

Propelled into Destiny
Daniel 2:1-19, 47-49

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In every life, there are pivotal moments when destiny is defined for that person. The decisions made at those crucial times usually set the course for the rest of our lives. I was watching a documentary a few days ago about the life of Martin Luther. In his early 20's he was studying to be an attorney. He had developed some close friendships at the university. Unexpectedly the plague hit that area and three of those close friends died. I'm sure that heightened Luther's awareness of his own mortality, to lose those people who had become so close to him. Shortly after that he took a trip from the university back to his hometown to visit his family. He was alone on horseback when caught in a fierce thunderstorm. It was a life-threatening situation. In that crisis, Luther made a commitment to God that he would forsake his worldly ambitions and become a monk. He came back and joined an extremely strict Augustine monastery. Luther had come to a pivotal moment in life. There alone in that thunderstorm he made a major life decision that took him on a new direction.¹

Elisha was the son of a wealthy farmer. We know that because he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen. One day the famous prophet Elijah came to his farm and threw his mantle on Elisha, which was a call to follow him as an apprentice prophet. At that moment, Elisha could have said, "No, I've got it pretty good here. Thanks for the offer; but I need to stay and keep this farm going." Had he made that decision, at that pivotal moment, we probably would not know his name today. In a brief moment of time and space, a decision was made that turned the course of Elisha's life.²

Each of the disciples had similar experiences. One rich young ruler could have become a close disciple, but at the crucial moment decided to enjoy his wealth instead.³

But this morning, I'm really not talking about any of those people. I'm talking about you and the major decision points in your life. I'm particularly talking about those decision points that will be coming your way in the days ahead. Some of those moments come and go rather quickly. And we usually cannot reconstruct them after the fact. We either went one way or the other. God is always redemptive. So regardless of where we are in life and regardless of past decisions we have made, we can still walk with Him and move forward in a positive way. But my focus this morning is on those opportunities that pop up in our lives and must be seized at the moment of opportunity.

Peter and his brother, Andrew, were busy fishing on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus walked up to them and said, "*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.*"⁴ Did they have the option of saying to Jesus, "We really would like to get with you, in a couple of years we should be able to wrap this up. How can we get in touch with you then?" Then the offer would have expired. Jesus was offering three years of training that would set the course of their lives. The time table was already set. They accepted the offer on God's terms or they turned it down. Some things with God are not negotiable. Of course, we know that the next verse says they

¹ PBS "Martin Luther," <https://www.youtube.com/channel/SWm8pb-CvuxN8> accessed 4-8-15.

² 1 Kings 19:19-21.

³ Mark 10:17-23.

⁴ Matt. 4:19. All Scripture quotes are in New King James Version unless indicated otherwise.

“*immediately*” left their nets and followed him. And you know the rest of the story; a pivotal point in those men’s lives.

I wonder what crucial decisions are being set before us by God as we speak. I wonder what I may step into tomorrow or the next day. I wonder why God is having me preach this message! Is there a decision you’re about to make that will make a lot of difference in the course of your life?

In our text today, Daniel found himself

I. Placed in a Crisis that was pivotal for his life.

Follow with me as we read Daniel 2:1-13 (Read).⁵

Some of us are at a disadvantage as we read this because we know the rest of the story. We know everything turns out fine. It’s kind of like watching a suspense movie that you’ve seen before. With the uncertainty of the outcome removed, some of the drama is not felt. But imagine that situation. King Nebuchadnezzar is not only demanding the impossible; but he is threatening severe punishment if they don’t accomplish the impossible. This looks like a no win situation. If you don’t come through, “I’m going to cut you to pieces.” Sounds to me like a good time to leave town. Everybody is in a panic.

Its times like these that the question comes to mind, “Why Me?” I’m sure at least some of those counselors were thinking that. The king’s demand was not fair. Yet he had the power to impose it on them. Daniel and his companions had just been living their lives and doing their jobs when all of a sudden they are hit with this dilemma.

On the one hand, we can blame Nebuchadnezzar for the situation. But where did that dream come from? Who led Daniel into the company of wise counselors so that he would be vulnerable to this decree? “*The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord,*” David wrote, in Psalm 37. Is Daniel a good man? We already saw his consecration to the Lord in chapter one. He is whole hearted to His God. This is not some chastening from God that Job’s friends might imply. This is not the negative consequences of bad choices in the past. This is a set up by God Himself for Daniel!

