

Daniel

Chapter Two

- **Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**
- **Daniel Interprets the Dream**

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream Verses 1- 23

Verse 1

“In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep.”

This dream is interpreted by Daniel *before* his graduation from his three-year training. Nebuchadnezzar is not the first national leader to receive revelation from God through a dream or vision...

(Abimelech) Genesis 20:1-3

“Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar, ² and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” Then Abimelech king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her. ³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.”

(Pharaoh) Genesis 41:1-7

“¹ When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, ² when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. ³ After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. ⁴ And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. ⁵ He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. ⁶ After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind. ⁷ The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.”

(Pharaoh-Necho) 2 Chronicles 35:20-21

“After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah marched out to meet him in battle. ²¹ But Neco sent messengers to him, saying, “What quarrel is there between you and me, O king of Judah? It is not you I am attacking at this time, but the house with which I am at war. God has told me to hurry; so stop opposing God, who is with me, or he will destroy you.”

Notice the word “dreams” is plural applying that this was a pattern. Nebuchadnezzar’s inability to sleep is not insomnia but a God-induced problem.

Verse 2

“So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king,”

The king summons wise men. These were men who were trained just like Daniel and his friends. Magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, astrologers, foretelling the future by analyzing

the stars. Communicating with the dead. Working with pharmaceutical ingredients (in the Septuagint the word used for sorcerers is *pharikol* which is where we get our English word pharmacist). This group of “wise men” appear in chapters 2,4 and 5.

Verse 3

“he said to them, "I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means.”

Nebuchadnezzar states he had a dream, singular not plural. Obviously this was a dream that had some significance. The king asks these men not only to interpret this dream (coming up with some wild interpretation would not have been difficult) but he wants them to tell him *what* he dreamed as well! This would be a great test of the accuracy of their translation.

Verse 4

“Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it.”

Before they create a fanciful tale about his dream they play to his ego, “Long live the king!” However, the mood quickly changes when Nebuchadnezzar asks the ones who claim to have all the answers to bring forth their intelligence.

Footnote: The book of Daniel switches original languages here. It goes from Hebrew to Aramaic and stays that way until 7:28. Aramaic would have been a “world” language in Daniel’s day. Much like English is today. Many foreign countries have at least an understanding of the English language. In Daniel’s day many would have understood Aramaic. The significance here is that God is now speaking to the world not just to Israel in Hebrew.

Verse 5

“The king replied to the astrologers, "This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble.”

The KJV and the NIV differ here in translation. The KJV reads, “*the thing is gone from me*” meaning the king is claiming that he has forgotten his dream. Most scholars believe the king only said he had forgotten. The king would have sensed the importance of this dream which meant the interpretation would also be of importance.

In translation, the NIV is stating “*This is what I have firmly decided*” The context here is that the king can demand anything and is not required to answer to anyone in regards to his demands. Did he forget his dream or not? We don’t know but we do know that he had no intention of telling his wizards the answer to their question, “tell us your dream”.

The second half of this verse is a picture of the barbaric cruelty of ancient kings, especially those who ruled in Assyria and Babylon. The penalty imposed is both excessive and extreme.

Verse 6

“But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me.”

The end of verse 5 was the bad news. Here is the good news. If these men who claim to have supernatural powers, retelling and interpreting a dream should be easy and the rewards will be great. However, if these men were failures, they would also be frauds.

Verses 7-9

“Once more they replied, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it.” Then the king answered, “I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me the dream, there is just one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me.”

Realizing how high the stakes are now and that their predicament is real, they again suggest to the king tells us your dream and we will tell you the interpretation, “*Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it.*” Once again, their request falls on deaf ears. Nebuchadnezzar is also an intelligent man; he sees what they are trying to do and reminds them of his decision and their fates – if they fail. Stalling will not change the king’s heart or his desire to have them correctly respond to his request.

These men were paid to interpret dreams, read the stars, and predict the future. One can see that the king has somewhat lost confidence in the truthfulness of their abilities and responses to previous assignments. So now he is putting them to the real test. If they can tell him his dream, then their interpretation will be validated. Pass and receive a reward; fail and die.

Verses 10-11

“The astrologers answered the king, “There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men.”

Knowing now that the king was not going to budge on his request or promise these men out of desperation, fear, and terror try to show the unreasonableness of the king’s request by replying...

- No one on earth can do what you ask
- No king has ever asked this before
- Only the gods have this information and they will not share it with humans

This is probably the first true statement these men have made so far. No man can do only what God can. These men have claimed to have supernatural abilities. What they are confessing is that they have no communication with heaven!

This scene is becoming like the scene with Elijah and the prophets of baal on Mount Carmel.

Verses 12-13

“This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death.”

The stage is now set for Daniel. The wise men fail so the king keeps his word and has them put to death.

Verses 14-16

“When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him.”

The king's original decree included Daniel and his friends. All the ones who had been or were being trained are included in this decree. The king has lost confidence in all these men. This order will cause many innocent men to be put to death. Again, a king does as he wished and answers to no one.

