

Notes on Daniel Chapter 2

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Notes

Daniel 2:1

History Revealed -- Vision 1: The Sequence of the Kingdoms

Nebuchadnezzar's dream, related here in Chapter 2, is highly predictive in nature and reveals the entire scope of future history beginning with Nebuchadnezzar himself. Why did God give this dream to Nebuchadnezzar? The rest of the prophetic dreams and visions of the book of Daniel were given directly to Daniel himself. Why give this first prophetic dream to a bloodthirsty, pagan king? We must remember that God is a multitasker. Here are some of the threads He was working on:

1) God's nature is to choose, as people through whom He wants to work, individuals who tend to be rejected and discounted ([1 Cor 1:26-29](#)). Who was the most unlikely person in Babylon for God to speak to in such a direct manner? Nebuchadnezzar.

2) This was the beginning of God's mission of winning Nebuchadnezzar, bringing him to a place of faith and submission to Himself.

3) He was creating an opportunity to place Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in places of influence within the Babylonian government.

4) This was the first in a series of seven dreams (the rest given to Daniel himself) that, when viewed together, give us a picture of what world history looks like from God's perspective. Many of the features of these dreams are now a matter of historical fact and teach us much about God's nature, how He views world events, and how He directs history. Understanding that perspective continues to help us as we continue to wait for the rest of Daniel's prophesies to be revealed in reality.

Daniel 2:1

second year of his reign – Nebuchadnezzar was just getting started at being a king. The transition between him and his father must have happened around or shortly after the first or second time he conquered Jerusalem. (Jerusalem was conquered four times by the Babylonians: 605 BC, 602 BC likely when Daniel was deported, 597 BC, and 586 BC when the city was completely destroyed.)

More Study: Read up on the history of the Babylonian Empire.

Daniel 2:3

I have had a dream – Clearly there was something different about this dream that clued Nebuchadnezzar in that it was not just the ordinary, random images most dreams are made of. This dream had a message and he knew it. Anyone who has ever had a prophetic dream understands what he was experiencing.

Daniel 2:4

Tell your servants the dream and we will give the interpretation – These guys were mostly charlatans and some of them likely knew it. The rest relied on demons to direct their activity. They were game to give the dream interpretation a go, but they didn't have a rabbit's chance in a coyote den of actually getting to the real message of the dream. The dream came from God and only God could reveal it.

Daniel 2:5

make known the dream to me – So, was Nebuchadnezzar's demand made because he didn't really trust his "wise men" or was he having trouble remembering the dream? My guess is both. The memory of dreams often fades quickly and Nebuchadnezzar may have only had a troubling impression of it left in his mind. So, he may have reasoned that if his wise men really did have the supernatural connections they claimed they had, they should be able to recall the details for him. That's not bad logic, really. Given the belief system he and all Babylonians adhered to, it wasn't all that unreasonable a request. Note, too, that Nebuchadnezzar was only a couple of years into his reign and these wise men were probably mostly inherited from his father. Most likely he was still sorting out who could be trusted amongst his advisors and may have been wanting to clean house.

Torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a garbage dump – Hand absolute power to someone who is immature and also has an uncontrolled temper, and nastiness happens. Add to that the practices of a barbaric society and this was no idle threat. No matter that the demand was impossible, these guys all had severely limited lifetimes.

Daniel 2:9

You have conspired – Here's more evidence that Nebuchadnezzar had trust issues with his advisors.

Tell me the dream and I will know you can give me its interpretation – And still more evidence that Nebuchadnezzar didn't trust these guys.

Daniel 2:12

gave a command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon – If Nebuchadnezzar was looking for an excuse to clean house, he was getting his wish. Still, given his impetuous nature, even the good guys like Daniel were in danger.

Daniel 2:14

Daniel responded with tact and discretion – Notice that Daniel didn't collapse in fear or start begging for his life. His courage was based on his trust in God. His life was and always had been in God's hands and he was content with what God worked out. Daniel also knew that God had placed him and his friends as leaders in the government for a purpose. Getting killed because Nebuchadnezzar was throwing a tantrum didn't really fit into that purpose. Daniel knew God was bigger than Nebuchadnezzar.

More Study: What was God's purpose for placing Daniel and friends in places of political power?

Daniel 2:15

he asked Arioch – Clearly Daniel had a good relationship with Arioch. It may be that Arioch sought out Daniel first, before the killing started, because he wanted to give Daniel a chance to deal with the situation. Indeed, it is even possible that Arioch had become a believer in Yahweh. Thus, Daniel and friends were fulfilling God's stated purpose for Israel to be a light to the Gentiles ([Gen 12:3](#) ; [Is 49:6](#)).

Daniel 2:16

asked the king to give him some time -- While the king clearly did not trust the bulk of his advisors and wise men, he did look with favor on Daniel and granted him the time he asked for. Nebuchadnezzar was wanting to clear out the bureaucracy and get rid of the "wise" men and magicians, some of whom were likely plotting against him. A big part of his plan had been to replace them with this new crop of trainees from Judah, Daniel and his friends being the cream of that crop. His temper, of course, threatened to destroy them all, the good with the bad, as his order to destroy the wise men of Babylon was all-inclusive! He was, so to speak, shooting himself in the foot.

