

THE LOOKOUT

JUNE 2024

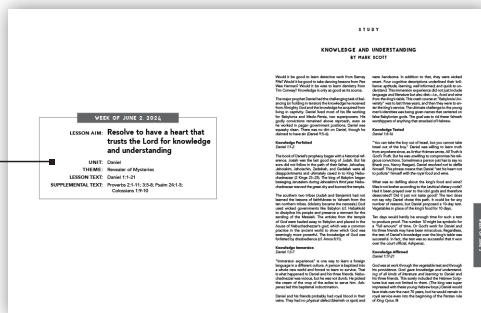
Unit: Daniel

Theme: Revealer of Mysteries

Overview: How does anyone know anything about God? The answer is simple. God must reveal himself. He does this through creation, through people made in his image, through Jesus, and through the Bible. A fundamental assertion of the Bible is that God has made himself known. He has “unveiled” himself. Even in some of Israel’s darkest hours (captivity and exile in Babylon), God was at work to reveal himself. The major prophet Daniel played a significant role in this revelation. In this unit students will learn how God revealed himself through knowledge, visions, and dreams, through miracles, and through historical events.

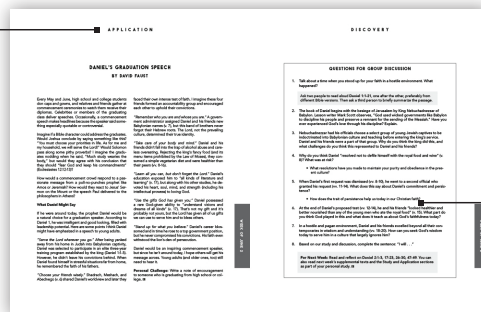
HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF JUNE 9, 2024

LESSON AIM: **Look to God for wisdom
in all things.**

UNIT: Daniel

THEME: Revealer of Mysteries

LESSON TEXT: Daniel 2:1-3, 17-23, 26-30, 47-49

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Daniel 2:4-16, 24-25, 31-46; Proverbs 2:6; James 1:5

DEEP AND HIDDEN THINGS

BY MARK SCOTT

Scholars speak of an *apophatic* view of God. This sometimes is called negative theology. The idea is that what cannot be known about God is far greater than what can be known. God is so far beyond human understanding that he is indescribable and inconceivable (Romans 11:33-36; 1 Timothy 1:17). Mere human beings should probably not even concern themselves with the deep things of God. Instead, they should be like a weaned child with its mother (Psalm 131).

Some secret things belong to the Lord exclusively (Deuteronomy 29:29). But God has revealed himself. According to Moses, God's specific commands can, in fact, be understood. They are not far off in the heavens or beyond the sea. They are near (Deuteronomy 30:11-14). The prophet Daniel believed that if God revealed the deep and hidden things, then they could be understood.

Troublesome Dreams*Daniel 2:1-3*

In the book of Daniel, as with other prophetic sections of Scripture (e.g., Ezra 4:7-16), certain events might seem out of order. Daniel 1:5 says that Daniel was trained for three years for the king's service. But Daniel 2:1 says it was the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign when the king had his dream and Daniel interpreted it. How can this be? Nebopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, most likely was still king of Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem.

Regardless, early in his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had *dreams* (visions with prophetic significance). The king's mind was *troubled* (beaten or disturbed) to the point of insomnia. The king gathered his wise men (*magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers*—all terms dealing more with the spirit world than modern science). The "catch-22" was that the king wanted these wise men to tell the king his dream and its interpretation. Of course, the wise men objected vigorously to such a request and stalled for time. But the king was resolute to the point that it even endangered the lives of Daniel and his friends.

Mysteries Revealed*Daniel 2:17-23, 26-30*

Daniel informed his friends of the king's request. The four held an earnest prayer meeting. They *pleaded for mercy* (or compassion) about the king's dream. God answered the prayer *during the night*. Before Daniel rushed off to

tell the king his dream and its interpretation, they praised the real king of the universe for revealing the *deep and hidden things*.

The praise chorus for God acknowledged his *wisdom and power* in addition to his sovereignty over seasons and kings. As God brought light out of darkness in creation (Genesis 1:3), so he did in revealing Nebuchadnezzar's secret dream. Notice that verse 21 is stated in first person. Daniel's praise is personal.

Daniel approached Arioch before the commander of the king's guard could kill the wise men of Babylon, and then Daniel was brought to the king. Arioch vetted Daniel while Nebuchadnezzar questioned him. Daniel told the king that no wise man of his kingdom could do what the king wanted done. But *God in heaven* could reveal the *mysteries* (secrets). The mysteries had to do with the future.

Verses 31-45 contain the content of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The imposing figure in the dream was that of a huge statue. The head was made of gold, the chest and arms were made of silver, the middle and thighs were made of bronze, and the feet were made of a combination of iron and clay. It looked powerful. But then a strange and unique stone slammed into the statue at its feet and smashed it. The statue blew away like chaff in the wind. The stone that had smashed into the statue grew into a huge mountain that filled the earth. Daniel interpreted the dream saying that the various parts of the statue represented the earthly kingdoms of Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. During the time of the Roman Empire, the kingdom of God would come.

