

Daniel 2:1-30 - Nebuchadnezzar's Dream, Part 1

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COURSE  COMMENTARY 



Introduction - Foundational

- [Blueprint for Understanding Prophecy](#)

Daniel 2 provides the “big picture” for understanding numerous prophetic passages of Scripture.

Provides the **framework** - like the frames of a building which determine the overall shape of the building.

The **foundation** for progressive revelation: Daniel 7, 8, 9, 11; Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 21, Revelation 13, 19-20 and more.

The “fork in the road” for different systems of prophetic interpretation (premillennial, postmillennial, amillennial).

Introduction - Interpretation

- [Guidelines for Interpretation](#)

Stand in Daniel’s shoes.

Add progressive revelation.

Recognize limits of progressive revelation.

Don’t press symbols too far.

Introduction - Theme

- [Kingdom of Man vs. Kingdom of God](#)

Kingdom of God (Jerusalem): throne of David, ruling by the light of God’s revelation.

Kingdom of Man (Babylon): Gentile nations, ruling “in the dark.”

Image of a **man** - points to mankind’s attempted independence from God.

Babylon, Babel, Shinar: echoes of first kingdom of man, Nimrod at Babel (Gen. 10:8-10).

Ultimate king of man: Antichrist, the final Gentile ruler with a global domain.

Ultimate king of God: the God-man Jesus upon the throne of David.

2:1 - The Second Year

- [Bible Difficulty?](#)

Daniel and his companions trained for **three years** (Dan. 1:5,18). Daniel interprets the dream in

Nebuchadnezzar's **second year**. How does this make sense?

- **Accession-Year Reckoning?**

Assume Daniel graduated from training before interpreting the dream.

Assume Daniel 2 chronologically follows Daniel 1.

Training years: 1, 2, 3

Accession years: 0, 1, 2 (see [Counting Years](#)).

- **Dream before Graduation?**

Daniel 2 occurs chronologically before graduation recorded in the end of Daniel 1.

Other chapters in Daniel do not follow strict [chronological order](#).

- **Partial (Inclusive) Years?**

Perhaps Daniel trained for part of the first year, all the second year, and only part of the third year.

In Hebrew usage, partial periods are sometimes counted in round (whole) numbers (Est. [4:16](#) cf. Est. [5:1](#)).

- **Daniel Taken Before the Year Nebuchadnezzar Ascended the Throne**

Daniel may have been taken prior to the year in which Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne.

Also explains how the events of Daniel [1:1](#) could take place during Jehoiakim's **third** year while the battle of Carchemish (Jer. [25:19](#)) is associated by Jeremiah with Jehoiakim's **fourth** year (Jer. [25:1](#))

Provides a full 70 year period from the beginning of Israel's captivity to the decree of Cyrus allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem (606 - 536 B.C.).

2:1 - Dreams

- **A Troubled Spirit**

"his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him"

The most powerful king in the known world, probably with concerns over the continuance of his empire--and perhaps his own life.

Like Solomon before him, perhaps the king was beginning to see the inability of great power and wealth to answer the concerns of the soul (Ecc. [3:11](#)).

Suspected that the dream related to the matters on his heart.

2:2-4 - Resources of the Realm

- **Magicians, Astrologers, Sorcerers, Chaldeans**

Like Pharaoh in Joseph's day (Gen. [41:8](#)), the king called for advice from the intellectual resources available in his day.

Even down to our day, the pattern within the kingdom of man is to seek answers anywhere and everywhere **except** from God.

Daniel has the very resource which the king lacks: a relationship with the Living God (Isa. 8:19).

Early Astronomers



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Nebuchadnezzar's Dream



Image courtesy of [culture.gouv.fr](#), 15th century. *Songe de Nabuchodonosor: la statue composite. Ars moriendi. Marseille - BM - ms. 0089 (f. 012)*. This image is in the public domain in the USA.

2:2-4 - Aramaic

- “spoke to the king in Aramaic”

Immediately following the word “Aramaic,” the text switches from Hebrew to Aramaic. This continues through chapter 7.

2:2-4 - Tell the Dream

- **Fabricating an Interpretation**

The wise men assumed the king’s request was going to be “business as usual.”

Once the king revealed the actual dream, it would be a simple matter to provide an interpretation.

2:5-13 - Decision is Firm

- **Variation in Translations**

The NKJV and many others translate the phrase, “My decision is firm...”

The KJV renders this phrase as “the thing is gone from me,” implying that Nebuchadnezzar was unable to remember his dream.

The same phrase is repeated in Daniel [2:15](#) where it refers to the decree which “went out” from the king.

Nebuchadnezzar may have had trouble recalling some details of the dream, but must have remembered enough to know if the wise men were lying had they attempted to give the dream itself.

2:5-13 - Make Know the Dream

- **Testing Occult Powers**

The king suspects his wise men have been deceiving him by speaking “lying words” (Dan. 2:9).

Those who appeal to occult powers may appear impressive, but like Pharaoh’s magicians who were able to duplicate some of the miracles of Moses and Aaron, they have their limits (Ex. 7:11,22; 8:19).

2:5-13 - Lying and Corrupt Words

- **Nebuchadnezzar’s Suspicions**

The king accuses his wise men of agreeing to speak lying words.

Not only does he distrust their prognostications, but he senses their collusion.

Perhaps his anxieties concerning his future and that of his kingdom reflect his suspicion that his advisors are plotting something against him.