God gave Nebuchadnezzar the dream. In verse 28 of this chapter, Daniel clearly says that. God Himself initiated this crisis by giving Nebuchadnezzar a troubling dream. That tells me that God is actively involved in the affairs of men, even in the lives of the ungodly. At this point, Nebuchadnezzar is a wicked, brutal idol worshipper. We might not think God would speak to someone like that.

Why wouldn’t God give a special dream like that to some godly person that’s seeking His face? God has strategies for the advancement of His kingdom that do not always fit into our little religious boxes. I’m expecting some unexpected strategies of God to immerge in the days ahead. Only those willing to risk stepping into unknown territory with Him will be in on it. Hiding in the comfort of safe environments and known experiences is probably one way to miss out on something big. What God does will always be consistent with His character; will always be consistent with the revelation He has already given in His word—but it will not always be done the same way, with the same methods as in the past. May God give us creativity in reaching lost people and making Him known to the world around us?

⁵ Please find at the end of this manuscript the words of the text: Daniel 2:1-19, 47-49.

Think about the crazy journey Daniel has already been on up to this point. He is born to devout Jewish parents. But they live in a nation that has turned from God to idolatry. *“Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people”* (Prov. 14:34). Israel was no exception to that principle; neither is America. God’s judgement came on Israel and it affected Daniel’s life. He was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, emasculated, and made a slave in Babylon. Daniel had been victimized by the iniquity of others; yet he does not embrace a victim mentality. He does not become absorbed with self-pity. The question, “Why me?” probably crossed his mind; but He did not camp there because His mind was stayed on the Lord. Everything he does revolves around his devotion to God. God’s judgement on his nation does not shake Daniel’s devotion to Jehovah. Jeremiah had prophesied these things; and they were coming to pass.

Once in Babylon, Daniel immediately faced another crisis. He was provided food that had been consecrated to the pagan gods of Babylon; foods that violated Jewish law. Some of you know the story in chapter one where he was able to persuade the Chief Eunuch to allow him to eat vegetables instead and keep himself ceremonially clean in that regard. So Daniel has behaved himself wisely in difficult situations already. He and his companions are recognized in the company of wise men who counsel the king.

But instead of all those good decisions leading to comfort, they have led him into a life and death crisis. It’s a very simplistic gospel that simply says good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. That was the theology of Job’s friends and God Himself rebuked it. The ways of God are a bit more complex than that. Daniel and his friends, through no fault of their own, are providentially placed in a crisis situation. But they had also been

II. Prepared for the Crisis

This is the heart of the message because, if we don’t take God’s preparations, then when crisis comes into our lives we may make the wrong choices.

All of what we have just talked about were preparations in Daniel for the pivotal moment in our text. Daniel had proved God faithful in his appeal to the Chief Eunuch. He had looked to God during the attack of Babylon on Jerusalem. Prior to that, as a boy he had learned the word. He knew the Jewish law concerning which foods were and were not defiling. He had already become a person of prayer before the crisis of Daniel 2. He was prepared spiritually to deal with this pivotal moment.

Paul wrote in 2Tim. 3 *“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power....”* How do you prepare for perilous times like the ones Paul is describing here? Paul immediately talks about being equipped by the word of God, knowing the Scriptures, knowing God.⁶ There is some wisdom in laying up money for the future. Solomon tells us to consider the ant as an example of that.⁷ There is some prudence in anticipating a problem ahead and resourcing ourselves to deal with it. But

⁶ 2 Tim 3:14-15 *“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”*

⁷ Proverbs 6:6-8. Also consider the wisdom of Joseph in Genesis 41:15-57.

there is ultimately one preparation you and I need above all others: that is our relationship with God, our grounding in the word of God, and our faith in His ability to see us through anything.

