

Daniel Chapter 2

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Introduction:

God has had Daniel trained for service to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonian Empire (chapter 1). Now, God has revealed the future to the king in a dream and the king is looking for someone to tell him what the dream was, probably to check on their ability to foretell the future revealed by the dream. His usual staff of wise-men have failed the first part of the test and the impetuous Nebuchadnezzar is about to have all of them killed. Daniel has offered to tell the king, both the dream and the future that it foretold. While Daniel didn't know the dream either, God revealed it to him beginning in verse 19.

(2:1) One night during the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had such disturbing dreams that he couldn't sleep. (2.) He called in his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers, and he demanded that they tell him what he had dreamed. As they stood before the king, (3.) he said, "I have had a dream that deeply troubles me, and I must know what it means."

- **Nebuchadnezzar** was comparatively new at leading the nation. His **dream** awakened him and kept him awake. Now he had royal insomnia (vs. 1).
- The dream triggered an early morning advisory meeting. The four categories of aides probably denotes representatives from all pagan factions of his advisory board. Daniel and his friends were *excluded* for some reason. It may have been hinted at in 1:20.
- **Nebuchadnezzar** was an absolute monarch who wanted the answers to his questions immediately. Or sooner. If he didn't get them, heads will roll.
- The original text becomes Aramaic at this point and continues to the end of chapter 7. This section relates primarily to the non-Jewish world.

(4.) Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "Long live the king! Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it

means." (5.) But the king said to the astrologers, "I am serious about this. If you don't tell me what my dream was and what it means, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be turned into heaps of rubble!"

- The king was hard on his support group. He hadn't forgotten the dream. His reasoning is: If they can divine the *interpretation* accurately, then they can divine the *dream* as well. This would give him proof that their prophecies were valid. He said, "**I am serious about this.** Another translation says, "**I meant what I said.**"
- If they fail, their lives and property were on the line. Their houses would be made **into heaps of rubble!**

(6.) But if you tell me what I dreamed and what the dream means, I will give you many wonderful gifts and honors. Just tell me the dream and what it means!" (7.) They said again, "Please, Your Majesty. Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means."

- Conversely, if the advisors could show the dream and its meaning, they would be heavily rewarded.
- Their terms -- **Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means** did not match the king's terms -- "**tell me the dream and what it means.**" If they could just hear the **dream**, they could make up any kind of meaning. They were wise men and could create an answer quickly and easily.

(8.) The king replied, "I know what you are doing! You're stalling for time because you know I am serious when I say, (9.) 'If you don't tell me the dream, you are doomed.' So you have conspired to tell me lies, hoping I will change my mind. But tell me the dream, and then I'll know that you can tell me what it means."

- **The king** held firm. He knew their motive was to save their lives (vs. 9).
- **The king** knows that this is an important **dream** and he distrusts these advisers. He has already decided that their words are **lies** (vs. 9). They would be hoping that things would become different if they stalled in giving an answer (vs. 9).

(10.) The astrologers replied to the king, "No one on earth can tell the king his dream! And no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer! (11.) The king's demand is impossible.

No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people."

- Their strategy changes to saying his requirements are impossible. They accuse him of acting differently than other **kings**. Accusing this boss wasn't safe, but they had already been sentenced to death, so they had nothing to lose. They blame any failure on **the king**.
- Now it is suggested that only heavenly **gods** can do what the **king** wants done. They're beginning to point to Daniel without knowing it (vs.11).
- If a **god** is required that does not dwell with men, then, of course, they have no contact with him or his dream manuals.

(12.) The king was furious when he heard this, and he ordered that all the wise men of Babylon be executed. (13.) And because of the king's decree, men were sent to find and kill Daniel and his friends.

- Nebuchadnezzar was not just going to kill the advisers who were present at the meeting, but all of them. And that would include **Daniel** and his three **friends** (vs. 12).
- **Paul Butler** writes: "The king is enraged at these who have gained fame and fortune and power by claiming to know the deepest secrets of man and the gods - and they cannot even tell him what he has dreamed."
- The fact that **Daniel** and his fellows shared in the decrees of destruction shows that they were now included as official advisers.

(14.) When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, came to kill them, Daniel handled the situation with wisdom and discretion. (15.) He asked Arioch, "Why has the king issued such a harsh decree?" So Arioch told him all that had happened. (16.) Daniel went at once to see the king and requested more time to tell the king what the dream meant.

