



Silverdale Baptist Church

STAND. A STUDY IN DANIEL • STAND IN THE GAP • DANIEL 2 • 6/6-7/2020

MAIN POINT

The God of heaven is in control of history and He wants to use us to influence this world.

INTRODUCTION

Use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

When have you felt like your world was coming apart?

What were the circumstances?

How did you respond?

We all want a secure, peaceful, pain-free world. We do everything possible to make our lives safe. But, then COVID-19 invades our world. Or, a man is killed by the police without the due process of law, and riots destroy cities. Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah, and Azariah probably felt the same way we do. But Nebuchadnezzar invaded their world. What can we learn from them to help us live in our world today?

UNDERSTANDING

Note to Leader: *This lesson, on Daniel 2, covers a significant number of verses. However, since this is a story or narrative, the pace will go smoothly. The lesson should take no longer than a regular small group discussion.*

The term Chaldeans in the Bible usually refers to a race or tribe of people living in Babylon. But, in the first five chapters of Daniel, the Chaldeans or wise men refers to a group of elite educated men who were skilled in mathematics, astronomy, and witchcraft.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 2:1-5

These verses set up the context for the story of Daniel 2. What is happening in this passage?

What does the king demand of the Chaldeans?

How does the king threaten the Chaldeans if they do not tell him both the dream and the interpretation?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 2:10-13.

How do the Chaldeans respond to Nebuchadnezzar's demand?

The Chaldeans admit that no one could tell King Nebuchadnezzar both his dream and the interpretation except the gods "who do not dwell among men." The Chaldeans are saying only the gods can answer your question, and we can't talk to them. Of course, the Chaldeans are right. Only God can answer the king's question. Of all the Chaldeans, only Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah can hear from God.

In his anger, what does Nebuchadnezzar order done to the wise men?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 2:14-19

When Daniel finds out what the king has ordered, how does he respond?

Who revealed the mystery to Daniel?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 2:20-21.

What do you learn about God from these verses?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 2:25-28

How does Daniel's statement in verses 26-27 compare to the comments of the Chaldeans in Daniel 2:11?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 2:31-35.

What was Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 2:36-44.

What is the interpretation of the dream?

How many kingdoms does the statue represent?

How is each kingdom described?

What do you learn about the kingdom of God in verse 44?

The kingdom of Babylon is represented by the head of gold. Babylon was conquered by the Persians, the chest and arms of silver. The Persians were later defeated by the Greeks, as described in Daniel 8. The Roman empire came next, represented by the legs of iron. We don't know who the feet of iron and clay represent, but it is a kingdom that comes in the end times. The rock is Jesus Christ at His second coming, and His country will never end.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 2:47-49

When Daniel declares the interpretation of the dream, how does Nebuchadnezzar respond?

Apply

What do you learn about God in verses 20-21? In verses 27-28? What difference do these truths make in our life today?

What about our world makes you feel like the foundations of the world are being shaken? How can what you learn about God in this chapter help you rest in the storm?

How does God want to use us in this world? How can we take what we have seen about the sovereignty of God in Daniel 2 and make a difference in our culture?

Prayer

Father, the world seems out of control right now. The foundations of everything we take for granted seem to be shaking. Thank You that You are in heaven, high and lifted up, and You see the craziness and are working through it all to accomplish Your purpose. I pray we cooperated with what You are doing and not fight against it. Increase our faith, focus our mind on Your word, let us see Your hands at work around us.

Commentary:

| DANIEL 2

2:1 Nebuchadnezzar's dreams took place in the second year of his reign, which might appear to conflict with the claim that Daniel's three-year training program (1:5) began in Nebuchadnezzar's first year (1:1). However, by Babylonian reckoning Daniel's second year of training occurred during what was considered the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (604–603 BC; see note at 1:1 about reckoning time). Therefore, the king sought interpretation of his dreams in 602 BC, shortly after Daniel had completed his three-year education.

2:2–3 On magicians and mediums, see note at 1:20. The Hebrew word for sorcerers comes from an Akkadian word that can also mean "witchcraft." Chaldeans is both a general ethnic term for the Babylonian people and, as used here, a specific term for priests who served as astrologers, soothsayers, and wise men in the king's government.

2:4–7:28 The narrative switches from Hebrew to Aramaic in v. 4 and continues in Aramaic until 7:28. Chapters 2–7 pertain to God's revelations about the Gentile nations. The structure is chiasmic (ABCCBA).

