

# Daniel: *Dual Book of History & Prophecy*

## Chapter 2 – King Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream

Daniel 2 and 7 present a prophetic, comprehensive view of history from 600 B.C. to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.

### The King’s Dream and Demand to Have it Interpreted (Verses 1-13)

**1-3** During the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, the king had a particularly troubling dream, so he summoned all of his “wise men” to determine what the dream was and what it meant.

As described in the Bible, dreams have been a common way for God to communicate specific messages to specific people <sup>Genesis 20:3, 28:12, 31:11,24, 37:5, 40:9,16, 41:1, 1 Kings 3:5, Daniel 4:5, Matthew 1:20, 2:12-13,19,22, 27:19</sup>.

This is the only time in Daniel where all of Nebuchadnezzar’s advisory groups (magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers) are mentioned in one place. Many times one or more of these groups are referred to <sup>Daniel 2:4,5,10, 3:8, 4:7,9, 5:7, 11:15</sup>; however, most of the time they are simply referenced by the abbreviated title: “wise men” <sup>Daniel 2:12-14,18,24,48, 4:6,18, 5:7-8,15</sup> of Babylon.

A possible reason for all of the advisory groups being mentioned is that Nebuchadnezzar may have wanted them all there with him to give him the greatest chance of his dream being interpreted correctly and/or he may not have trusted these advisors he had inherited from his father (King Nabopolassar) and he saw this situation as a perfect opportunity to test all of the advisors.

A more literal translation of the Hebrew word shown in the NIV1984 as “astrologers” is “Chaldeans”. This word is used in the OT for both a place name (the “Ur of the Chaldeans”, which was probably in the area of present day Kuwait and the place where Abram and Sarai were from <sup>Genesis 11:27-31a</sup>) and a title of people who claimed to be able to ascertain information from carefully studying the stars.

**4** The astrologers (Chaldeans) spoke to the king for the advisors in Aramaic (this begins the Aramaic section of the book <sup>Daniel 2:4b-7:28</sup>). They began with a common laudatory greeting for the king: “O king, live forever!” <sup>Daniel 3:9, 5:10, 6:21</sup>, and then said they would be glad to interpret the dream just as soon as King Nebuchadnezzar shared the dream with them.

**5-6** The king, however, “firmly decided” <sup>Genesis 41:32</sup> the wise men must first tell him what the dream was and then he would listen to the interpretation. In fact, as a “motivator”, the king told his advisors if they could not do as he required, he was going to kill them all and destroy their homes <sup>Ezra 6:11</sup>. On the plus side, he offered “gifts and rewards and great honor” to any of his advisors who could both describe and interpret the dream correctly.

**7-9** The wise men continued to press Nebuchadnezzar to describe the dream for them; however, the king recognized their efforts to stall (buy time) in order to figure out what to do next, because he already told them his ‘firm decision’ <sup>v.5</sup>. The king’s distrust of the “wise men” was evident (“You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things...”), and led to his deciding the need for this very wise test. He recognized that any intelligent person who knew the dream could make up ‘an’ explanation, but what he desired was ‘the correct’

## Daniel 2

interpretation, and the king knew that whoever had an 'information source' who could provide the details of the dream would also be able to render the appropriate interpretation.

**10-11** The astrologers again acted as the spokesmen for the group of advisors by responding to King Nebuchadnezzar with absolutely true statements reflecting the bankruptcy of human wisdom in the face of supernatural issues <sup>Isaiah 41:21-24</sup>: "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks!" and "No one can reveal it to the king except the gods...". They also took a great risk (although they were already facing a death sentence) by confronting the king with his unprecedented request to be told both the dream and the interpretation.

**12-13** The king became furious <sup>Daniel 3:13,19</sup>, because he recognized the impudence, as well as the hypocrisy, of the wise men, so he decided to immediately follow through on his threat to execute them <sup>v.5</sup>. The king's decree of death was going to be applied to all of the "wise men" of Babylon, including Daniel and his three "friends" (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego).

### Daniel Offers to Interpret the Dream, then He Prays (Verses 14-23)

**14-16** The king's commander of the guard (Arioch) was sent to fulfill the decree of killing all of the king's wise men. In carrying out his responsibilities, Arioch approached Daniel, because he was considered one of the wise men. Not having been in the palace when the king spoke to the other advisors, Arioch explained what took place. In spite of the proclaimed death sentence, Daniel responded with calmness and wisdom, including inquiring why the king's decree was so "harsh". As the assistant to a vicious king, it was not normal for Arioch to delay carrying out King Nebuchadnezzar's decree, so his heart had to have been softened by the Holy Spirit and by Daniel's calm demeanor. As a result, Daniel was allowed to approach the king. Because of His deep faith and trust in God, Daniel was confident God knew the dream and its meaning, and believed God had a continuing plan for his life, so he requested that King Nebuchadnezzar give him some time to learn the dream and its interpretation.

