

Daniel 2:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Analysis

This verse reveals Daniel's response to King Nebuchadnezzar's impossible demand —interpret a dream without being told its content. The Aramaic rachamim (רָחָם, "mercies") appears in plural form, emphasizing abundant compassion and tender mercy from "the God of heaven" (Elah shemaya), a title emphasizing God's sovereignty over earthly kingdoms.

"Desire mercies" translates l'ba'ah rachamim, meaning to seek or request compassionately. Daniel's immediate response to crisis was prayer, specifically corporate prayer with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego). This demonstrates the power and importance of united prayer (Matthew 18:19-20). Daniel didn't rely on his own wisdom or spiritual gifts but wholly depended on God's revelation.

"This secret" (raza, רָצָה) refers to the mystery God alone could reveal. The term later appears in apocalyptic literature for divine mysteries requiring supernatural disclosure. Theologically, this verse teaches:

1. believers should respond to crises with prayer, not panic
2. corporate prayer strengthens faith
3. God reveals what humans cannot discover
4. God's mercy extends even to those in pagan kingdoms.

This points to Christ, the ultimate revelation of God's mysteries (Colossians 2:2-3), and the gospel revealed to all nations.

Historical Context

This event occurred early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign (approximately 603-602 BC), shortly after Daniel and his friends were taken captive to Babylon in 605 BC. Nebuchadnezzar had recently defeated Egypt at Carchemish, establishing Babylonian dominance over the ancient Near East. Daniel and his companions were among the Jewish nobility selected for three years of training in Babylonian language, literature, and wisdom to serve in the king's court.

Babylonian culture highly valued dream interpretation, consulting professional dream interpreters, astrologers, and magicians. Ancient texts reveal that Babylonian wise men kept extensive dream catalogs with standardized interpretations. However, Nebuchadnezzar's demand to tell both dream and interpretation without hearing the dream first was unprecedented and impossible by human means—exposing the impotence of pagan wisdom.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Daniel's immediate turn to prayer in crisis model the proper Christian response to seemingly impossible situations?
2. What is the significance of Daniel seeking corporate prayer with his friends rather than praying alone?

Interlinear Text

עַל	שְׁמֵי	אֵל	הָאָדָם	מִן	לְמִבְּעָא	וְרַחֲםָם	וְ
concerning	of heaven	the God	the God	of	That they would desire	mercies	and
H5922	H8065	H426	H6925	H4481	H1156	H7359	with
with	and his fellows	that Daniel	perish	should not	secret	secret	with
H5974	H2269	H1841	H7	H3809	H1768	H1836	H7328
בְּרִלָּה:	שָׁאָר	מִנְכָּמִים	בְּ	בְּ	בְּ	בְּ	בְּ
men of Babylon	the rest	of the wise	the	the	the	the	the
H895	H2445	H7606					

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 33:3 (Parallel theme): Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

Matthew 18:19 (Parallel theme): Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

Psalms 50:15 (Parallel theme): And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

Psalms 91:15 (Parallel theme): He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

Matthew 18:12 (Parallel theme): How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

Isaiah 37:4 (References God): It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.

Genesis 18:28 (Parallel theme): Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

Malachi 3:18 (References God): Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

1 Samuel 17:37 (Parallel theme): David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

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