- **Daniel** is using some of the prudence that God has imparted to him (1:20). **Daniel** inquired about this immediate death sentence and **Arioch** explained.
- **Leupold** says, "The very audacity of Daniel's plan must have impressed Arioch."
- Probably **Daniel** himself did not approach the king, but used **Arioch** as a proxy (vs. 24) to offer hope to Nebuchadnezzar and to get a reprieve. After all, dead advisers can't satisfy the **king's** desire for an explanation.

- It should be noted that **Daniel** does not know either the dream or its meaning at this point. He is operating with faith that God will intervene.

(17.) Then Daniel went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened. (18.) He urged them to ask the God of heaven to show them His mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not be executed along with the other wise men of Babylon.

- Following **Daniel's** offer to explain the dream there was one *serious prayer meeting* (verse 17). The astrologers were correct that the answer would not come from earth. God had prepared His man to represent heaven and Daniel was ready.
- **Daniel** and company were getting a potent lesson on the mercy of **God**. It was *His mercy* or *their death*. Praying **friends** are valuable friends.

(19) That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven. (20.) He said, "Praise the name of God forever and ever, for He has all wisdom and power. (21.) He controls the course of world events; He removes kings and sets up other kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the scholars. (22.) He reveals deep and mysterious things and knows what lies hidden in darkness, though He is surrounded by light. (23.) I thank and praise You, God of my ancestors, for You have given me wisdom and strength. You have told me what we asked of You and revealed to us what the king demanded."

- **God revealed** the **vision** and its meaning to **Daniel** at night. **Daniel**, in turn, **praised the God of heaven**. His life had been spared along with many others.
- The exact form of the **praise** is recorded:
 - **Daniel** expresses God's superior **wisdom and power** (vs.20).
 - **Daniel** expresses that **God** is in charge of the rise and fall of kingdoms and cultures (vs. 21).
 - **Daniel** expresses that God adds to the naturally acquired wisdom and knowledge of advisers (vs. 22). God has inexhaustible stores of information.
 - **Daniel** expresses that his own **wisdom and strength** are anchored in the **wisdom and strength** of **God** (vs. 23).

- **Daniel** further expresses thanksgiving for answering the prayer of the four men for information about the dream (vs. 23).
- It should be noted that the elements of the prayer are not necessarily new information, but they were items that were expressed to **God**. Some of our prayers should take that model.
- **Burton Coffman** observes:
 Many scholars have pointed out how Daniel's prayer displayed an intimate acquaintance with Old Testament literature, including the Psalms. Like Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish, Daniel referred to God as "the God of heaven." Many of the phrases used in Daniel's language here are found in the Psalms.

(24.) Then Daniel went in to see Arioch, whom the king had ordered to execute the wise men of Babylon. Daniel said to him, "Don't kill the wise men. Take me to the king, and I will tell him the meaning of his dream."

- **Daniel** even intervened on behalf of his pagan colleagues. He resisted the opportunity to say, "Kill all of the pagan advisers and leave us alive."
- These phonies owed their lives to **Daniel**, but they didn't remember very long. In the next chapter, they denounced him.

But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews. (Daniel 3:8 NLT)

- Now **Daniel** has made the commitment again. He will show the interpretation. Failure at this point would get a lot of **wise men** killed.

(25.) Arioch quickly took Daniel to the king and said, "I have found one of the captives from Judah who will tell the king the meaning of his dream!" (26.) The king said to Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar.), "Is this true? Can you tell me what my dream was and what it means?"

- Note the haste here (vs. 25). Lives were at stake.
- **Belteshazzar** was, of course, **Daniel's** court name and did not include a reference to Jehovah God (the EL portion of **Daniel**). **The king** inquired about the dream as well as its meaning.

(27.) Daniel replied, "There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can reveal the king's secret.

(28.) But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future. Now I will tell you your dream and the visions you saw as you lay on your bed.

- **Daniel** had been trained in the secrets of the courtiers so he knew their limitations (vs. 27). **Daniel** first took the opportunity to show the impotence of the advisers to the king (v.28). **Daniel** was not broad-minded.
- **Daniel's God** was in heaven, not a stone temple.
- **Paul Butler** writes:
 What a wonderful opportunity for Daniel to plant the seed of Truth in the mind of a pagan monarch. What courage it took to stand in the presence of such an absolute despot who considered himself a god and speak of The Living God. Daniel's courage was born of his faith in God and his knowledge of the situation - the extremity of Nebuchadnezzar's anxiety.

