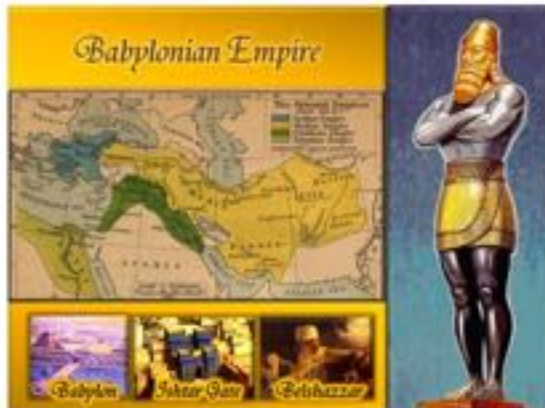


# Daniel 08 – Marduk's Gold Head: Nebuchadnezzar

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Daniel 2:36-38

## Head of Gold

- Daniel begins his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream after recounting the actual dream
- This legitimized his interpretation as it validated what the king knew but refused to tell anyone else
- I believe Nebuchadnezzar's vision was a representation of Marduk who was the chief god of Babylon's pantheon
- Nebuchadnezzar is the pinnacle of previous Mesopotamian governments
- The vision is a totality; each part is emphasized by its historical position, but it stands on the same fragile base of sin



## Fallacy of Absolute Rule

- Nebuchadnezzar, though trained to rule and given great responsibilities during his father's reign, was still learning to integrate himself into the power structures of the Babylonian government, including religion
  - Nebuchadnezzar displayed immature rashness when he ordered the death of all wisemen showing that he did not yet understand his need to integrate himself into these other power structures that could easily remove him (Da 2:10-13)
  - Nebuchadnezzar had to rule through various power structures such as military, advisors, bureaucracy and priesthood: we discussed how the king had to be humiliated by the high priest annually; what if his power trappings were not returned, how could he rule?
  - Upsetting or disrespecting any of these important people could result in his death as he was absolutely dependent on others for his safety; assassination was a threat and many an unpopular king was deposed by relatives or attendants

## Frailty of Fealty

- Mesopotamia was frequently rocked by changes in fealty whenever an old king died
  - Powerful vassal states would seek new alliances with other powers to better their position or reduce their tribute requirements.
  - Subjugated peoples would seek this time to rebel, to reassert the independence
  - Peoples on the periphery of the kingdom would take this time to make incursions to expand their own kingdoms or simply to raid and plunder
- Every new king had to deal with these challenges within the first few years and defeat would signal more peoples to disrespect the king; including his own peoples
  - Each king quickly learns decisions are easier when others bear responsibility; decisions become difficult when you account for decisions with your life

## Nebuchadnezzar Mirrors Solomon's Dilemma 400 Years Previous

- Nebuchadnezzar had his vision during his second year as king which means he probably just completed his first full year as king
  - He may have felt the weight of rulership near the festival of Marduk which occurred about the same time as Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread
  - During this festival he had to divest himself of all trappings of royalty, be slapped, humiliated, by the high priest, swear fealty to Marduk to receive Marduk's blessing and regain the trappings of rulership  
<https://www.biblestudytools.com/daniel/daniel-2.html>
  - He was probably feeling the responsibility of being the final arbiter of justice and major decision maker concerning domestic and foreign policies: like Solomon (1K 3:7-9)
  - Like Solomon, he was looking for guidance from the only source he knew, Marduk; yet, God intervened according to His will to provide true guidance

## All Civilizations Came from Noah: Mesopotamia Seat of this Knowledge

- All knowledge came through Noah and his three sons of which Shem clung to the true knowledge of God probably establishing a priesthood that was still extant in Abraham's day; i.e., Melchizedek (ps 110:4) (1K 1:1-4)
- Abram lived with Terah, his father, in Ur during Ur II kingdom during its weakening
- Terah probably moved the extended family after Haran was killed and settled along the Balikh River possibly establishing or renaming the village, Uruk (1K 11:31-32)
- Terah probably worshipped the moon god, Sin, which was also extant in Haran, possibly why this attracted him
- Abram was instructed to continue to Canaan alone after the death of Terah to finish the journey originally started by Terah but aborted by idolatry (ps 121:3)
- This predated Babylon; however, law codes were already in use showing high degree of civilization that continued after Babel and spread from this region