Daniel 2:24

Daniel went to to Arioch – I find Arioch to be an interesting person. He was the commander of the King's guard, but was not, as one would expect, a bloodthirsty man. He would have carried out his orders to kill all the wise men, but before beginning the slaughter, he took time to seek an alternative. Nebuchadnezzar was lucky to have him on his staff.

Daniel 2:27

the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the King – Daniel is making a distinction between the astrologers magicians and soothsayers and himself with his three friends. The King needed to understand that Daniel's supernatural knowledge came from a different source – God.

Daniel 2:30

in order that...you may understand the thoughts of your mind -- It is an easy thing to take this episode, this dream given to the king, as being focused on Daniel and his three friends, but that isn't the case. It wasn't even about God developing the government of Babylon in such a way the Jews were favored. That favor *did* happen, Nebuchadnezzar's government was decidedly pro-semitic. However, as important as that was, that was not what this episode was all about. In a very, very clear statement Daniel points out that this dream was all about King Nebuchadnezzar gaining understanding. This was God's first step with Nebuchadnezzar, drawing him into relationship with Himself. God was reaching out in love to a vicious, idolatrous and murderous king, drawing him to salvation. This vision was step one.

Our sakes (NKJV) – Like God's promise to Abram to spare Sodom if only 10 righteous men were found in that city (reference), God spared the entire cadre of pagan wise men for the sake of Daniel and his friends. God's mercy is great!

Daniel 2:31

its appearance was terrifying – It was frightening? Why? It may not have been the statue's physical appearance that was frightening. This was a dream and dream imagery always comes with emotional context attached. (Think about the dreams you have experienced. Always, it is the emotions of the dream that make it significant, not just the images.) Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue was a snapshot of future human history. It was an overview of all the mayhem, sin, hatred, and slaughter that mankind can and would produce. So, yes, it was frightening.

Daniel 2:32

gold...silver...bronze...iron – Notice the progression. The materials used in the statue decrease in value as one proceeds down the list. Yet at the same time they increase in strength. They are inversely proportional when one compares their value to their strength.

More Study: Look up the tensile strength of each of the materials mentioned. A different pattern may emerge.

Daniel 2:34

without a hand touching it – No hand touched it because the stone is Christ. Salvation does not come by the hand of man or through the works of law. Salvation comes through Christ and Him only. The hand of man will never work salvation for anyone. The various kingdoms represented by the statue in the dream represent what man can do. One touch from the stone of Christ points out how man's works never last, but the Kingdom of Christ – made by Him and Him alone – will last forever.

Daniel 2:35

filled the whole earth – There is a "now and then" aspect to this concept. The kingdom of Christ has been established and he rules as king over all of creation now. We do not have to wait to see his rule extended over all the earth because *He rules now*. However, the kingdom of God is still growing and expanding to cover all the earth. At this writing that process is nearly complete. Except for a few pockets of unreached people (people groups whom the missionaries are avidly seeking out), the whole world has heard the gospel of Christ preached to them in clear terms. The stone has grown to fill the whole earth. Yet, at the same time, we are *waiting* for the kingdom of God to grow and fill the whole earth, avidly longing to see it in its completion. So, the kingdom of God is now and yet we are waiting for that time to come when Satan and his angels have been destroyed, sin is no more, and we can walk in the joy and peace of the kingdom of God without interference. The kingdom of God is now and then.

Daniel 2:47

Your God is indeed God of god's, Lord of Kings – For Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge Yahweh in this way is huge! Still, Nebuchadnezzar's move into true faith was only just beginning. He still had a long ways to go.

Author's Note: I've been taking notes on the book of Daniel for along time and have changed my methods over the years. Currently, I use a Bible study program that comes from Logos.com, and, since most of my Bible reading is now done on my tablet using their mobile app, it is an easy thing to simply dictate my notes, attaching them to the verse I'm currently reading. It wasn't always that way. Below is an outline of a portion of Daniel Chapter 2 that I took the old-fashioned way, typing it into an old version of Microsoft Word. That outline did not copy over well, into this document. I did a little formatting (but not much) to try and help it out, but it still has it's problems. I hope you aren't too bothered by that.

Dreams & Visions of the Book of Daniel

I. The Multi-Metal Statue

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.”***

A. This is an overview of history.

1. It's all in the future for Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, but is mostly in the past for us now.
2. Note that the vision ends when the "Stone cut without hands" – Jesus – destroys it all and becomes the Kingdom of God. This is really strong support for our time being the end of the ages.
 - a) The Roman Empire had its split into Eastern & Western empires (the two legs of iron) and both of those have fallen. Only the feet are left. The world, like it or not, is dominated by Western civilization and that civilization is very well-described by "iron and clay, mixed". Never in history has there ever been a stronger world-ruling power than that of what we now call the "First World".
 - (1) Note also that the Iron-Legged empire broke and trampled underfoot all that it conquered. This also typifies the character of the Western powers.
 - (a) Just ask the nations conquered by Britain when she built her empire on which "the sun never sets". They certainly could accurately describe the actions of their conquerors as "grinding underfoot". The other European nations did likewise. Consider the opinion of the Native American tribes – none could stand before the "grinding" power of the European civilization that conquered this continent.
3. Yet, even while possessing irresistible, grinding power, the First World nations are fragile. Whereas Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar was unified and strong under a single monarch (note also that Gold has amazing tensile strength) Western civilization is not even remotely unified being a conglomeration of sovereign nations.

a) Contrasting with all this is the fact that Western civilization, while being strong and conquering all in its path, is also the only ruling system ever to be underpinned and founded on godly principles and the truths of Christianity.

