

As the story goes, a West Texas cowboy applied for life insurance and was asked by the agent if he had ever had any accidents during the last year – and the conversation goes like this:

“No, never had an accident.”

“You mean nothing has ever happened to you? You’ve never been hurt?”

“Oh sure,” said the cowboy. “Once I was bitten by a rattlesnake, and a bucking bronco threw me and broke my arm.”

“And you wouldn’t call those accidents?”

“Certainly not,” said the cowboy. “They did it on purpose.”

There are no accidents with God. He works according to His purpose and plan, and as we have already seen, and will see again – God is behind the scenes and He controls the scenes He is behind.

If you recall from last week, because of God’s judgment against His wayward people, the southern kingdom of Judah was subdued and the capital city of Jerusalem was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. In their conquest, the king ordered that some of the best and the brightest of Judah be deported to Babylon, and of these was a teenager named Daniel and three of his friends – taken to begin a three-year indoctrination process in the Babylonian way of life so that they may serve the king.

So, with that, if you have your Bible, turn to **Daniel 2** and we will begin with **verse 1**.

Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.

Either during the final moments of their three-year indoctrination process or maybe very soon after graduation, we are told that King Nebuchadnezzar had dreams – dreams that disturbed him and caused him to be restless in his sleep.

Now, you might be wondering why I would suggest that Daniel and his friends could be done with their three-year indoctrination process when we are told this is only the **second year** of the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. Well, Daniel is using a Babylonian reckoning of time, and a Babylonian king did not count the first year of his reign. It was called the *year of ascension*, so, in reality, three years have actually come and gone and Daniel and his friends are likely done with the indoctrination process or very close to being done.

Anyway, here is the ruler of the known world, his enemies are vanquished, he is secure on the throne, from a worldly stand point he has everything he could ever want, but he's having this reoccurring dream – apparently an unsettling dream about what comes next. Now with a little bit of hindsight on our part, we know this is God's doing, and God will use this to thrust His faithful servant Daniel before the king. So, let's continue beginning with **verse 2**.

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.

The king was determined to have his dreams interpreted, and so he summoned an interesting group of wise men to do it. Of this group, there were the **magicians** who were the scribes that wrote their religious literature. There were the **conjurers** who communicated with the dead – they were the mediums of their day. There were the **sorcerers** who performed incantations and spells probably under the influence of a mind-altering drug, and then there were the **Chaldeans** who were the astrologers. So, this is an interesting group of wise men standing before the king, but notice that Daniel and his friends are not among them.

Then beginning with **verse 3**, the king's dream becomes a nightmare for these wise men. We are told,

³The king said to them, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream." ⁴Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation." ⁵The king replied 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. ⁶But 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." ⁷They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation." ⁸The king replied, "I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm, ⁹that 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." ¹⁰The 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. ¹¹ 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.” ¹² Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

King Nebuchadnezzar says to his wise men, tell me my dream, and then after that, give me its interpretation, and if you do, I will reward you with great wealth and honor, but if you don't, you will be torn from limb to limb, cut into little pieces and your homes will be turned into trash heaps.

The king was thinking, **if they can't tell me the dream, then how can I trust their interpretation?** The king knew his wise men would just make up something to save their skins – they would tell him exactly what they thought he wanted to hear, but when pressed, the wise men had to confess they got nothing for him, they can't tell the king his dream, in fact, they say the no one can.

Well, in the king's eyes they were nothing but phonies. The king is livid with their excuses and their protests, and he decrees that all the wise men of Babylon be executed and their homes destroyed. So, it looks really bad, but remember this is God's doing, and all of this sets the stage for Daniel beginning with **verse 13**.

¹³ So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them. ¹⁴ 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; ¹⁵ he 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, ¹⁸ so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel wasn't among the wise men who stood before the king – he was innocent, but that didn't matter. Even as new Jewish graduates, now maybe 17 or 18 years old, Daniel and his three friends were counted among the wise men of Babylon and they were also subject to this decree of death by the king.

We are told that **Arioch** goes to Daniel's living quarters to drag him out. Daniel seems to know why Arioch is there, but he doesn't freak out, instead with a *cool head* he calmly asks why the decree from the king was so harsh and so urgent.

Arioch explained what had happened, and then he allowed Daniel to have a moment with Nebuchadnezzar. No doubt, the king remembered that Daniel was an exceptional student – graduated with top honors, ten times better than all of his wise men of Babylon – he's different from the others, he's confident, and so the king may have thought that Daniel deserved an opportunity to reveal the dream and its interpretation.

Daniel asked for some extra time, and it's granted, and with this extra time Daniel does the only thing he can do – he turns to God in prayer. This is some serious prayer for Daniel and his friends who join him, and sure enough, Daniel gets his answers, and his prayer turns into a song of praise beginning with **verse 19**.

19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; 20 Daniel said,

**“Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,
For wisdom and power belong to Him.**

**21 “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.**

**22 “It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things;
He knows what is in the darkness,
And the light dwells with Him.**

**23 “To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise,
For You have given me wisdom and power;
Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You,
For You have made known to us the king's matter.”**

In his praise, Daniel acknowledged that God is behind the scenes and controls the scenes He is behind. Daniel also gives credit where credit is due, for he did not figure out the dream, instead God **revealed** it to him. It all came from God, and that's what Daniel explains to the king beginning with **verse 24**.

24 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.” ²⁵ 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!” ²⁶ The king 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 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. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ 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.