## Marduk and Hammurabi

- Hammurabi's famous law code supposedly was given by Marduk to the king which legitimized its supremacy as discussed in earlier lessons
  - Babylon had previously been established but reached a zenith under Hammurabi and though it was defeated after his reign the city flourished at various times before Nebuchadnezzar
  - Babylon was considered the seat of culture of its time much like Paris was considered the seat of Western culture in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe
  - "The ancient scientists who lived in the city made important discoveries in mathematics, physics and astronomy. Among their many accomplishments, they developed lunarometry, used mathematical models to track the planet Jupiter and developed methods of tracking time that are still used today. Ancient Babylonian records are still used by modern-day astronomers to study how the rotation of the Earth has changed."  
<https://www.reference.com/2012-ancient-babylon-center-of-innovation-christian.htm>

## Nebuchadnezzar Added to Babylon's Splendor

- Because Nebuchadnezzar's Median treaty wife was from the mountains, supposedly she was unhappy in hot, dusty, flat Babylon; thus, the Hanging Gardens were built as terraces to give a sense of the mountains and their foliage to keep her happy
  - Marduk's Temple was a seven or eight story ziggurat in the center of the city which dominated the government
  - Babylonian astrology of the day was simply a means of recognizing that the earth was influenced by forces from other heavenly bodies though limited by the technology and worldviews of their day; modern peoples are only now recognizing the influence of the heliosphere and solar/galactic winds causing significant events on earth such as volcano eruptions, earthquakes and major storms
  - Yet, climate changes persist in the myth of carbon emissions as causation

## Comparing Two Idols

Marduk with his Dragon



Nebuchadnezzar's Vision



## Daniel's Basic Interpretation: Nebuchadnezzar the Golden Head

- Daniel gives as a statement of fact that Nebuchadnezzar is the golden head of his vision; i.e., he is the head of Marduk and greater than all the kingdoms which will follow
  - Daniel's wordage is not drawn out of thin air but builds on Jeremiah's prophecies (Jer 27:1-4; 28:1-4-7)
  - Daniel attributes his prophecy to God of Heaven, differentiating Him from Marduk who dwells on earth in a temple whose gold statue is paraded annually through Babylon during a two-week elaborate ceremony which ends in human sacrifice, usually a criminal stands in for the king to die in the king's place
  - When Daniel proclaims that God (Allah) subjected all peoples, beasts and birds under his rule to his authority, Nebuchadnezzar confutes this to mean his god, Marduk; this leads to the events in Daniel Two: worship of the golden idol
  - Nebuchadnezzar was truly pinnacle of Mesopotamian culture – Golden Head

## Mesopotamian Culture Intertwined with Judaism

- As previously indicated, Abram came from Mesopotamia in its early days coming out of idolatry: Sin Moon god (Gen 12:1-26)
  - Abraham believed God and became the father of both a physical people, Jews, and a spiritual people, True Jews and Christians (Gen 15:1-6; 22:1-18; 24:1-26)
  - False Jews remained trapped in their idolatry though warned of God many times of the consequences: Captivity (Gen 24:45-50; 37:36-39)
  - God has returned His people back to the idolatrous land of their beginnings to experience the harshness of Satan's tender mercies, Hammurabi's Law Code
  - Now God will show mercy to the king who brought them into captivity to bring them to rage at the mercy they have refused (Gen 37:36-39)
  - God's first step was to declare their captor as the pinnacle of civilization and show him mercy, of which this is the first step, while they suffer wrath for their sin

## Paul's Warning Stands Today for Us

- Paul's warning from Romans should make Christians pause rather than rejoice from a position of pride (Rom 12:16-21)
  - Christians are saved not because they are simply special; this was the mistake the Jews made; indeed, everyone back to Cain has made
  - God saves those who understand their sinfulness, their utter worthlessness (Abel) before God because of their sin (Rom 3:23)
  - Meekness is simply the recognition that one has nothing that God needs; it is the believer who needs God and rests in the work that Christ did and does (Rom 12:16-21)
  - Today True Christians are being overrun by False Christians, or Christendom, just as the True Jews were dominated by the False Jews in Daniel's day
  - When God calls out His Church what will remain will be Christendom joining with False Jews to persecute the True Jews during the Antichrist's reign of which Daniel is foretelling through Nebuchadnezzar's Marduk statue: Feet of Clay/Iron