



Daniel

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Chapter 2

GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO A KING

Daniel's account gives us a fascinating glimpse into God's sovereignty. God has granted Nebuchadnezzar incredible power and majesty so that even the wild animals and birds of the air are under his control, yet the king is powerless over a simple dream, because he is unable to understand what it means.

In this chapter we see a sharp contrast between the king's response to his dilemma and that of Daniel when told he would be executed. The king turns to his own resources and brute strength in an effort to solve his problem, while Daniel turns immediately to God in an attitude of humility and peace.

DANIEL 2:1-3

In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the king dreamed dreams, and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep went from him.

Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, to show the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

And the king said to them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the meaning of the dream.

- Nebuchadnezzar's "second year" of reign was actually the third since his crowning, because Babylonians did not count the year he became king. It is likely that as this event took place, Daniel had not yet completed his three-year training program. Daniel is not included among the wise men who are called before the king. However, later in the narrative we see that he is allowed to go in and see the king, which suggests a familiarity that may be the result of the interview with Nebuchadnezzar mentioned earlier.
- Dreams were important to people of the Chaldean Empire, and still are today throughout the Middle Eastern world. People in those cultures have long considered them messages from the gods.
- The plurality of the term here suggests that the same dream was repeated over several nights, which would have indeed troubled the king greatly if he could not understand it.



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DANIEL 2:4-6

Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, “O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the meaning.”

The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, “The word from me is certain: if you will not make known to me the dream, with the meaning of it, you will be made into limbs, and your houses will be made a dunghill.

But if you describe the dream, and the meaning of it, you will receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour. Therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation of it.”

- From this point through the end of chapter 7, Daniel changes from the Hebrew language to the gentile language of the day, Aramaic. This uses the same Hebrew characters. Chapters 2 through 7 of Daniel deal primarily with Gentile history, while chapter 1 as well as 8 through 12 deal with Jewish issues and are thus written in Hebrew. Chapter 4 is not only written in Aramaic but is written *by* a Gentile!
- The term “live forever” is an early version of our modern day “long live the king.” It doesn’t refer to an immortal life but to the length of the kingdom he established or represents.
- Some English Bibles interpret verse 5 as “cut into pieces.” There is in fact no reference to cutting instruments. The proper interpretation is “torn limb from limb” which refers to a common form of Babylonian torture in which the victim was tied to four trees bent towards each other, then the binding of the trees was cut so they sprang apart and literally tore the body into five parts.
- The phrase “the thing is gone from me” appears in the King James translation in verse 5. In fact, the Aramaic says something more akin to “the word from me is (assured or certain)” indicating that Nebuchadnezzar was referring to his own words as a command of authority. In that context, the KJV is a weak translation and the more modern Bibles are more accurate.
- It is still early in the king’s reign. Nebuchadnezzar had inherited these advisors from his father. He probably despised them and saw them as little more than con artists. Chances are that as a crown prince he saw much corruption in their ranks. His unreasonable challenge was an opportunity to prove them as fakes and get rid of them. What a way to trim the royal payroll.



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DANIEL 2:7-9

They answered again and said, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will explain the meaning of it.”

The king answered, “I know with certainty that you are only trying to gain time [because you see my word is gone forth from me].

But if you will not make known to me the dream, there is but one decree for you, for you have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, hoping to delay things. Therefore tell me the dream, and I will know that you can show me the meaning of it.”

- Notice that the king says they have conspired to tell him misleading things. Clearly there is more to what they have claimed than we see in the text. They’ve obviously told him in the past that they are capable of things such as knowing what someone has dreamed. Perhaps even when first bringing them together he tested them by asking if they had such powers. In either case, they have placed their feet firmly in their mouths and are about to pay the ultimate penalty.
- Again the KJV Bible oddly interprets the king’s reference to his own word of authority as “you see the thing is gone from me” which is quite a different meaning if one reads it as meaning he has forgotten the dream.

DANIEL 2:10-11

The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, “There is not a man upon the earth who can show the king’s matter. Therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things of any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean.

And it is a rare thing that the king requires, and there is no one else who can show it before the king, except the gods, and they don’t live among men.”

- These men have no idea how true their statement is. They are merely trying to save their skins. Although they are probably quite devout, they likely don’t have a deep conviction of faith in their gods. Yet what they say -- that only God can reveal such things -- is completely true and Daniel is about to bring that truth into the light.



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DANIEL 2:12

This made the king angry and extremely furious, and he commanded to have all the wise men of Babylon destroyed.