(29.) "While Your Majesty was sleeping, you dreamed about coming events. He who reveals secrets has shown you what is going to happen. (30.) And it is not because I am wiser than anyone else that I know the secret of your dream, but because God wants you to understand what was in your heart.

- Daniel also revealed the king's inner meditations, further demonstrating his power to reveal the dream and its meaning (vs. 29). The Great Revealer of Secrets had communicated with King Nebuchadnezzar. This is further evidence of a *Living* God.
- Daniel downplayed his own role in this revelation (vs. 30). **God** wanted Nebuchadnezzar to understand the future. This message is from a living and powerful God and He controls the future (vs. 30).

(31.) "In your vision, Your Majesty, you saw standing before you a huge, shining statue of a man. It was a frightening sight. (32.) The head of the statue was made of fine gold. Its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs were bronze, (33.) its legs were iron, and its feet were a combination of iron and baked clay.

- Nebuchadnezzar has seen the image of a large metallic man in his **vision**. He was a worshiper of images (ch. 3:4) and this made the dream all the more disturbing.
- Images were common in Babylon. 3:1. This image glowed and was frightening to the all-powerful Nebuchadnezzar.

(34.) As you watched, a rock was cut from a mountain, but not by human hands. It struck the feet of iron and clay, smashing them to bits. (35.) The whole statue was crushed into small pieces of iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold. Then the wind blew them away without a trace, like chaff on a threshing floor. But the rock that knocked the statue down became a great mountain that covered the whole earth.

- There was an intervention at this point that implies a **mountain** standing next to the statue. A stone was cut out of the **mountain** by a divine force - and it rolled down and destroyed the bottom of **the statue**. The valuable metals in the top of the image collapsed as well (vs.34).
- The rolling stone pounded the image until it was blown away and the stone grew to be a kingdom and **covered the whole earth**. (vs.35).
- It should be easy for us to share Nebuchadnezzar's fright over what he had seen. Did the statue represent his empire?

(36.) "That was the dream. Now we will tell the king what it means. (37.) Your Majesty, you are the greatest of kings. The God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor. (38.) He has made you the ruler over all the inhabited world and has put even the wild animals and birds under your control. You are the head of gold.

- Daniel has established his credibility by describing the king's inner feeling plus the **dream** in its entirety. Now it's time for the **meaning**.
- Nebuchadnezzar is also called the king of kings (vs 37) in Ezekiel 26:7.
- All of Nebuchadnezzar's **power, strength and honor** have been granted by the God of heaven. Jeremiah had predicted this:

Now I will give your countries to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who is My servant. I have put everything, even the wild animals, under his control. (Jeremiah 27:6 NLT)

- Babylon is in present-day Iraq and Saddam Hussein had started to rebuild Babylon with a view to restoring its former glory. The site is located about an hour south of Baghdad.
- The image of the metallic man was certainly flattering to Nebuchadnezzar.

(39.) "But after your kingdom comes to an end, another kingdom, inferior to yours, will rise to take your place. After that kingdom has fallen, yet a third kingdom, represented by bronze, will rise to rule the world. (40.) Following that kingdom, there will be a fourth one, as strong as iron. That kingdom will smash and crush all previous empires, just as iron smashes and crushes everything it strikes.

- The **kingdom** that followed the Babylonian Empire was the Medo-Persian Empire. It's rise to power is reported in Daniel:

Parsin means 'divided' -- your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians." (Daniel 5:28 NLT)

This was the *second* kingdom.

- Following the second empire was the Greek Empire. An angel spoke of Persia being replaced by Greece.

He replied, "Do you know why I have come? Soon I must return to fight against the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia, and after that the spirit prince of the kingdom of Greece will come. (Daniel 10:20 NLT)

The *third* kingdom was the Grecian Empire.

- The *fourth* and final empire was the Roman Empire that was in control of the world when Jesus was born. Luke mentions it when describing the years when Jesus was born:

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (Luke 2:1 NLT)

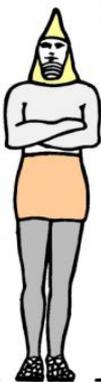
- The *Roman Empire* was a hybrid. The peaceful parts were ruled by the Senate in *Rome* while the hard-to-rule parts were under the direct rule of the emperor. As the *Roman* armies expanded the empire, they confronted a city with choices: just pay us taxes and you can remain as you are. We will protect you from any enemies and make your gods honorary citizens of the empire. You will be represented by a Senator in the *Roman Senate*. Some areas did not willingly cooperate and were placed directly under the emperor. Judea is a case where it was ruled directly from the *Roman* headquarters in Caesarea. That is why the trial of Jesus was handled by Pilate, the *Roman governor*.