**17-18** After the king agreed to his request, Daniel withdrew to his home to pray. He explained the situation to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and implored them to join him in prayer for the true God (the "God of Heaven" <sup>Genesis 24:7, Ezra 1:2, 6:10, 7:12,21, Nehemiah 1:5, 2:4, Psalm 136:26</sup>), in His mercy <sup>Job 9:15</sup>, to reveal the mystery (the dream and interpretation), so that they would be saved <sup>Psalm 31:15</sup> from the injustice <sup>Luke 18:1-8</sup> of the decree of King Nebuchadnezzar. Later, however, it became clear these young men were willing to die for their faith <sup>Daniel 3,6</sup>.  
*A mystery is something God keeps hidden until His perfect timing* <sup>Ephesians 1:7-10, 3:7-12, Colossians 1:25-27</sup>.

**19-23** God honored the prayers of the four young men by showing the dream and its meaning to Daniel in a vision <sup>Acts 16:9</sup> during the night. Daniel offered a hymn of praise to God <sup>Psalm 113</sup> for His mercy and grace in response to their prayers. First, Daniel recognized God's eternal nature <sup>1 Chronicles 29:10</sup>, and His omniscience & omnipotence <sup>Job 12:16-22</sup>. Second, Daniel applauded God's power & sovereignty. Third, Daniel acknowledged God's comprehensive

## Daniel 2

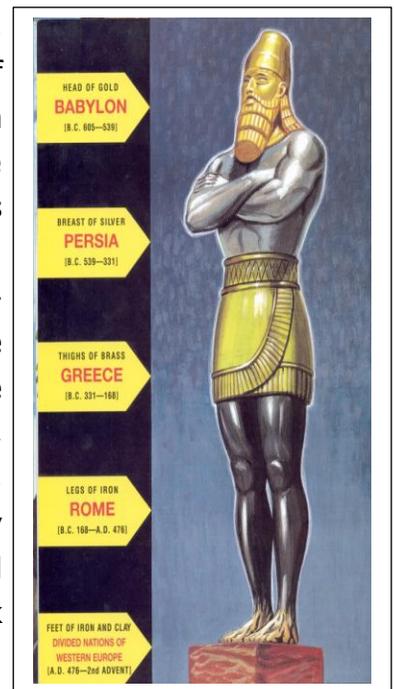
insight (heavenly wisdom <sup>Job 12:12-13</sup>) and His being the essence of truth. Last, Daniel gave thanks <sup>1 Corinthians 15:57</sup> (an attitude of gratitude) for God's provision of answering the prayers. Daniel's hymn of praise is a summary theme for the entire book: *God is Sovereign* <sup>Jeremiah 32:17-23</sup>. In praising "the name of God" <sup>Psalms 113:2, Philippians 2:5-11</sup>, Daniel was speaking of the character of God.

### Daniel Tells the King the Dream and Its Meaning (Verses 24-45)

**24-26** Daniel followed protocol by going back to Arioch, telling him not to proceed with the executions and proclaiming his ability to meet the requirements of the king's demands. Being confident in Daniel and wanting to gain favor with the king, Arioch decided to take credit for discovering Daniel's ability to interpret the dream. Perhaps with a bit of skepticism, the king asked "Belteshazzar" directly if he could describe the dream and its interpretation. Daniel's poise in calmly telling Arioch "Do not execute the wise men..." revealed Daniel's confidence that the hand of God was upon him <sup>2 Chronicles 32:12</sup>.

**27-30** Daniel echoed the earlier statement of the wise men <sup>v.10</sup> about this being impossible for man <sup>Genesis 41:8</sup>. As any faithful servant of God would do, Daniel gave God the glory by admitting the dream and interpretation was from the "God in heaven" (with an implication that the dream did not come from the god of the Babylonians). David told the king that while he was on his bed the "revealer of mysteries" <sup>Genesis 40:8, 41:16</sup> disclosed to him "what will happen in the days to come" (the future) <sup>Genesis 49:1, Daniel 10:14, Matthew 24:6, Revelation 1:1, 22:6</sup>. In his humility, Daniel made it clear that he was only being God's messenger to the king, because God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know the truth about the dream.