In chapter one Daniel approached Asphenaz, a political servant of the king (about their diets). Here he approaches Arioch, a military servant of the kings, his chief executioner. Daniel spoke with wisdom, discretion and tact. Arioch was under no obligation to listen to or to speak to Daniel. One can only assume that Arioch believed the decree to be at least harsh if not wrong. Why would one think that? Because he took the time to explain to Daniel the situation.

Daniel receives an audience with the king and, with the confidence of a man who has faith in God, he too asks for time. Time for what!
Time for prayer!

Despite the failure, collapse and exile of the Hebrew nation God is still omnipotent. Daniel's request will show the reality, wisdom and power of the one true God – Yahweh – against the false gods the magicians worshipped.

Verses 17-18

“Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of

heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.”

Daniel’s friends needed to be warned and more importantly they needed to pray. This strategy was flawless... plead for mercy.

Daniel uses the same term Abraham used in Genesis 24, “*God of heaven*”.

Verses 19-20

“During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his.”

In contrast to Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Daniel receives a vision. In verse 20, prayer turns to praise. Appeal to appreciation. The Psalms call this “Wisdom and Power”. Daniel, like David did in the Psalms, praised the name of God.

Verses 21-22

“He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.”

As Daniel continues to praise, we have one of his prayers recorded for us. Daniel is a man of prayer. Because of God’s mercy, Daniel is now ready for another audience with the king.

Verse 23

“I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king.”

Daniel was about to display wisdom and power beyond that of human ability and before that happens comes a time of thanksgiving and praise! Daniel is making it known that this answer to prayer and this interpretation is from God alone, not from human minds.

Each line of this time of prayer exalts God’s greatness.

Daniel Interprets the Dream

Verses 24-49

Verses 24-25

“Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him." Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and said, "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means.”

These verses tell us two things. First, Daniel's faith in God is stopping the killing of Babylon's "wise men". Second, Arioch, takes credit for finding Daniel which is a great contrast between the pride of position and power versus the humility of a servant.

Verse 26

"The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?"

Skeptical, the king asks Daniel if he can really interpret his dream. His cynical heart is about to be touched by the living God!

Verses 27-28

"Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these:"

Daniel begins by confirming that no human mind could do what the king asked to be done. Only God could reveal the mystery the king is seeking an answer to. There is a distinction between the wisdom of Babylon and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:20,25).

Daniel now introduced this pagan king to the Living and true God, "*there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.*"

NOTICE Daniel explains that Nebuchadnezzar's dream is revealing things that are to "*happen in days to come*" (KJV reads "*in the latter days*"). This is referring to end times, well beyond the days of Nebuchadnezzar. This is the end times of the Gentiles, which is the theme of the book of Daniel. The end times of the Gentiles (the rapture) leads to the end times of Israel which is fulfilled during the Great Tribulation period. In 600 B.C., neither Daniel nor Nebuchadnezzar would have an understanding of the rapture and the Tribulation. Only God would see that far ahead.

Verses 29-30

"As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind."

These two verses are not about the king's dream but about his state of mind. Once again Daniel makes sure that the king understands that this is not Daniel's wisdom about to speak but the wisdom of God.

The prophet will describe four great world empires and their complete destruction by the final empire, the kingdom of heaven.

Verses 31-33

"You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay."

The shape of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream was not unusual but the size and appearance was. This was a picture of how Nebuchadnezzar viewed himself, a king over this great empire. Think what would Nebuchadnezzar's expression have been like as he listened to Daniel explain this dream in such detail!

Now Nebuchadnezzar would have been ready to listen to the interpretation. God was speaking to him in a language he could understand.

The gold head = Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar)
The silver chest and arms = Medo-Persia (Cyrus)
The bronze belly and thighs = Greece (Alexander)
The iron legs and clay toes = Rome (Herod)



Verses 34-35

“While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.”

A supernaturally formed rock crushed, pulverized the statue’s feet. Its feet disabled, the entire statue crumbles and becomes like chaff on a threshing floor being blown away by the wind. The stone begins to grow, becoming the living stone. The great kingdoms of the earth will all one day be scattered and smashed by the great stone, the rock, the Lord Jesus Christ.

New Testament readers may compare this picture with Jesus telling His disciples at Caesarea Philippi that *“Upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”*

Verses 36-38

"This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.”

The king must have sat intently listening to the accuracy of the details as Daniel moves from explaining the dream to interpreting it. Nebuchadnezzar was the first great world leader.

What did Daniel mean when he said, *“You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory”* Ezekiel uses the same language in Ezekiel 26:7 when he spoke of Nebuchadnezzar.