- Why is the king's anger so aroused by their statement? These men are probably suggesting he is not tuned into the gods of the Babylonians. Their words are an insult to the king, because his role is traditionally seen as that of a servant managing the affairs of the gods on earth. He is supposed to be in touch with the gods. Their statement shows a lack of respect for his position and authority.
- Notice how impulsive Nebuchadnezzar is. When he has a problem, he resorts to brute strength to solve it. His rash solution will not actually solve his problem in any way. The only problem it does solve is to reduce the royal budget and rid him of corrupt advisors. Killing them won't explain the dream.
- Until now, things have been remarkably comfortable for Daniel. But the true test of a person's character is how they behave under pressure.
- Imagine how you would respond if you suddenly learned that you were placed on death row not for anything you did, but just because someone else had a temper tantrum. Think about your thoughts, your actions, the emotional upheaval as you struggled to understand the logic in such a bizarre situation.

DANIEL 2:13-16

¹³ The decree went out that the wise men should be executed; and the officers of the king sought Daniel and his friends to be executed.

¹⁴ Then Daniel spoke with wisdom and tact to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, who had come to kill the wise men of Babylon.

¹⁵ He said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree so quick from the king?" Then Arioch explained everything to Daniel.

¹⁶ Then Daniel went in, and requested of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation.

- Daniel was unaware of the reason for the decree, proving that he was not included among the wise men called before the king. This indicates that his three-year training program was likely not yet complete, though this event may have taken place near the end of that program.



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- Note Daniel's response to news that he was headed for execution. He speaks with "wisdom and tact," the opposite response to Nebuchadnezzar's response to a problem, and very different from the response the wise men had.
- Daniel is able to speak personally to the king. This shows that the men he reported to trusted him. His ability to meet with the king might be the result of the favorable interview from chapter 1.

DANIEL 2:17-18

Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions:

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

- Daniel's first action after speaking to the king was to call his friends and hold a prayer meeting. Sure, they were under pressure beyond their ability to fix, which usually brings people to their knees. But their prayerful response demonstrates their genuine faith in God. Daniel had been confident enough that God would provide an answer that he had personally met with the king asking for time.

DANIEL 2:19-23

¹⁹ Then was the secret revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

²⁰ Daniel answered and said, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his.

²¹ He changes the times and the seasons. He removes kings, and sets up kings. He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those that have understanding.

²² He reveals the deep and secret things. He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.

²³ I thank you, and praise you, O God of my fathers, who has given me wisdom and strength, and have made known to me now what we asked of you, for you have now made known to us the king's matter."



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- Daniel praises God for three characteristics: His eternal existence, His wisdom and His power. God is recognized as the source of all wisdom and the source of all power.
- The essence of Daniel's prayer is prophecy and its interpretation. He recognized in the revelation of the king's dream and its message that God uses prophecy to prove that He is God, since only God himself can tell the future. Prophecy is one of the primary reasons for the existence of the Bible. 27% of all Scripture verses are prophecy! This dream is the beginning of many visions and prophecies Daniel will receive in his lifetime.

DANIEL 2:24-25

Therefore Daniel went in to see Arioch, whom the king had authorized to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He said to him, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the meaning of his dream."

Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said to him, "I have found a man among the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the meaning of his dream."

- Notice that Arioch attempts to take the credit for finding Daniel, as if it is only by his great heroics that this interpreter of the dream was found. He appears to have been unaware that Daniel already talked personally to the king about this issue.

DANIEL 2:26-28

The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and the meaning of it?"

Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded cannot be shown to the king by any of the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the diviners;

But there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and makes known to king Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, are these;

- Daniel not only refuses to take any credit for what he is about to tell, but uses this as an opportunity to witness to the king about the God of the Hebrews. He tells the king that God is capable of doing what man (and the Babylonian gods) could not, then proves it by telling the king his dream and its interpretation.



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- Notice that Daniel is not only going to interpret the dream itself, but even what he was thinking as he lay on his bed, trying to fall asleep!
- As Daniel prepares to interpret the dream for the king, notice the tact and respect with which he treats this egotistical man. He is not condescending. He does not talk down to this pagan. He lifts him up and treats him with love and thoughtfulness.
- Although the wise men appeared to separate the king from the gods by suggesting that he was out of touch with the god he served, Daniel affirms the king's role by declaring that he was not only in touch with the true God, but that God cares about him personally. What a contrast to the insulting way the king was treated by his advisors!

DANIEL 2:29-30

As for you, O king, your thoughts came into your mind upon your bed about what should come to pass in the future. And he that reveals secrets makes known to you what shall come to pass.

But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than anyone else, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that you might know the thoughts of your heart.