The strongest claim of the *Roman empire* to be the iron kingdom is found in the length of its duration – the best proof of its strength. The kingdom of Babylon lasted only 70 years – the kingdom of the Medo-Persians lasted 200 years – the Greek kingdom lasted 130 years – while the *Roman empire* in its *undivided* state lasted some 500 years.

(41.) The feet and toes you saw were a combination of iron and baked clay, showing that this kingdom will be divided. Like iron mixed with clay, it will have some of the strength of iron. (42.) But while some parts of it will be as strong as iron, other parts will be as weak as clay. (43.) This mixture of iron and clay also shows that these kingdoms will try to strengthen themselves by forming alliances with each other through inter- marriage. But they will not hold together, just as iron and clay do not mix.

- **Albert Barnes** comments on the **clay** composition of the Roman Empire:

They aspired at the dominion of the world; and, in their strides at universal conquest, they brought nations under their subjection, and admitted them to the rights of citizenship, which had no affinity with the original material which composed the Roman power, and which never really amalgamated with it, anymore than *clay* does with *iron*.

		KINGDOM	DATES
GOLD		BABYLON	606- 539BC
SILVER		MEDO-PERSIA	539- 331BC
BRONZE		GREECE	331- 30BC
IRON AND CLAY		ROME	30BC- 397AD

(44) "During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever. (45.) That is the meaning of the rock cut from the

mountain, though not by human hands, that crushed to pieces the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. The great God was showing the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its meaning is certain."

- In the days of the Roman Empire God will set up His own kingdom (vs. 44). Unlike those before it, this kingdom is permanent and politically stable. Eventually it will overcome all other kingdoms and will stand for ever (vs.45).
- Enter the angel Gabriel. He appeared only to Daniel in Daniel 8 and 9 but appeared twice in Luke's record. First, he appeared to Zechariah and then Mary, the one who was to be the mother of Jesus. To Mary he promised that Jesus:

... will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His ancestor David. And He will reign over Israel forever; His Kingdom will never end!" (Luke 1:32-33 NLT)

There is **the kingdom that will never be destroyed** as promised in Daniel 2:44. Thirty years later the baby had become the man Jesus and preached:

Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near. (Matthew 4:17 NLT)

Jesus said He would establish the kingdom very soon and that Peter would unlock its gates:

Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build My church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven." (Matthew 16:18-19 NLT)

- After the church began on Pentecost following Jesus' resurrection, the kingdom was spoken of as present.

For He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son,

who purchased our freedom [with His blood] and forgave our sins. (Colossians 1:13-14 NLT)

- Daniel summarizes the dream and restates that God has let Nebuchadnezzar in on the meaning (vs. 45).
- The sun rose and set on the Empires of man, but the sun never sets on the Kingdom of God. It is world-wide and everlasting.

(46.) Then King Nebuchadnezzar threw himself down before Daniel and worshiped him, and he commanded his people to offer sacrifices and burn sweet incense before him. (47.) The king said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret."

- **Daniel** had made it clear to **King Nebuchadnezzar** in verse 30 that he was only a servant of God.
- **Paul Butler** writes:
We believe Nebuchadnezzar was simply showing his respect for Daniel and at the same time doing obeisance through Daniel as the accredited representative of the God who had the power to reveal secrets. Notice that Nebuchadnezzar does not in any way call Daniel a god. It is evident, therefore, that the king is worshipping and sacrificing to Daniel's God through Daniel as an intermediary.
- **Nebuchadnezzar** further acknowledged Daniel's **God** as superior to all other deities.

(48.) Then the king appointed Daniel to a high position and gave him many valuable gifts. He made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, as well as chief over all his wise men. (49.) At Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be in charge of all the affairs of the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained in the king's court.

- **Daniel** was upgraded from being an adviser to being the ruler of **the province of Babylon** as well as being **chief** of his **wise men** (vs. 48).
- **The king** was delighted to learn that he had a representative of the God of heaven in his own court.
- These were the rewards that Nebuchadnezzar had promised in verse 5. Consider Daniel's young age at this time.
- **Daniel** remembered his three buddies and had them appointed as local administrators (vs. 49) while he became the closest

consultant to Nebuchadnezzar on national and international affairs.