As I look at the trends in America over the last couple of decades, I would say it is likely there are some perilous times ahead for America. This nation is following the same path of turning from God that Israel had done. That brought perilous times on Israel. I doubt the same thing is going to be overlooked in America. But I also want you to see something in Daniel and his companions that is very important. In their perilous times they did exploits. In their times of spiritual darkness they shined brightly. The darker the night, the brighter the stars of heaven shine. Perilous times, does not mean our light has to go out. It may mean our light shines even more brightly. God says (Isa 59:19) *“When the enemy comes in like a flood, The Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him.”*

Isa 60:1-2 *“Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. 2 For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.”*

I am not Polly Anna about the future; but I am confident in God’s ability to shine through His people even in the darkest of times, just as He did through Daniel and his companions. Daniel 11 talks about some very dark events in the last days; but in the mist of all that verse 32 says, *“And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits (KJV).”* There is a hint at the essential preparation that must be made. The exploits are done by *“the people that do know their God.”* I want to know Him in a way that I am ready for anything!

There is a lot of ambiguity in the Bible about events of the last days, especially timing of events. I cannot tell you for sure when the rapture will occur. But I can tell you that you and I need the same preparation for a rapture that we need for a tribulation: *“the people that do know their God”* are ready for either one.

Daniel was prepared for the crisis he faced. When David walked into the camp of Israel and heard the threats and challenges of Goliath, he was prepared for the crisis. What was his preparation? Did he have more swords than anybody else or better armour? No, he actually picked up the stones as he was walking into battle with Goliath. His preparation was his relationship with God and the faith he had as a result of that relationship.

Steven had a very different experience from the one David had with Goliath. Steven faced a life and death crisis with the Sanhedrin.⁸ Instead of slaying a Goliath, he was slain as the first martyr of the Church. But he was victorious in his crisis and he was prepared for the moment. What was his preparation? Acts 6:5 says he was *“a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit.”*

Daniel’s preparation, David’s preparation, and Steven’s preparation were all the same. It was their relationship with God. We can make other prudent preparation for the days ahead; but if we leave that one off we will not be prepared.⁹ In Cyprus people prepared for crisis by saving

⁸ Acts 6:12-15 Sanhedrin. (from The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press). The Greek word translated council is *“sunedrion.”*

⁹ This was the case in the gospels when Jesus was arrested and all the disciples dissented him (Matt. 26:56). Peter denied Him because he was not spiritually equipped for the challenge. He had plenty of swords but misused the weapon (John 18:10-11) because he was not spiritually prepared. In contrast, he was spiritually equipped for the crisis in Acts 3 & 4 the challenge in Acts 3 & 4.

up money in their bank accounts. That preparation began to disappear the day their government confiscated money by simple edict.¹⁰ Not saying we shouldn't save; just sayin' there are treasures that no government can take.

Back in Daniel 2 everyone is panicking. But Daniel does not panic.

Daniel 2:14-19 (Read)

For the sake of time we won't read the rest of the chapter. Daniel gives praise to God for revealing to him the dream and interpretation. He goes before King Nebuchadnezzar and reads his mail—gives him the dream and the interpretation. We see the end result in Daniel 2:47-49 (Read). So now Daniel is:

III. Propelled by the Crisis into Destiny.

Since he was prepared for the moment, the moment of crisis became a moment of opportunity. When the king's decree went forth, all the wise men were looking for a place to hide. They wanted to distance themselves from the king as much as possible. All they saw in this was danger. They're running backwards on their heels. But Daniel is a man of a different spirit. Instead of backing off, he steps forward—putting himself at even more risk. We can calmly read this story, with very little emotion—unless we ask ourselves the question. What would have happened if Daniel had missed it? He steps forward and tells the king he has the dream and interpretation. What do you think the crazy king would have done if Daniel had given him the wrong dream? It doesn't get much worse than being cut in little pieces; but if anybody could have come up with a more painful way to go, Nebuchadnezzar would have been the one to do it. Don't think Daniel's courageous act was easy. First, even before he heard anything from the Lord, he stepped forward in faith and asked the king for time. Look at verses 16-18 closely. He is essentially telling the king, he'll be back with the answer. What if God had not given him the answer? I would have preferred to get the revelation of the dream before going to the king, wouldn't you? When God first called me to preach, it was a major struggle. I did not want to get up in front of people; and I certainly didn't want to be standing up there without the word of the Lord. So after I had preached a few times, when pastors asked me to preach, my answer was, "I'll get back with you if God gives me a message." A message did not come, so for a good while I did not preach. Finally, the Lord told me to submit to their authority and when they asked, say yes in faith: trust God to give the message. It was amazing how God would speak to me when I did that.