2:5-13 - A Difficult Task

- **God’s Omniscience**

The wise men know they have no resource which can reveal the king’s dream from the past.

Neither the material nor the occult realm can provide the answer.

Only the omniscience of God can provide the answer. He alone is **Creator**. All else is **creature**.

2:14-15 - Counsel and Wisdom

- **Halting the Executioner**

The most powerful man in the world commanded his executioner, Arioch.

That Arioch listens and responds to this young man, who may even still be a teenager, is remarkable!

Daniel had probably already established a reputation as an individual worth listening to.

Daniel’s conversation was flavored with “counsel” (discretion, prudence) and “wisdom” (good sense, tact).

Arioch may not have been in favor of killing all the wise men.

The king was in such a state that perhaps everyone in the court, including Arioch, was getting nervous about what he might do next.

2:16-18 - Seeking Mercy

Daniel Intercedes with Arioch

- **Prayer and Petition**

Unlike the gods which the other wise men had described (Dan. 2:11), the God of the Psalms is near to those who dwell in flesh.

“The LORD is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works. **The LORD is near** to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth” (Ps. 145:17-18 cf. Mat. 18:19-20).

2:16-18 - God of heaven

- **Ruler of Heaven**

Destiny is not regulated by the astral bodies worshiped by the Babylonians.

The information Daniel and his companions sought could only come from heaven--as even the pagan wise men of Babylon acknowledged (Dan. 2:11).



Image courtesy of [David Jackson](#), 2010. A scene from a medallion (1243-1248) originally from the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. King Louis IX of France built the chapel to house the Crown of Thorns, which he had acquired in 1239. The prophet Daniel, with halo, is shown interceding with Arioch, the captain of King Nebuchadnezzar's guard. Arioch had been charged with killing all the wise men of Babylon (Daniel 2:14-15, 24). To the left, behind Daniel, an executioner raises his sword to kill two of the wise men. This image is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 UK: England & Wales license](#).

2:19-23 - Night Vision

- **Revealed to Daniel**

The secret was revealed in a night vision. It would seem that Daniel and his companions remained in prayer and praise petitioning God for their very lives until the answer came.

Only Daniel received the vision. It was God's purpose to promote all four Jewish youths. Yet, in the sovereignty of God, Daniel was to be given a higher position of authority and influence than his companions.

2:19-23 - Worship

- **Daniel Blessed God**

Daniel's response to God's mercy is worship!

Daniel's worship is God-centered and informed from Scripture, highlighting God's character.

2:19-23 - God is Sovereign

- **Times and Seasons**

God is sovereign over the timing and events of history.

Seventy years under Babylon (Dan. 9:2 cf. Jer. 25:11).

Seventy sevens (Dan. 9:24-27).

- **Removes and Raises Kings**

God turns a king's heart wherever He wishes (Pr. 21:1).

God will use Cyrus to release the Jews after the Medo-Persian empire overthrows Babylon. Yet Cyrus did not know Him (Isa. 44:28; 45:1-4).

God is sovereign over the rule of all governments (Rom. 13).

This truth concerns the subject matter of the dream and its interpretation: the [sequence of kingdoms](#) during the [Times of the Gentiles](#).

2:24-30 - Revealing Secrets

- [Wise Men Cannot Declare](#)

It's not [what](#) you know, but [who](#) you know.

Neither the highly educated nor occult practitioners can access truths which only come from God because God reveals things to those who have a [relationship](#) with Him.

Daniel and his companions were among those who conducted themselves in "simplicity and godly sincerity" to whom God responds (2Cor. 1:12 cf. Ps. 8:2; Mat. 11:25).

- [God Reveals Secrets](#)

There are many things which will [never](#) be known through investigation and study.

These "secrets" are not simply mysterious or complex, they involve information which is [unavailable](#) through natural means.

This is "revelation" which is only given by God and involves the "unveiling" of what was previously hidden (Rev. 1:1).

For example: Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its meaning (Dan. 2), Daniel's night vision and its meaning (Dan. 7), the [Seventy Sevens](#) (Dan. 9) and much more.

- [Latter Days](#)

The phrase "the latter days" could be translated as "the afterward days" or "the days which follow."

The meaning of the phrase (and the related phrases "last days," "last day," "last time," and "last hour") depends upon the context.

The use of the phrase here probably refers to: (1) the immediate future concerning Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:45), which addresses the personal anxiety of the king (Dan. 2:1,3); (2) extends to the time in which God's kingdom supersedes all Gentile dominion in the Millennial Kingdom as represented by the latter portion of the dream.

Later in the book, an angelic messenger will be sent to Daniel to relate events which reach to the very end of the age (Dan. 12:13), "Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come" (Dan. 10:14).

See the [commentary](#) for more on this phrase.

Daniel Interprets the Dream



Image courtesy of W. A. Spicer, 1917. *Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream, as described in the Second Chapter of Daniel.* This image is in the public domain in the USA.

- **Purpose of the Dream**

The dream and interpretation were given for several purposes.

In response to the personal concerns of the king. "Thoughts came to your mind... about what would come to pass after this" (Dan. [2:29](#)). "That you may know the thoughts of your heart" (Dan. [2:30](#)).

To save Daniel and his companions and to provide for their promotion, "for our sakes" (Dan. [2:30](#)).

To give important revelation to the world concerning God's prophetic framework concerning the [Times of the Gentiles](#) and how they will come to an end.