- Daniel begins by telling the king something he hadn't asked for: what he was thinking about before he went to sleep. This goes far beyond the ability to interpret a dream or even to know what the dream was.
- He informs the king that his ability to tell and interpret this dream has nothing to do with Daniel's capabilities but comes from God alone. This dream and its interpretation is purely designed to show Nebuchadnezzar that God is sovereign by revealing the future, something only God can do.

DANIEL 2:31-33

You, O king, looked, and saw before you a great image of a man. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before you; and the form of it was terrible.

This image's head was of fine gold, his chest and arms of silver, his belly and thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet partly of iron and partly of clay.



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- The statue is a man, representing kingdoms of men. Four metals are shown in their order of value. Four kingdoms are represented by these metals: Babylon (the head of gold), Persia (the chest and arms of silver), Greece (the belly and thighs of bronze) and Rome (the legs of iron later mixed with clay).

DANIEL 2:34-35

You looked until you saw that a stone was cut out without hands, which smashed the image upon its feet of iron and clay and broke them to pieces.

Then the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold was broken to pieces all at once, and became like fine dust on the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them. The stone that smashed the image became a great mountain, filling the whole earth.

- The Rock is cut out of a Mountain. There are many references throughout the Scriptures describing both God and His promised Messiah as a rock or stone. As the “Son of God,” the metaphor of a rock cut out of a mountain could not be more clear.
- After the terrible and glorious Day of the Lord, the “Maschiach Nagid” (Messiah the King) Jesus Christ will take the throne of David and His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom that covers the whole earth. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is the Lord of lords and King of kings.
- It’s interesting that the rock, when it crushes these kingdoms of men, crushes all of them together. This reference to all the prior kingdoms still somehow being in place on that day is clarified in Daniel’s vision described in chapter 8.

DANIEL 2:36-38

This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation of it before the king.

You, O king, are a king of kings: for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

- Babylon was a kingdom blessed by God in some unique ways (God Himself referred to Nebuchadnezzar as “His servant” in Jeremiah). The Chaldean Empire was used by God as an instrument of judgment for the nation of Judah. It was taken over by the Persians in 539BC.



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DANIEL 2:39A

And after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you.

- The Persian kingdom was at first a single kingdom (the Medes) but was then manipulated by Cyrus into a Persian-dominated coalition often referred to as the Medo-Persian Empire. It was destroyed by Alexander the Great around 330BC.

DANIEL 2:39B

After that will come a third kingdom of brass [or bronze], which shall rule over all the earth.

- Alexander's Greek kingdom swept the world rapidly. In just 11 years it grew substantially larger than the previous ones, literally covering the known world from Spain to India and down into Egypt.
- After Alexander died, his kingdom was eventually broken into four pieces. Much of the later prophecies of Daniel deal with the continuing battles between two of these kingdoms for hundreds of years.

DANIEL 2:40-43

⁴⁰ Then a fourth kingdom will come that will be strong as iron. For as iron breaks into pieces and subdues all things, shall it break in pieces and bruise all these.

⁴¹ And the feet and toes you saw, partly of potters' clay and partly of iron, shows that the kingdom will be divided; but it will have the strength of the iron, just as you saw the iron mixed with miry clay.

⁴² And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

⁴³ And as you saw iron mixed with miry clay, the people will mingle themselves but they will not be unified with one another, even as iron does not mix with clay.

- The reference to iron smashing and breaking everything is a remarkable piece of detail, because unlike the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia and Greece, the Roman style was to crush the nations it conquered. The previous empires were sensitive to the cultures and people of the nations they conquered; they valued their strengths and showed respect for what had been established because it gave them strength. The Romans, on the other hand, simply destroyed everything and replaced it with their own systems and people with brute strength.



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- Note the reference to the people of the Roman empire not remaining united. That has happened. Remember that the Roman empire was never destroyed. It continues to exist, and will eventually be revived in some meaningful form.
- Daniel explained that this last kingdom will feature nationalities very much intermingled in their gene pool, but very diverse in their philosophies and cultures.
- The book of Revelation describes a revived Roman empire in the last days that will include 10 dominant nations, making the 10 toes remarkably meaningful. The coming one-world leader will arise from these and subdue three of them politically but the 10 kingdoms or nations will be crushed by Jesus when He returns on the Day of the Lord.

DANIEL 2:44-45

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed. That kingdom will not be left to other people, but it will smash to pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it will stand forever.

For as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke into pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter. The dream is certain, and the interpretation of it sure.”

