

## Lesson 2: Chapter 2 – A Dream that Spans Millenia

Chapter 2 of Daniel is one of the most unique chapters of Scripture in the entire Bible – it is written in two languages! The first verse down through the midpoint of the fourth verse is in Hebrew, the heart language of Daniel and the Jewish exiles. The second half of verse four through chapter 7 is in Aramaic, which was the diplomatic trade language of the Babylonian empire, which Daniel would have been well-versed in as a member of the Babylonian court. Some commentators believe that this reflects the fact that some of Daniel's words carry particular implications for his own Jewish people, while other parts involve the non-Jewish world.

Day 1: Read Daniel 2:1-13. While this might seem like an outrageous request today, in the time of King Nebuchadnezzar, dreams were very important, even considered to be messages from the gods. In Babylonia, a city renowned for its sophistication and learning, magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers were amongst the highest order of the aristocracy. With such privilege came heavy responsibility, that of interpreting kingly dreams. But this request of Nebuchadnezzar is rather unique – not only must his wise men interpret his dream, they must tell him what he dreamed, as he refused to share with them.

1. Nebuchadnezzar's dream so troubled him that he summoned some of his wisest men.
  - a. What did he promise them if they could tell him the dream and explain it?
  - b. What did he promise them if they failed?
2. King Nebuchadnezzar's threats of death were not idle – he was a ruler known for his quick temper and harsh treatment. Read 2 Kings 25:7 and Jeremiah 29:22 to learn the violence of which Nebuchadnezzar was capable when his anger was aroused.

Day 2: At this point, Daniel, a young man newly finished with his courtly training and installed as one of Nebuchadnezzar's wise men, was summoned, along with his friends, so that he could be put to death at the hand of the king.

1. Read Daniel 2:10-15. How does Daniel speak to the commander of the king's guard as he summons him to put him to death?
2. Now read Daniel 2:16-23.
  - a. In the midst of a grave threat to his very life, to whom does Daniel turn?
  - b. How do you react when you feel threatened? Is your first instinct to go to the Lord? Copy Philippians 4:6. Memorize it this week.
3. God answers Daniel's prayer for deliverance in dramatic fashion, revealing the mystery of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its meaning to him.
  - a. Can you think of another famous Israelite whom God gifted with the ability to interpret dreams (hint – Genesis 37:5-11, Genesis 40, and Genesis 41:1-36)?
  - b. From Daniel's words of praise to God in 2:20-23, identify at least five things that God alone can do.
  - c. Do we need to interpret dreams today for God to communicate with us or do we have something more certain than our dreams that guides us (see 2 Timothy 3:14-17)?

Day 3: It's time! Daniel is brought before King Nebuchadnezzar. He recounts the king's dream to him with perfect precision. Read Daniel 2:24-36.

1. Who does Daniel credit for his knowledge of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (vv. 27-28)?
2. Draw a picture of Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue (do your best but remember this isn't art class). Divide the statue into four different parts:
  - a. Head
  - b. Chest and arms
  - c. Belly and thighs
  - d. Legs and Feet (don't forget the toes!)

3. What curious thing happens to the statue in vv. 34-35? What do you think it means when it says in v. 34 “not by human hands”? What happens to the rock?

Day 4: What a curious sight Nebuchadnezzar’s statue is! Thankfully, Daniel shares the interpretation of it given to him by God. Read Daniel 2:36-45.

1. Remember the statue you drew yesterday? Let’s turn back to it and match the interpretation to the drawing, section by section.
  - a. What or who does the head correspond to (vv. 37-38)?
  - b. What about the chest and arms (v. 39a)?
  - c. And the belly and thighs (v. 39b)?
  - d. What about the legs and feet (vv. 40-43)?
2. We now know that the different sections of the statue represent kingdoms, but which kingdoms might they be? When Daniel gave the interpretation to King Nebuchadnezzar, he was telling the future – sharing a prophecy. More than 2,000 years later, with the additional revelation of Scripture given by the Holy Spirit after Daniel’s days and the historical record, we can make those identifications with confidence. Back to the statue again.
  - a. We already know that the head refers to the Babylonian empire, label it accordingly.
  - b. The next world empire would overthrow Babylon and extend their boundaries even further than Nebuchadnezzar. This was the combined empire of Medo-Persia. Label the statue’s chest and arms the Medo-Persian empire
  - c. Alexander the Great defeats the Medo-Persian empire and with astonishing swiftness, ushers in the next world empire, the Greek empire. Label the belly and thighs as the Grecian empire.
  - d. The Greek empire is overthrown by an empire that would eclipse all previous world empires in territory and power – the Roman empire. Label the legs and feet as the Roman empire.
3. Note what Daniel says about the feet and toes in vv. 41-43. They appear to be something both a part of and yet distinct from the Roman empire. Keep this in mind for tomorrow’s study

Day 5: We have spent quite a bit of time interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, now let’s examine its shocking end, as well as what happens to Daniel in the wake of this incident.

1. Read Daniel 2:44-45. Now go back and reread vv. 34-35.
  - a. What does Daniel tell us the rock and resultant mountain symbolize (v. 44)?
  - b. What two things will the kingdom of God do?
2. Remember the mixed feet and toes of the statue Daniel described earlier? We have just read that the kingdom of God, when it comes, will destroy all human kingdoms and endure forever. But this has not happened yet. Empires and human kingdoms continue to rise and fall. This must mean that the kingdom of God that will overthrow all earthly kingdoms has not yet begun. Although most of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is now fulfilled prophecy, this last part is still future prophecy. Does the Bible tell us of a time when God’s kingdom will destroy and replace all human kingdoms and possess all authority forever (hint - read Philippians 2:10-11 and Revelation 19:11-21)?
3. Read Daniel 2:46-49.
  - a. What is King Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction to the interpretation God has given to Daniel?
  - b. What happens to Daniel himself?