The Aramaic noun *peshar*, occurring only in Daniel, relates to an Akkadian word for interpreting dreams and omens, one connected with divination and magic and that could describe one's profession. True interpretation of dreams and divine messages requires God's enablement (Dn 2:30). The Aramaic verb *peshar* (2×) denotes interpret or give interpretations (Dn 5:12, 16). These words link with two Hebrew word families. Similar-sounding *peshar* means interpretation (Ec 8:1) and need not involve divine messages. Ecclesiastes 8:1 is the only OT passage where the root lacks the association with interpreting divine message. Genesis 40–41 uses the verb *patar* (9×), which varies in spelling due to standard differences occurring between languages. It suggests Joseph's interpreting (8×) or explaining (Gn 40:8, 22) dreams. The related noun *pithron* (5×) in that narrative signifies interpretation (Gn 40:8) or meaning (Gn 40:5; 41:11). Commentaries among the Dead Sea Scrolls use this root of interpreting Scripture.

2:5–9 Some versions translate the phrase my word is final as "the dream is forgotten." It is better to translate it as referring to the certainty and finality of the king's demand. Nebuchadnezzar withheld the facts of the dream not because he could not remember them but because he wanted to test his wise men.

2:10–11 This candid confession by the wise men admits that despite all their incantations, magic, and astrology, they were not capable of receiving supernatural revelation.

2:12 Wise men is a general term for all the king's counselors, who gained their knowledge through occult practices.

2:13 Daniel and his friends were subject to execution because they were in the class of wise men; they had not participated in any of the discussions with the king.

2:14–16 That the king would grant a stay of execution under these circumstances is more than remarkable.

2:17–19 The mystery refers to a secret that can only be known by divine revelation.

2:20–23 Daniel's song of praise includes the two key ideas of the chapter: First, God is sovereign over the political affairs of humanity because he removes kings and establishes kings. Second, God alone can give revelation by giving wisdom to the wise and by revealing the deep ... hidden things, even the king's mystery that had stumped the wise men.

2:24–26 The king was likely surprised to hear further word regarding this matter.

2:27 Daniel asserted that no pagan soothsayer could solve the mystery. Rather, he attributed revelation to God alone. The word translated diviner expresses the idea of cutting or determining, referring to a person who is able to determine another's fate.

2:28 In the last days indicates that the king's dream would find its complete fulfillment only in the end times.

2:29–30 Daniel tactfully stressed that Nebuchadnezzar—rather than himself—was the recipient of the revelation.

2:31–45 Daniel interpreted the parts of the colossal statue to represent four empires in historical succession. The head represented the kingdom of Babylon (605–539 BC). The chest and arms symbolized the Medo-Persian Empire (539–331 BC). The stomach and thighs stood for the Greek Empire (331–146 BC). The legs referred to the Roman Empire (146 BC–AD 1476 in the West and AD 1453 in the East). The feet were mixed of iron and clay and represented a future continuation or revival of Rome. The material of each section of the statue decreased in value but increased in strength (except for the feet; see vv. 42–43). The decreased value may symbolize the moral decline of each succeeding kingdom. The increased strength refers to the harsher domination each successive kingdom would impose on its subjects. Daniel also described a stone that would shatter the final kingdom and grow into a mountain that filled the whole earth. This "stone" is the kingdom of God.

Primarily because they disbelieve in the possibility of predictive prophecy, critical scholars assume that Daniel was written in 165 BC and therefore is looking backward rather than forward at the rise of earthly kingdoms such as the Roman Empire. They divide the four kingdoms into Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. On the other hand, most interpreters who accept the reality of predictive prophecy in Scripture believe Daniel was written in the late sixth century and view the fourth kingdom as Rome. They hold different opinions about the meaning of the stone, however. Some view it as a spiritual kingdom, embodied in the church, which gradually conquered the Roman Empire. Others more accurately view it as a future kingdom, when Messiah Jesus will return and establish his physical rule that will govern the whole earth and never be destroyed.

2:37 In Ezk 26:7 God himself calls Nebuchadnezzar king of kings. But Daniel makes clear that his position is a gift of God. King Artaxerxes claims the title for himself in Ezr 7:12. But the title belongs truly only to Jesus Christ (1Tm 6:15; Rv 17:14; 19:16).

2:46–47 King Nebuchadnezzar responded to Daniel's remarkable revelation by recognizing the God of Israel as part of the pantheon of gods, though he did not recognize the God of Israel as the one and only true God.[1]

[1] Rydelnik, M. (2017). Daniel. In E. A. Blum & T. Wax (Eds.), *CSB Study Bible: Notes* (pp. 1325–1329). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.