**31-35** Daniel began to describe the king's dream of "an enormous, dazzling statue" (the immense size of the statue was an implication of the great power it represented). Daniel explained the statue had a head made of "pure gold", the chest and arms made of silver, and the belly and thighs made of bronze. Continuing, he described the legs as made of iron and the feet made of both iron and pottery (baked clay). Daniel then told the king he had dreamed a rock was formed by non-human (supernatural) hands, and the rock "struck" the feet of the statue and "smashed them" <sup>Job 34:24</sup>. Daniel continued by saying the rock destroyed the entire statue of gold, silver, bronze, iron & clay, with the pieces <sup>Psalms 2:9</sup> being as "chaff on a threshing floor" (a hard, flat surface used to separate grain from the husks <sup>Ruth 3:2</sup>, also used by John the Baptist to describe the judgement of mankind <sup>Luke 3:15-17</sup>). All of the statue pieces (the chaff) were blown away <sup>Psalms 1:4</sup>, but the rock became an enormous mountain <sup>Micah 4:1</sup> and "filled the whole earth".



There are obvious trends from top to bottom in the statue's materials: (1) they decreased in value (from gold to clay) and increased in strength (from gold to iron; however, the clay was the weakest). Nebuchadnezzar was in silent awe of Daniel's speech, so Daniel continued with the interpretation.

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## Daniel 2

**36** Daniel said the dream description was finished and “we” were ready to give the meaning.

Some scholars interpret “we” to mean Daniel and God, but having already admitted all the information came from God, it seems apparent the “we” is a term of humility, referring to Daniel and his friends.

**37-45** Daniel explained to Nebuchadnezzar that “the God of heaven” <sup>v.18</sup> had given him great worldly power as the “king of kings”. The king was informed he was the “head of gold”, and had been granted immense responsibility as the earthly sovereign ruler <sup>Jeremiah 27:6-7</sup> over man, beast and birds. However, there would be a second less-powerful (“inferior”) kingdom following after his kingdom (most scholars believe this was referring to the Persian or Medo-Persian Empire <sup>Daniel 7:5,8:20</sup>). Daniel described the next (third) empire as powerful “over the whole earth” (the Greek Empire <sup>Daniel 7:6,8:21-22</sup>). Finally, Daniel detailed a fourth kingdom that would smash everything/everybody around it (the Roman Empire <sup>Daniel 7:7</sup>). The ten toes represented a divided kingdom (generally believed to be in the time of the Tribulation, when the Antichrist will lead a coalition of ten kings <sup>Daniel 7:23-25, Revelation 17:12-13</sup>). This divided kingdom was said to be somewhat strong, but very brittle (easily broken apart). Daniel explained there will be great unrest in this 10-toed kingdom <sup>Revelation 17:14</sup>. However, the kings will be replaced by an eternal kingdom led by Christ and His people <sup>Daniel 7:26-27</sup>. The divinely created rock (Jesus Christ <sup>1 Corinthians 10:3-4</sup>) will completely destroy the world dominions <sup>Psalms 110:5, 1 Corinthians 15:24, Revelation 18</sup> and will produce the final (and eternal) kingdom <sup>Psalms 145:13, Revelation 11:15</sup>. Daniel closed his report to King Nebuchadnezzar with a reminder that God was the source of all the information, and so therefore it could be trusted.

There are only three people who are described in the Bible as a “king of kings” (1) Artaxerxes: In his letter to Ezra, permitting him to return to Jerusalem (along with other Israelites who wanted to go), Artaxerxes proclaimed himself “king of kings” <sup>Ezra 7:12</sup>; (2) Nebuchadnezzar: God, through both Ezekiel <sup>Ezekiel 26:7</sup> and Daniel <sup>v.37</sup>, proclaimed Nebuchadnezzar “king of kings” as a way of denoting him as the most powerful earthly king who ever lived (including the given power to defeat the Israelites of the Southern Kingdom of Judah 3 times and destroy the city of Jerusalem); and (3) Jesus Christ: Jesus was proclaimed “King of kings” and “Lord of lords” three times <sup>1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14, 19:16</sup>, which signified His eternal predominance over all the earthly and heavenly powers.

The phrase “whole earth” in verse 39 refers to the Greek Empire, which had a greatest extent from Greece to India. This is one of many examples in the Bible where the phrase “whole earth” refers to the extent of the civilized world, and not to the entire globe, as most people tend to assume.

### The King Honored Daniel and Praised Daniel’s God (Verses 46-49)

**46-47** Nebuchadnezzar was awed by Daniel, and fell face down in respect before him <sup>Acts 10:25</sup>, proclaiming Daniel’s “God is the God of gods” <sup>Deuteronomy 10:17</sup> & the “revealer of mysteries”.

**48-49** In honoring his promise to reward the person who told him “the dream and interpret it”, King Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel ruler over the “entire province of Babylon” <sup>Genesis 41:39-40</sup>, including all of the other wise men. And, at Daniel’s suggestion, the king also made Daniel’s three friends (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) administrators over the Babylon province.

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