

Daniel

Chapter Two

Daniel 2:1-3

Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans, to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. And the king said to them, "I had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream."

- Ancient Babylonians believed that dreams were messages from the gods.
- As we read chapter 2—it is very similar to Joseph in Genesis 41 (cupbearer in Genesis parallels Arioch in Daniel)
- This dream of Nebuchadnezzar provides a history of the world through 4 successive gentile empires.
- Second year of his reign—Nisan (April-May) 603-602 BC.
- This may have been before the four had finished their third year of training (would explain why they were not among the initial call for the wise men).
- Biblical prophecy—which occasionally includes dreams is the result of divine initiative/revelation.
- King is anxious/foreboding—disturbed by what he saw in the dream (His spirit was 'struck'—like hitting an anvil with a hammer)
- Sorcerer—to practice sorcery/witchcraft—widespread in ancient world (Condemned in Ex 7:11, Deut 18:10, Is 47:9)
- Astrologers—usually rendered Chaldeans—they served as a class of priests. It was Babylonian astronomer—in 500 BC—who calculated the length of a year at 365 days, 6 hrs, 15 min, 41 seconds.....only 26 minutes, 55 seconds too long.
- At this point in Daniel, until the end of chapter 7—language changes from Hebrew to Aramaic.

Daniel 2:4-6

Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation." The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be made a rubbish heap. But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation."

- O king—live forever: customary salutation
- Chaldeans confidently state that they will interpret dream using their charts/books
- Failure to interpret—cut in pieces/dismembered (hacked to pieces or pulled apart). Dismemberment of enemies was a common practice in the ancient Orient. Houses would also be destroyed—used as garbage dumps. (100 years later, Darius massacres an entire group of the Magi)
- King demands they state the dream as well as interpret it—to assure accuracy. He is not interested in speculation—but supernatural disclosure.
- King also offers incentives/rewards

Daniel 2:7-9

They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation." The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm, that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation."

- King possessed power/fame/influence-----why would he experience so much anxiety from a dream?
- Augustine: "The human heart is restless until it finds its' rest in God."
- The wise men of Babylon—who rely on their gods—are impotent to reveal truth.
- Read Is 46:6-7, 47:13-14, 46:9-10
- We learn about Nebuchadnezzar from his reactions—hostile and insecure
- Wise men remain powerless—even under threat

Daniel 2:10-13

The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh." Because of this the king became indignant and very furious, and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain' and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them.

- Main lesson—it is not within man's ability to accomplish this request.
- It is unreasonable to make such a request of humans—but in desperation—Nebuchadnezzar is driven to an unreasonable demand. (Asking what only God can know)

Daniel 2:14-18

Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon; he answered and said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter. So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king. Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, in order that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

- Arioch—captain of the King's bodyguard (bodyguard=to slay/ He is chief executioner)
- Daniel asks for time—not to stall—but to hear from the Lord (You never know when a 'fasted life' is necessary—Daniel is prepared to hear from the Lord) . His immediate response—to turn to prayer—shows where his trust lies.
- Spiritual wisdom—is a highly developed sense of God's ways—learned through obedience to God's word—comes from understanding the Lord's word and His ways.
- Daniel was confident that His God could accomplish this unprecedented miracle. He desires that God would be glorified—not just that he would be spared.
- Daniel's friends join him in intercession—making their requests known to God (take note that their Hebrew names are used on this occasion)
- God of Heaven—perfect name to use among those who looked to the heavenlies (sun, moon, stars) for their counsel
- 'God of Heaven'- name for God only used in Books of exile/captivity: Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel

Daniel 2:19-23

Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; Daniel answered and said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. To Thee, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for Thou hast given me wisdom and power; even now Thou hast made known to me what we requested of Thee, for Thou hast made known to us the king's matter."

- Daniel responds to the gift of supernatural revelation with thanksgiving and praise ("Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever"=be constantly praised)
- He Who changes the times and epochs=governs all time and territories
- 2 gifts from God: wisdom and power belong to Him
- God determines times/seasons—events that will take place in the course of history

- Daniel acknowledges that he had partners in prayer
- His worship displayed His trust

Daniel 2:24-25

Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king's presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king." Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!"

