to understand or to solve, only to see God move in a sovereign way to provide rescue for you? If so, you know the joy of a believer when he has witnessed the work of God. How much better that is than to seek the imperfect and often incorrect guidance of men who dabble in the occult.

IV. THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR (2:24-45)

The Lord God proved faithful to Daniel as He has proven himself true to His people in all generations. The content and the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream came to Daniel in a night vision. He was confident it was from God, and was a true revelation, though he had no way to test it before he appeared in the presence of the king.

“Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?” Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel (verse 26). The young prophet was faithful to give God the credit, saying, *“There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days”* (verse 28). The king asked, *“Are YOU able?”* and Daniel answered, *“GOD is able.”* *“This secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living”* (verse 30). How careful he was to give God the full credit and take no glory to himself. Daniel told the king of his dream. He had seen a statue of a man. The head was of fine gold, the arms and chest of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet part iron and part clay. There was a great stone which struck the image and destroyed it, the stone growing into a great mountain which filled all the earth. Daniel explained that the image represented kingdoms of men (Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom being the head of gold) and the stone represented the kingdom of God.

God bore witness to the heart of King Nebuchadnezzar that the dream was real and the interpretation was true. He responded, *“Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret”* (2:47). Even the pagan king recognized and honored the Lord God.

Let no Christian turn to pagan methods of determining the future or seeking guidance by any form of occult practice. It is idolatry! Let the Christian seek the Lord God. There is wisdom and guidance in Him for all situations and needs. The believer's faithfulness to God will result in the unbeliever's recognizing Him and honoring Him.

Away with horoscopes, ouiji boards, tarot cards, fortune-telling, etc. *“And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? . . . To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”* (Isaiah 8:19, 20).

1. What does occult mean?
2. How is occult influence manifest today?

3. What does Isaiah 8:19, 20 mean?
4. How is the occult limited?
5. How is the believer better off without the occult?
6. How does God provide insight and leadership today?
7. Why are horoscopes a form of idolatry today?
8. How can Christians influence occultists to seek the Lord instead?
9. Why are occult practices senseless and sinful today?
10. How can you make practical use of this study?