- There is a reference to “the time of those kings.” This specifically means the time of the 10 kings represented by the 10 toes of iron mixed with clay. The setting of the final dominion of Jesus will take place in the days of a revived Roman empire in which 10 primary nations play a key role. The coming world leader will arise suddenly on the world stage, politically manipulate his way over three of those 10 nations so that he controls them, then he will begin to rule with an iron hand, showing his true colors. There is more on this in later chapters of Daniel.
- Psalm 2 represents a conversation between the three figures of the Trinity, in which they discuss the folly of the final battle of Armageddon when human armies set out to battle God. In this Psalm, God affirms to His Son, Jesus Christ, that He will rule over the nations forever:

“You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”
-- Psalm 2:9



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- Can you imagine anything more foolish than setting a human army to battle God? Yet the Bible tells us that the coming world leader will do exactly that when the time comes.

THE ROCK OF SALVATION

- There are many references in Scripture to God as the “Rock” of salvation. Rock and stone are common metaphors used to represent God and Christ.
- For example, the apostle Paul refers to Christ metaphorically as the “rock that followed the Israelites in the desert,” indicating that the rock from which they received water was an idiom for Jesus.
- Following are some of the most dominant themes of God and Jesus Christ represented in Scripture as a rock:

“You and Aaron must take the staff and assemble the entire community. As the people watch, command the rock over there to pour out its water. You will get enough water from the rock to satisfy all the people and their livestock.”

-- Numbers 20:8

- This is an oblique reference to salvation through Christ. He called himself the “living water” and said that everyone who drinks from the water he provides will never again thirst. If you’re thinking this seems contrived, look at the next verse.

“I don’t want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, what happened to our ancestors in the wilderness long ago... For they all drank from the miraculous rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ.”

-- 1 Corinthians 10:1-4

- The apostle Paul wasn’t saying that the rock was physically Christ, but that it symbolized the way Christ provides for us at all times and that his salvation sustains us permanently.

“These are the words he sang: “The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the strength of my salvation, and my stronghold, my high tower, my savior, the one who saves me from violence.”

-- 2 Samuel 22:2-3

“The stone rejected by the builders has now become the cornerstone.”

-- Psalm 118:22 (see also Psalm 89, 95)



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- The stone in this passage is a direct reference to Jesus Christ. He and his disciples quoted that same passage. It means that the Jewish religious leaders rejected him but that he is in fact the cornerstone of salvation.
 - “Trust in the LORD always, for the LORD GOD is the eternal Rock”
-- Isaiah 26:4
 - “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.”
-- Isaiah 28:16 (NASB)
- Another reference to Christ. The word interpreted as “disturbed” means that those who believe in Jesus will not be judged or destroyed on Judgement Day.
 - “Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ““The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone (cornerstone); the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?” “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”
-- Matthew 21:42-44
- Jesus used Psalm 118:22 to explain why he was now offering his gift of eternal life to Gentiles. Initially he brought salvation to the Jewish people, but because they rejected him it was given to non-Jews for a time. Eventually, after the church is removed in the event called the Rapture, God’s plan for the Jews will be completed as described in Daniel 9.
 - “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn;”
-- Isaiah 51:1
- We are to act and live in a way pleasing to God. Are you living a life that God would approve of? Are you free from sexual immorality? Are you honest? Loving? Forgiving? Encouraging?



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CLAY IN THE HANDS OF THE POTTER

Clay always represents people in Scripture. It is a symbol of how we are shaped and molded by God through the experiences He gives to us. Here are some references to clay:

“Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again?”
-- Job 10:9

“How stupid can you be? He is the Potter, and he is certainly greater than you. You are only the jars he makes! Should the thing that was created say to the one who made it, “He didn’t make us”? Does a jar ever say, “The potter who made me is stupid”?”
-- Isaiah 29:16

“And yet, LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We are all formed by your hand.”
-- Isaiah 64:8

- We are clay in God’s hand, but are only of value if we are soft and pliable. No wonder God often brings us to a point of true humility before we can be used by Him! In the case of king Nebuchadnezzar, God will later strike him down to a surprisingly low position before the arrogant king is pliable enough to give himself over to God’s control.
- How soft and pliable are you? Is your response to godly discipline harsh and willful, or do you allow difficulties in life to offer a measured evaluation of God’s true purpose in putting you through them?

DANIEL 2:46-47

Then king Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face before Daniel, and commanded that they should offer him a sacrifice and incense.

The king said to Daniel, “It is true that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing how you could reveal this secret.”

- The king did not worship Daniel but bowed before him in respect to the God Daniel represented.
- The wording used does not say the king presented an offering to Daniel. Instead, the king presented to Daniel the items needed to make an offering to God. He equipped Daniel for making a sacrifice, something that had been impossible since he was taken from Jerusalem.



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DANIEL 2:48-49

Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

- Although it was common practice for kings like Nebuchadnezzar to appoint the most qualified people to positions of power, it upset the wise men to see this Jewish captive put into a position of authority over them, even though he saved their lives. We see their response more clearly in chapters 3 and 6.