- Arioch is quick to cooperate with communication from Daniel
- He takes credit for finding someone who can interpret

Daniel 2:26-28

The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?" Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians, nor diviners are able to declare it to the king. However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed."

- Daniel was known to the king as Belteshazzar
- Daniel immediately makes a distinction between wisdom of Babylon and wisdom of God (I Cor 1:20,25)
- This dream refers to the end of the 'times of the Gentiles'.
- The 'end of the times of the Gentiles'—runs concurrently with 'latter days' of nation of Israel—both come to their fulfillment during the great tribulation.
- Unlike Arioch—Daniel makes no mention of himself
- Daniel begins by saying same thing as wise men—man cannot know these things—only God.
- It is established that this vision concerns the future
- There is a God in heaven—different than manmade god and deified men—Daniel is basically telling Nebuchadnezzar that his empire's paganism is worthless.

Daniel 2:29-30

“As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place. But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

- Daniel is filled with Spirit of truth—speaks from Him
- God reveals multi-faceted wisdom—Ephesians 3:9-10
- Nebuchadnezzar plays a part in his great dream about 4 empires (their futures and his)
- Nebuchadnezzar had been pondering the future on his bed—sometimes our quests/thoughts begin to prepare us for the Lord to speak
- God wants to make the interpretation known to Nebuchadnezzar
- In this dream—God speaks of the outward glory of kingdoms—something that Nebuchadnezzar would understand.
- Nebuchadnezzar was an idolater—so God uses the imagery he will understand—not to be supportive/bless idolatry.
- Babylon was the source of pagan religion ever since the Tower of Babel—basis for heathen idols
- With the exile—Vision is given that the Lord is taking the scepter from line of David and giving it to the Gentile nations—until Christ returns.
- Nebuchadnezzar was first great world ruler—Adam was to have had dominion—but forfeited it

Daniel 2:31-35

“You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

- Brightness of vision—overwhelming/unprecedented
- Assortment of metals—but not mixed together
- This vision introduces the fore-ordained succession of world powers that will dominate until the final victory of Messiah in the last days.

- Vision—calculated to show Nebuchadnezzar his true smallness—to humble him before God Almighty
- Though Nebuchadnezzar is the 'head of gold'—in this vision he is only a spectator
- Great statue—described here without measurements—but later when statue is built, statue is 90 feet tall
- Each part—below head—less valuable/impressive
- Read Psalm 1:4-5 (verse 35)

Daniel 2:36-38

"This was the dream; now we shall tell its interpretation before the king. "You O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.

- We shall tell: God, Daniel, and three who prayed
- There are two ways that this section gets interpreted:

Roman View: (The one we will adopt)

Head of Gold—Nebuchadnezzar—Babylon

Arms/Chest of Silver—Medo-Persians Empire

Belly/thighs of Bronze—Greek Empire

Legs/Iron-----Roman Empire

Greek View:

Excludes Rome (not a world player at time of vision). They didn't see prophecy as predictive. They separate Medes and Persians into separate empires.

- In verse 36—Daniel moves from dream report to interpretation
- Imagine Nebuchadnezzar's response as he hears that he is preeminent
- Even though dream indicates that his empire will fall—for now he is on top
- Story is similar to Hezekiah—II Kings 20:19—during his reign there was peace and security/trouble for descendants
- Gold represents a king—other metals represent kingdoms/empires
- Interpretation of dream in chapter 2 is tied to vision of beasts in Daniel 7, and goat and ram in chapter 8
- Each successive kingdom is 'less than'---counter to thinking that humanity will continue to get better
- Nebuchadnezzar is given a kingdom—does nothing to achieve it

- His rule will continue for about 40 more years—until 562-560 BC—His empire only lasted 21 years after his death (fell to Persians in 539 BC)
- Jeremiah 27:5-11

Daniel 2:39

And after you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

- **Second Kingdom—Silver: Medo Persia (Cyrus the Great)**
Darius—brought Persian Empire to its Zenith—followed by Xerxes (464-424)—Darius (423-404)—Artaxerxes II (404-359)—Artaxerxes III (359-338)—Arses (338-336)—Darius III(336-331)
- **Third Kingdom—Bronze: Greco-Macedonian—Alexander the Great**
Invades Persia in 334
Crushed all resistance by 331
Extends borders from Yugoslavia to India

After Alexander dies in 323—land is divided among 4 generals

Antipater—Macedon and Greece

Lysimachus—Thrace and Asia Minor

Seleucus—Asia

Ptolemy—Egypt, Palestine, Cyrenaica

Greece overtaken by Rome in 146

Daniel 2:40-43

“Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. And in that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.