*"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*¹¹ The revelation of the dream came to Daniel because he acted in faith: four things Daniel did right. (1) He put himself on the line by saying he would get the answer from God while he still didn't have it. (2) He went to God in prayer looking for the answer. (3) He involved fellow believers in the process with him. (4) He took to the king what God revealed to him; even though he did not have absolute proof that the king would recognize it as the dream and the right interpretation.

¹⁰ Alex Newman, "Panic Grips Europe as Cyprus, EU, and IMF Confiscate Savings" March 18, 2013 <http://www.thenewamerican.com/economy/markets/item/14813-panic-grips-europe-as-cyprus-eu-and-imf-confiscate-savings> accessed 4-8-15. Also see <http://www.wcvarones.com/2013/03/eu-orders-cyprus-to-confiscate-citizens.html>. m

¹¹ Hebrews 11:1.

Leadership emerges in crisis. Were it not for the threat of Hitler and the crisis of World War II, you and I would probably not know the name Winston Churchill. Were it not for the crisis of segregation and discrimination in America, we would probably not know the name, Martin Luther King, Jr. Were it not for the crisis of British oppression and taxation of the early colonies, George Washington might have just been another wealthy farmer in Virginia.

When the crisis came in our text, Daniel knew a God who is sufficient for any crisis. He knew his God and he did exploits! He knew God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we could ask or think.¹² Therefore he responded to the crisis in faith. That response turned the crisis into an opportunity. Seizing the opportunity propelled Daniel forward in his destiny.

How will you respond to the pivotal moments that lay ahead in your life? It depends on the preparations you allow God to make now. It depends upon your understanding of God and His relationship with you. It depends upon a willingness to step forward in faith and trust God for a good outcome, even when others can't see that possibility.

God Himself Placed Daniel in a Crisis; but He had already prepared him for that crisis; and therefore Daniel's response to the crisis propelled him into his destiny for the days ahead.

The crucial preparation for Daniel was his consecration to God. Even as a boy, he committed himself to the Lord. Have you committed your life to the Lord? Are there spiritual preparations you need to make? Now is the time for those commitments; now is its own opportunity. Pray.

Text: Dan 2:1-19, 47-49

Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. 2 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 the king. 3 And the king said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream." 4 Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation." 5 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. 6 However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation." 7 They answered again and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation." 8 The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm: 9 if you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation." 10 The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. 11 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." 12 For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave the command to destroy all the

¹² Ephesians 3:20.

wise men of Babylon. 13 So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.

14 Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon; 15 he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel. 16 So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. 17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, 18 that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven... 47 The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret." 48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

Outline

Intro

- A. Pivotal Moments Come to Everyone
- B. Examples: Martin Luther
 - Elisha
 - Disciples
- C. What Crucial Decisions Await Us?

I. Placed in a Crisis

- A. Providential Events of Text (Dan. 2:1-13)
- B. Previous Events in Daniel's life

II. Prepared for the Crisis

- A. Preparation by Previous Consecration
- B. The Times in Which We Live
 - 1Tim. 3:1-5
 - Isa. 59:19-60:2; Dan. 11:32
- C. Priority of Spiritually Equipping
(Dan. 2:14-19)

III. Propelled by the Crisis (into Destiny) (Dan. 2:47-49)

- A. Crisis Became Opportunity Because Prepared
- B. Faith is Required to Meet the Crisis
- C. Leadership Emerges in a Crisis

Conclusion

- A. How Will We Respond to Pivotal Moments that Are Ahead?
- B. What Preparations Are Needed Now?

Discussion Questions

1. Why was Daniel able to respond to the crisis in the way he did?
2. How do you see God's sovereign providence interacting with free will in this story?
(What was beyond Daniel's control? What was Daniel's responsibility?)
3. What trends do you see in America that may bring pivotal decisions in Christians' lives?
4. What preparations for tomorrow's pivotal moments are you making today?
5. What is God speaking to you this morning?