(1) This “grinding conqueror” picture that history gives us and the under girding foundation of Christian thought and principles are quite contradictory. How does this fit in?

B. The Stone & the “millennial” eschatologys

1. Pre-millennial – strong support

a) This one’s easy. Jesus returns at the end of the age and establishes the Kingdom of God that fills the whole earth and lasts a whole millennium.

2. Post-millennial – some support

a) Post-millennialists will focus on how the Stone that crushed the statue’s feet became the Kingdom of God that filled the whole earth. They will interpret this as beginning with Christ’s work on the cross with the Kingdom of God growing through the ages until it conquers and rules the whole earth. Christ through the church “crushes” the current world order and the world is ruled by Christians. To the post-millennialist the image of the rock that filled the whole earth represents the church as she replaces the secular world with theocratic rule. Thus the millennium remains the current church age and all ends at Christ’s return.

b) Note that I am still shaky on my understanding of the Post-millennial viewpoint.

3. A-millennial – strong support

a) Christ, the stone cut without hands, on His advent took dominion over the earth. That dominion has, during the church age (the millennium of Revelation), been growing ever since. On His second return He will crush the last of the human governments and then, in the New Heaven and New Earth, continue to reign forever.

Extra Study: Study out the properties of the metals of the image and see how they fit in with the dream’s interpretation. Value decreases while the utility, strength & potential for doing good increases. Pay special attention to the property of “tensile strength”. That property may follow a different pattern.

C. The Empire Sequence *Daniel 2:27-45*

1. Babylonian/(Assyrian) Empire

a) Vs. 32 – The head of gold

(1) Note that the Babylonians took over the old Assyrian Empire and expanded it.

(2) This was a kingdom of great glory. There is an emphasis on the absolute authority of Nebuchadnezzar's monarchy. Emphasis is also placed on identifying Nebuchadnezzar as the head of gold itself.

(a) Babylon faded quickly after Nebuchadnezzar died.

2. Medo/Persian Empire

a) Vs. 32 – The Chest and arms of Silver

(1) There is really no commentary on this empire except to point out it's inferiority to Babylon.

(2) It's important to note that Daniel also had much to do with this empire and it was Cyrus, the establishing conqueror, who ordered the return of the Israeli people to Jerusalem.

3. Greek Empire

a) Vs. 32 The belly & thighs of Bronze

(1) Again there is no commentary except to say that it will rule over all the earth.

(2) Notes

(a) The Greek Empire was short-lived because it was dependent on Alexander's power and character.

(b) Alexander's passion was for the spread of Greek culture and he attempted to Hellenize the territories he conquered.

- (c) Of the four components into which the Greek empire broke up after Alexander's death the Seleucids (Centered in Syria at Antioch) and the Ptolemys (centered in Egypt) had the most influence on Israel
 - (d) Wars between the northern and southern Greeks and repeated attempts at forcing Hellenization on the Israeli people, caused the biggest conflicts concerning Israel.
- (3) Note that the bronze encompassed the belly and thighs – was there a division represented by the two thighs? Alexander's Empire split into four components, not two. However, the Seleucids and Ptolemys were by far the more dominant.

4. Roman Empire

a) Vs. 33 – Legs of Iron

- (1) Commentary is sparse and focuses on the strength of this empire and how it will “crush” all the others.
- (2) The strength of Rome established the “Pax Romana” which allowed Christianity to spread across the known world. The two legs are usually taken to represent the Eastern and Western components into which the empire split, but that split didn't happen until late in the life of the empire.

5. The Fifth World Order

a) Vs. 33 – Feet of iron and clay mixed

- (1) The iron makes a connection between the legs (representing the Roman Empire) and this fifth “empire”.
- (2) The usual interpretation is that the feet & toes are divided remnants of the Roman empire. They are characterized by an inability to adhere together well.
 - (a) This is a very good description of the Western nations. Growing up out of the remnants of the fallen Roman Empire. While they share western (Judeo-Christian based) culture they don't always stick together well.

- (b) Don't get stuck on the 10 toes and try to put national names to them. The number 10, in Hebrew numerology, represents governing authority. That's the focus, not on the number of nations involved.

D. The Stone Cut Without Hands – Vs. 34-35

1. Vs. 44 Interpreted as God's kingdom
2. Question: Just how is the "Stone" going to break up the empires of men?
 - a) Through literal establishment of a kingdom ruled by Christ on earth?
Or
 - b) Through the establishment of the Kingdom of God and through the success of the church in preaching the gospel?
Or
 - c) Both