- Fourth Kingdom—strong as iron/shatters everything in its path
- Rome described as mixture of iron/clay—it will decay and crumble internally
- Rise and fall of this empire—not military or financial—but moral and spiritual
- Fourth Kingdom—stronger than previous kingdoms—tries to unite things that cannot coalesce

- No one conquered Roman Empire—it corrupted from within
- Psalm 2:8-9

In the vision of the statue—deterioration is communicated:

- 1) quality of metals
- 2) specific location of each metal
- 3) each metal less honorable than previous

Daniel 2:44-45

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy."

- Only God can reveal mysteries—He alone is the source of all wisdom
- Wisdom—not something achieved by human effort or prowess—but through abiding/submission/listening
- God's Kingdom—indestructible, infallible, all victorious, eternal
- That which is cut out of a mountain—becomes a mountain

Daniel 2:46-49

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery." Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king's court.

- When Nebuchadnezzar is overwhelmed with the interpretation—he worships Daniel
- We do not see Daniel rejecting or resisting this behavior
- Daniel's response contrasts with Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14: 8-20
- In verse 47—Nebuchadnezzar praises the power behind Daniel
- Nebuchadnezzar is a polytheist—willing to acknowledge the power of foreign deities

- We see in the closing verses—most powerful pagan in the world prostrating himself before a captive Jewish exile
- King is as extravagant with Daniel as he had promised previously to be ruthless if no interpretation is given.

Daniel Chapter Two-----Workbook

Project:

Pick one of the following books to read during the time it takes to finish chapter two: Jeremiah, Lamentations, or Ezekiel.

Harmonize:

What Old Testament passages instruct us concerning the kinds of counselors that Nebuchadnezzar turned to?

Dig:

- 1) What do we know about Nebuchadnezzar from reading chapter two?
- 2) What reward was there for interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream? What punishment would take place if they failed?
- 3) Who did Nebuchadnezzar ask to help interpret his dreams?
- 4) In Daniel 2:2—how are these types of people similar, and how do they differ in their work?
- 5) How would Nebuchadnezzar know if they interpreted his dream accurately?
- 6) What was Daniel's response when he learned that the wise men were to be slain?
- 7) How does Daniel go about interpreting the dream?

- 8) What does Daniel do first when he gets the interpretation?
- 9) What do you learn about gaining spiritual wisdom in chapter two?
- 10) Who establishes the kingdoms of the world? Why would they be given different values?
- 11) What do we learn about the Kingdom of God from chapter two?
- 12) What was Nebuchadnezzar's response to the interpretation of the dream?

Discuss:

- 1) Have you ever had a 'spiritual' dream? What set it apart from your other dreams?
- 2) Why would God give directions through a dream?
- 3) How are Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar similar to Joseph and Pharaoh?
- 4) What role did the prophets serve for Israel? Does the Lord still use prophets today? Is there a difference between those who speak prophetic words and the office of prophet?

Point of Prayer:

Pray for a Christian that you know who has been given a position of influence—whether with world leaders, local government, school boards, teachers, coaches, etc.

Integrate:

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

Application:

- 1) When world events take place—who do you tend to turn to in order to understand the event?
- 2) When you experience supernatural gifts—how have you learned to test them?
- 3) Jesus calls us to have eyes to see and ears to hear. How familiar are you with these spiritual capacities?
- 4) How has the Lord developed discernment in your life?
- 5) Do you watch the news? Why? Why not?
- 6) Do you recognize any areas in the world today that 'combine' but do not 'adhere' to each other?
- 7) Which part of the dream has not taken place yet? How does the church prepare for that transition?