Servants Honored*Daniel 2:47-49*

King Nebuchadnezzar was undone by Daniel's knowledge of the dream and its interpretation. He fell down and paid homage to Daniel. Then the great pagan king acknowledged God by proclaiming God's exclusivity. He is *God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries*.

Daniel was awarded a *high position* in the government. He also received *many gifts* and was given rulership of the Babylonian province. He was *placed in charge* of all the wise men, and the king appointed his three friends to positions as *administrators*. Daniel and his friends knew that God's thoughts and ways were higher and deeper than those of people (Isaiah 55:8-9). ■

APPLICATION

LEARNING ABOUT GOD IN UNEXPECTED WAYS

BY DAVID FAUST

I didn't expect to learn anything about God at the dentist's office—but I did. My dental hygienist chatted with me while she cleaned my teeth. (She did most of the talking.) Tooth enamel is the hardest substance in the human body, she explained, and "each tooth is composed of millions of tiny rods or tubules." These oblong crystals, which are about 1,000 times narrower than a human hair, protect against tooth decay and equip us for decades of chewing.

"Just one more reason to believe in God's creative design," I managed to mumble, and my hygienist nodded in agreement.

Surprising Classrooms

The Lord isn't confined to church buildings. Moses heard from the Lord at a burning bush and on a mountaintop. David encountered God while hiding in caves from angry King Saul.

Jesus' disciples learned about God while sailing across a lake, walking on a road, eating at dinner tables, and debating with antagonists. Paul's faith grew stronger on sinking ships and in prison cells. Peter gained new insights about God in a place he never expected to visit—the home of a Gentile named Cornelius. John received amazing revelations while he was exiled on the island of Patmos.

Surprising Teachers

Preachers and seminary professors have a lot to teach us, but so do new believers and little kids. And so do atheists and doubters whose questions make us dig deeper into the Scriptures and think harder about what we believe.

King Nebuchadnezzar learned about God from a surprising source. When no one could explain his troubling dream, the irritated and sleep-deprived monarch confronted his advisors with an impossible-sounding demand. He wanted them to tell him what he dreamed and its interpretation.

"Let the king tell his servants your dream, and we will interpret it," they answered nervously (Daniel 2:7), but when the king persisted, they said, "There is no one on earth who can do what the king asks!" (v. 10).

Eventually, the king discovered a surprising instructor among the young Jewish exiles. The Lord gave Daniel a detailed explanation of the dream and its meaning. Daniel's insight amazed the king, but the young prophet didn't take personal credit. He told Nebuchadnezzar, "This mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than anyone else alive" (v. 30). Instead, Daniel gave glory to God who "reveals deep and hidden things" (v. 22).

Surprising Lessons

According to the king's advisors, no one could reveal his dream "except the gods, and they do not live among humans" (v. 11). (Some translations of that verse say the gods' "dwelling is not with flesh.") But the New Testament presents a startling truth: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14).

God can do what appears impossible to us. He even knows what we dream at night. He has revealed deep and hidden things through creation and through the writings of his prophets and apostles. But his supreme revelation came through Jesus Christ, who is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Hebrews 1:3).

It's stunning to realize the Creator himself came to earth, took on human flesh, taught lessons that left people "amazed at his teaching" (Matthew 7:28)—and ultimately sacrificed his own life to show us grace. The songwriter was right to say, "I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene."

Personal Challenge: What amazes you about the Lord? How have you seen his wisdom and power demonstrated in your life? ■

DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever had to trust God for an outcome that seemed unresolvable? Explain.

Ask two people to read aloud **Daniel 2:1-3, 17-23, 26-30, 47-49**, one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize these verses.

2. King Nebuchadnezzar had a troubling dream (vv. 1-3) wherein God revealed the future. Why do you think God communicated in this way to a pagan ruler?
 - What does this teach us about God's sovereignty over all people and all nations?
3. When Daniel was made aware of the king's dream, he urged his friends "to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery" (v. 18) so that he could interpret the dream. What does this say to you about Daniel's faith?
 - How does this encourage you to trust God even in dire circumstances?
4. It was only by God's intervention that Daniel was able to tell the king what he had dreamed and what the dream meant (vv. 26-30). In what ways have you depended on God's intervention in your life?
5. As a result of Daniel's interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar recognized Daniel's God as "the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries" (v. 47). How can our faith, trust, and obedience today point people to God as the one true God?
6. Because he acted on his trust in God, Daniel was rewarded greatly by the king (v. 48). Does God always reward faithfulness in this life? What does it mean to trust and obey God regardless of rewards?
7. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Daniel 3:1, 4-6, 8-28**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts and the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. 📖