So, before the executions begin, Daniel goes to **Airoch** and tells him he has what King Nebuchadnezzar wants and Daniel is quickly taken him. The king asks, “Do you know my dream and can you interpret it?” to which Daniel replies,

“There is no wise man anywhere who is able to do what you want, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries and secrets, and He has shown you what will happen in the latter days, because that’s what you were worried about as you lay in your bed at night – yes, I know that too O King, and God has revealed it all to me.”

“**But there is a God in heaven**” – words the king needed to hear, and words we need to remember. In the craziness of this world, when everything seems upside down and inside out, when right is wrong and wrong is right, when things don’t make sense, when the wise men can’t help, when there are more questions than answers – there is a God in heaven.

So, here is the king’s dream beginning with **verse 31**,

³¹ “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. ³² The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze,

³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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.

You looked, O king, and there before you stood this colossal and dazzling statue presented to you in human form. It was awesome. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay like pottery.

While you were looking at this statue, a stone that was not cut out by human hands, struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them, then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken into pieces at the same time and they became like chaff on a threshing floor. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace, but the stone that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

I can only imagine that the king, who is likely seated on his throne, is now leaning forward towards Daniel and saying to himself, *“I’m finally going to get a truthful answer. Daniel knows the dream”* – and just so you know, it’s a dream about the Gentile empires who will rule the known world up to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ – empires which will follow one another in succession, empires that will decrease in glory yet increase in might symbolized by the various types of metals, and keep in mind that when Nebuchadnezzar dreamed his dream, these empires who follow the Babylonian Empire were just blips on the radar.

So, with our advantage of known history, let’s take a look at the interpretation of the dream beginning with **verse 36**, and I am only going to touch on these empires briefly because we will see them later in this book. Daniel says,

³⁶ “This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king.

³⁷ 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; ³⁸ 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. ³⁹After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

⁴⁰ 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. ⁴¹ 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. ⁴² 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. ⁴³ 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.

Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that God has given him his kingdom, and in truth, that applies to all kingdoms of the world. God removes kings and kingdoms and He establishes kings and kingdoms, and as for the *Babylonian Empire*, Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that he is the supreme king of earthy kings with unquestioned authority as its monarch, and he is represented by the **head of gold**. It starts with him.

Well, this probably made the king feel pretty good – but not so fast, for history tells us the united *Medo-Persian Empire* will conquer the Babylonians. The Medo-Persian Empire is symbolized by the **silver** chest and arms of the statue, then after some 200 years, that empire falls to the *Grecian Empire* under the command of Alexander the Great. This is the third world empire represented by the **bronze** belly and thighs – an empire well-known for their bronze armor and weaponry, whose influence and culture covered the whole earth. Then there are the legs of **iron**. The iron represents the fourth world empire known as the *Roman Empire*, and with its Iron Legions, they overpowered all resistance. Now, they would not be defeated like the other empires, instead they would crumble from within due to immorality and corruption. No world empire has taken its place, which leads many to believe that still in the future there will be a *revived Roman Empire* led by the Antichrist during the Tribulation period represented by the feet and the toes mixed with **iron** and **clay**. Yes, it appears strong like iron, but it's brittle like pottery and it will not stand. We will get more into that later in this book.

Lastly, is the stone which destroys the entire statue. Daniel describes it beginning with **verse 44** and he says,

⁴⁴ 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. ⁴⁵ 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.”

In this passage, Daniel describes when the time of the Gentiles comes to an end, and the earthly kingdom ruled by Jesus Christ begins at His Second Coming following the Tribulation period. At this time, the Stone – Jesus Christ crushes the Gentile powers so thoroughly that He removes any trace of the past empires and their rule over the earth. Jesus will rule, and His kingdom will stand forever.

Well, how did Nebuchadnezzar react to this interpretation by Daniel? Let's find out beginning with **verse 46**.

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. ⁴⁷ 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.” 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 prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. ⁴⁹ 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.

Daniel honored the God in heaven and true to his word, King Nebuchadnezzar honored Daniel and his friends with great promotions, and now, just as God had planned, they are in a position to influence this king and future kings.

I was talking to Trish about this chapter, and afterwards I said to her – **“So what?”**
“How does all this apply to us?”

Well, with our advantage of history and hindsight, we are reminded that God's word is true. If the biblical prophecies of the past have come and gone just as God has revealed, then we have no cause for doubt regarding the biblical prophecies concerning our future.

Not only that, but just as Daniel had said, *“there is a God in heaven.”* Our God is behind the scenes and He controls the scenes He is behind, and no matter what king or kingdom is in place in this world, our God is still large and in charge, and

He is always at work in the lives of His people putting them in the right place at the right time for the right purpose. We can trust our God who is in heaven.

And lastly, we are living in the time of the Gentiles. The statue seen by King Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel is still standing so to speak, but that supernatural Stone – the Stone who was rejected – Jesus Christ is coming. **Are you ready?**

Source Material:

The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament – Walvoord & Zuck
Holman Old Testament Commentary, Daniel – Max Anders, Kenneth O. Gangel
John F. MacArthur Jr., The MacArthur Bible Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005)
Daniel L. Akin, Exalting Jesus in Daniel (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017)
John F. Walvoord, Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation (Galaxie Software, 2008)
The Bible Exposition Commentary, Old Testament, Isaiah-Malachi – Warren W. Wiersbe
David Jeremiah and C. C. Carlson, The Handwriting on the Wall: Secrets from the Prophecies of Daniel (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2020)
Enduring Word – David Guzik
Daniel – Joe Focht, PhillyResources
Through the Word, Daniel 2 – Kris Langham