

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream



Daniel 2

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Daniel 2:1-13

Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. ² Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. ³ And the king said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream."

⁴ Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation."

⁵ The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap. ⁶ However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation."

⁷ They answered again and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation."

⁸ The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm: ⁹ if you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation."

¹⁰ The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. ¹¹ It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

¹² For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave the command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. ¹³ So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.

What caused the king to lose sleep?

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and he was troubled because he knew in his spirit that it was important but did not know what it meant.

Why did the king want his wise men to tell him the dream instead of interpret it for him?

- Nebuchadnezzar didn't "forget" the dream, he was testing the wise men of Babylon
- Anybody could come up with a plausible interpretation of a dream but only those close to the "Dream Giver" could both know the dream and its true interpretation.

Why was the penalty for not satisfying the request of the king so harsh?

- It was the business of these wise men to be able to contact the divine and get secrets from the spirit realm
- The harsh posture of Nebuchadnezzar, as well as his method of execution, is perfectly consistent with an ancient eastern monarch

How did the wise men respond to the king?

The wise men tried to explain the impossibility of Nebuchadnezzar's request. The strategy of the wise men was to convince the king that he was being unreasonable, not that they were incompetent.

Why did God orchestrate this situation by giving the dream to Nebuchadnezzar?

What better way of:

- Revealing Himself to a pagan nation than through the Hebrew Prophet Daniel
- Emphasizing Daniel's abilities and importance to the Babylonian King
- Assuring the following generations that He is in control of nations and human affairs
- Demonstrating that the demonic capabilities of the astrologers, magicians, enchanters and sorcerers are limited in their abilities and are not God's messengers

God Reveals Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel 2:14-23

¹⁴ Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon; ¹⁵ he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel.

¹⁶ So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. ¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸ that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

²⁰ Daniel answered and said:

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
For wisdom and might are His.

²¹ And He changes the times and the seasons;
He removes kings and raises up kings;
He gives wisdom to the wise
And knowledge to those who have understanding.

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

²³ "I thank You and praise You,
O God of my fathers;
You have given me wisdom and might,
And have now made known to me what we asked of You,
For You have made known to us the king's demand."

How did Daniel respond when he learned of the king's decree to purge the wise men from Babylon?

- He appealed to the king to give him some time to satisfy his challenge to the wise men.
- Then he consulted with his compatriots soliciting them to join him in prayer about the situation.

How did God respond to their prayers?

Daniel received a "vision" from God that very night revealing both the dream and the interpretation.

What is the difference between a dream and a vision?

Daniel was awake to see the "vision"; a dream occurs when one is asleep

How did Daniel respond to God revealing the secret to him?

Daniel immediately praises God and thanks Him

What specific things did Daniel mention in his praise to God?

- He acknowledged His wisdom and might
- He is the authority behind all authorities
- He gives wisdom & knowledge to those seeking it
- He reveals secrets to His faithful
- He illuminates the darkness with His light – truth
- He answers intercessory prayer

Daniel Explains the Dream

Daniel 2:14-45

²⁴ Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation."

²⁵ Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation."

²⁶ 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?"

²⁷ Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. ²⁸ But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: ²⁹ As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. ³⁰ But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

³¹ "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. ³² This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

³⁶ “This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. ³⁷ You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; ³⁸ and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. ³⁹ But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. ⁴¹ Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic 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 fragile. ⁴³ As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. ⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. ⁴⁵ Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”

What did Daniel do with this “secret” knowledge God revealed to him?

He went to the executioner Arioch to tell him not to destroy the wise men because he knew the dream and its interpretation. And Arioch took him before the king.

Do you think the court magicians and astrologers ever thanked Daniel for saving their lives?

Probably not, jealousy is a powerful emotion.

How did Daniel respond to the king when he questioned whether he was “able” to describe the dream along with interpret it?

Daniel acknowledged that to do this was impossible for men no matter how wise they were, but there is a God in heaven who could.

What do we learn of Daniel’s character in his comments about God revealing secrets to him?

Daniel demonstrated honesty and integrity by not taking credit for knowing what God revealed to him

He made clear that God revealed it to him in a vision, not for his own sake but for the sake of his brethren and companions, who by their prayers helped him know the dream and its interpretation, so their lives might be saved from death.

So, what was the dream?

What Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was a giant Statue of a man representing five kingdoms which would become the future world empires.

- The “Head” was of Gold (the richest metal)
- The “Chest and Arms” were of silver (the next to gold in worth)
- The “Belly and Thighs” were of brass (still baser metal)
- The “Legs” were of iron (strongest of all the metals)
- The “Feet” were part Iron and Clay (Last Empire to be weakened by a mixture of strong iron and weak clay)

Daniel also saw a stone, not cut out by human hands, strike the statue on the feet and destroy them, thus causing the statue to fall and be totally destroyed

- The image became like chaff and was blown away!
- The “stone” however became like a giant mountain and filled the earth... the mountain symbolizes a kingdom

What was the interpretation of the dream?