Ezekiel 26:7

*“For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: From the north I am going to bring against Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, **king of kings**, with horses and chariots, with horsemen and a great army. ⁸ He will ravage your settlements on the mainland with the sword; he will set up siege works against you, build a ramp up to your walls and raise his shields against you. ⁹ He will direct the blows of his battering rams against your walls and demolish your towers with his weapons. ¹⁰ His horses will be so many that they will cover you with dust. Your walls will tremble at the noise of the war horses, wagons and chariots when he enters your gates as men enter a city whose walls have been broken through. ¹¹ The hoofs of his horses will trample all your streets; he will kill your people with the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground. ¹² They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea.”*

So does Jeremiah...

Jeremiah 27:5-11

"This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Tell this to your masters: ⁵ With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁶ Now I will hand all your countries over to my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him. ⁷ All nations will serve him and his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes; then many nations and great kings will subjugate him. ⁸ " "If, however, any nation or kingdom will not serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon or bow its neck under his yoke, I will punish that nation with the sword, famine and plague, declares the LORD, until I destroy it by his hand. ⁹ So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your interpreters of dreams, your mediums or your sorcerers who tell you, 'You will not serve the king of Babylon.' ¹⁰ They prophesy lies to you that will only serve to remove you far from your lands; I will banish you and you will perish. ¹¹ But if any nation will bow its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will let that nation remain in its own land to till it and to live there, declares the LORD."

Nebuchadnezzar would have accepted the title “king of kings”, but Daniel quickly points out that “*The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might...*” God made Nebuchadnezzar the first great world ruler and there has been no one like him since.

Verse 39

"After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth."

Having paid tribute to this king Daniel quickly moves past the next two kingdoms. Based on the type of material used to describe them, the next kingdom will be inferior to Babylon and the third will be inferior to the second and the fourth inferior to the third. The silver kingdom is Persia which begins with Cyrus in 539 B.C. (we are told this next kingdom is Persia in Daniel 5:28). Persia will gain more territory than Babylon did but Babylon's political organization, culture and the authority of its king is second to none.

The third kingdom, represented by brass, is Greece ruled by Alexander the Great and begins in 334 B.C.

The quality of the metals:

- Gold is finer than silver
- Silver is finer than brass
- Brass is finer than iron
- Iron is better than clay

Each metal shows deterioration from one kingdom to another. Each position also shows a lesser honor.

- The head has more honor than the chest
- The chest has more honor than the belly
- The belly has more honor than the toes

Babylon is the head – it was never divided.
Greece was divided into fours
Rome was divided into tens.

The last great empire of the ancient world was Rome. Rome was never conquered; it fell apart from within. No enemy destroyed it. Rome is still living in nations of the Old Roman empire: Italy, France, Great Britain, Germany and Spain. What is happening today? Those who live in the old Roman Empire do not want to be called Italians or Germans; they are being called Europeans. The thinking is being put into place for the “man of sin”, (the antichrist) to rebuild a once great empire. That time will not happen until God removes the roadblocks.

Verses 40-43

“Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.”

Iron breaks and smashes everything and that is what Rome does when it rules the world. The toes are a picture of contrast, iron being so strong and clay being one of the most vulnerable of materials. Out of the ruins of Rome (Europe) will come what we know as the anti-christ. This man will be a world leader much like Nebuchadnezzar was (Revelations 13).

Verse 44

"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever."

The fifth kingdom rises up and smashes the other four. In Scripture, only God is called a rock. This metaphor is never used to describe a human.

Genesis 49:24

“because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel”

Psalms 118:22

“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;”

Isaiah 28:16

“So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation;”

1 Corinthians 1:23

“but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews...”

1 Peter 2:4-8

“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” ⁷Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,” ⁸and, “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.”

To Israel Jesus was a stumbling stone; to Christians He is the cornerstone.

Verse 45

“This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy.”

Once again Daniel points out that the rock which will destroy and rule is not cut out by human hands but by the hand of God. The picture also re-emphasizes that when the rock strikes the statue the entire statue falls and is destroyed.

Matthew 21:44

“He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”

Christ is the rock of salvation and the rock of judgment.

Deuteronomy 32:15

“He abandoned the God who made him and rejected the Rock his Savior.”

Deuteronomy 32:4

“He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.”

Verses 46-47

“Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. The king said to Daniel, “Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.”

Nebuchadnezzar went from the position of ordering executions to a position of worship, acknowledging (in his limited theology) that Daniel's God was the "*God of gods and the Lord of kings*".

Revelation 11:15

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

Revelation 19:16

"On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

Like Abraham and Joseph before him and Esther after him, Daniel was elevated to a place of respect by a powerful pagan leader and used in that position by God to care for His people.

A lesson for all is that sometimes we want to put God in such a nice and neat box that we remove the mystery of His Divine being. Nebuchadnezzar admitted that Daniel's God is a God of some mystery. Not everything about God can be understood by the human mind and that's okay.

Verses 48-49

"Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court."

Can one serve in high levels of government and not compromise their Christian faith?
Joseph did, as did Daniel and his three friends.

Lot sat in the gate of Sodom, meaning he was a judge and Mordecai sat in the gate in Persia.

Daniel went from an exiled Jew to an honored position in a foreign kingdom – that is the hand of God!