The image represented the kingdoms of the earth that would successively rule the nations of the world (from Israel’s perspective)

What does the gold head represent?

Babylon

- represents absolute power with great wealth
- The Babylonian dynasty was from 626 – 539 BC King Nebuchadnezzar reigned 43 years, His son served as regent during his father’s seven years of madness. King Nabonidus was ruling from Arabia when Babylon was captured in 539 BC (Total of 87 years)

What does the silver chest and arms represent?

Medo-Persia

- “Inferior” meaning that the successor would not be so rich, powerful, or victorious as the Babylonian Empire
- The kingdom was founded by Darius the Mede and by Cyrus the Persian
- This monarchy lasted 208 years (538 – 330 BC)
- Cyrus was named in prophecy by Isaiah more than a century and a half before he was born (Isaiah 44:28)
- Cyrus authorized the return of the Jewish captives to Israel (Ezra 1:1-4)

What does the bronze belly and thighs represent?

Greece

- The Grecian monarchy was founded by Alexander the Great, who conquered Darius, the last of the Persian Emperors
- This kingdom of brass was inferior to the Persian monarchy in wealth and extent of dominion
- Alexander boasted that he had conquered the world, and then he sat down and wept because he had not another world to conquer. He was 33 years old when he died.
- Alexander's Empire was divided between his four Generals
- The Grecian Empire lasted 185 years (330 - 146 BC)
- The Hebrew Bible was translated into "koine" (everyday) Greek, known as the Septuagint (for 70 translators) was completed in 165 BC.

What does the iron legs represent?

Rome

- The Roman kingdom was strong as iron, defending itself against many enemies for ages
- In 364 A.D., Roman Emperor Constantine split the Roman Empire into East and West divisions with Rome the Western capital. The Goths defeated Rome in 476 AD.
- Constantinople (Turkey) became capital of the Eastern Roman Empire and morphed into the Byzantine Empire which was defeated by the Ottoman Turks in 1453 AD

What does the iron & clay feet represent?

The "Western Christian" and Eastern Muslim" nation-states that exist today

- Formed from the break-up of the Western Roman & Eastern Ottoman legs of the original Roman empire

What does the iron & clay toes represent?

The future empire of the Antichrist

- The "toes" correspond to the 10 horns of the "fourth beast" in Dan 7:23-24

What does the continuity of the iron in the feet and toes represent?

The Roman empire did not completely go away, it just fragmented into nation states that alternately cooperates and clashes with each other.

How is it that the iron and clay is mixed?

- Westerners have enclaves in Eastern nations as Easterners (Muslims) have enclaves in Western nations
- In general, Easterners and Westerners do not assimilate into each other's cultures, they do not mix despite there being plenty of mixed marriages where one spouse has

to essentially convert to the culture of the other for the marriage to work.

What does it mean, "*they will mingle with the seed of men*"?

- Another way to ask this question is, who is the "they"? This points back to the iron and clay kingdoms; while individual members of these kingdom intermarry, their cultures will not mix.
- Some say that the "they" refers to demons mixing it up with mankind as what happened during Noah's day and expected to happen again in the end times, "*as it were in the days of Noah.*" Yes, demons will mix it up with mankind but this isn't a reference to that...
- It is a category error to consider the clay to represent anything other than a Gentile kingdom that ruled over Jerusalem. (Same as all the other materials in the statue.)

What is this kingdom that will never be destroyed?

It is the Kingdom of Christ that will begin when Jesus returns to establish His Millennial Kingdom. This Kingdom will be superseded with the Eternal State when the 1,000 years are complete.

What is the significance of the stone not cut with human hands?

It represents a government that is of God, it is not of men.

Daniel and His Friends Promoted

Daniel 2:46-49

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. ⁴⁷ The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret." ⁴⁸ Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. ⁴⁹ Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

How did King Nebuchadnezzar respond to Daniel's interpretation of his dream?

- Nebuchadnezzar believed the interpretation because Daniel correctly described what the King dreamed
- Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that Daniel's God is the God of gods and Lord of lords.
- Nebuchadnezzar was so moved that he fell on his face and worshiped Daniel!

What reward did Daniel receive for interpreting the king's dream?

- The king promoted Daniel to a high position in the government and lavished him with gifts.
- Daniel was the leader over the entire province of Babylon and in charge of all the "wise" men
- Daniel's companions were also promoted
- The positions of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego allowed them to help and support their fellow captives and perhaps even help those Hebrews still in Israel

What impact do you think that Daniel ruling over the "wise" men have on them?

Some no-doubt were converted as seen by the wise men from Persia who sought out the Messiah when Jesus was born. But most likely doubled down on their occultic idolatry... pride is a powerful emotion that leads to destruction.

What applications do we see in this story today?

- God works best in human impossible situations
- Only God can declare the end from the beginning
- Today's geopolitical situation sets the stage for the coming iron & clay toe global government