

Daniel

Chapter 2

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. ² So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, ³ he said to them, "I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means." ⁴ Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it." ⁵ The king replied to the astrologers, "This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. ⁶ But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me." ⁷ Once more they replied, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it." ⁸ Then the king answered, "I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: ⁹ If you do not tell me the dream, there is just one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me." ¹⁰ The astrologers answered the king, "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. ¹¹ What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men." ¹² This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. ¹³ So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death. ¹⁴ When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. ¹⁵ He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. ¹⁶ At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him. ¹⁷ Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ¹⁸ He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven ²⁰ and said: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. ²¹ He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. ²² He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. ²³ I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom

and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king.”

Ch 2 Luth: “The honoring of Daniel begins; it is occasioned by the king’s dream which Daniel, with the help of divine revelation, discerns and interprets. As a result Daniel becomes a ruler of the entire Babylonian realm and a bishop or chief prefect over all the priests and learned men. This takes place also for the comforting of the whole Jewish [Judean] community, that despite their wretched condition they should neither despair nor grow impatient, as if God had abandoned them or withdrawn his promise of Christ.... So wondrously does God lead his faithful ones; he bestows upon them far more than anyone could wish” (AE 35:295). (TLSB)

Major Emphases in Daniel 2

Divine Revelation to Daniel and His Prayer

The first mortal threat to Daniel comes in this chapter. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream so troubling that he demands that his court diviners interpret it. When they ask him to describe the dream, he refuses and adds the requirement that they must, in addition to interpreting the dream, also tell him its content. Of course no one could do such a thing without divine revelation. This extra requirement is the king’s way of ensuring that the interpretation too is given by divine revelation. If the wise men of the court are unable to give both the dream and its interpretation, all the wise men, including Daniel and his three Judean friends, will be executed. (CC)

This chapter introduces the first direct divine revelation in Daniel, which becomes a common feature in the book. Of the twelve chapters, only Daniel 1, 3, and 6 do not feature some type of direct revelation from God, and God still performs miracles in those chapters. The revelation to Daniel in chapter 2 is given by God for Nebuchadnezzar, to answer his thoughts about the future (2:29) and to reveal to him for the first time that Israel’s God is in control over all that happens among human kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a statue constructed with four metals drives this point home as Daniel interprets it to be about four great world empires that give way to God’s eternal kingdom. (CC)

Though the messianic overtones of Daniel’s interpretation are clear, they are lost on Nebuchadnezzar, who has no interest in the theological nuances of what he considers to be the faith of a third-rate people whom he has subjugated. Though in the end Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges Daniel’s God as “God of gods, Lord of kings, and Revealer of mysteries” (2:47), he does not understand the full implications of the dream, either in its messianic message or its implied monotheism. (CC)

However, the theological center of the chapter is not the dream and its interpretation, but Daniel’s prayer (2:20–23). This prayer fuses the two major theological themes in the chapter: God governs all human history, and God alone grants knowledge and wisdom. This second theme is emphasized by the contrast between the inability of the Babylonian wise men to fulfill the royal demand and Daniel’s ability to do what they are unable to do. Nebuchadnezzar twice demands that the wise men of Babylon tell him

both the dream and its interpretation (2:5–6, 8–9). God reveals both to Daniel (2:19), whereas the Babylonians do not believe that such divine disclosure is possible because their gods’ “dwelling is not with mortal flesh” (2:11). In contrast, Daniel’s God does interact with mortals, and indeed he would come to dwell in human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ (Mt 1:18–25; Jn 1:14; Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 4:2). (CC)

2:1 *second year of ... Nebuchadnezzar.* 604 B.C. (CSB)

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream occurred during Daniel’s three year educational period. Sometime likely elapsed before the king consulted his dream experts. (TLSB)

spirit was troubled. Disturbed by the content of the dreams. (TLSB)

2:2 **MAGICIANS, ENCHANTERS, SORCERES AND ASTROLOGERS** – Each group used slightly different occult methods to interpret dreams. Archaeologists have discovered Mesopotamian, Ugaritic, and Egyptian documents written especially for dream interpretation. (TLSB)

2:4 *Aramaic.*† Since the astrologers were of various racial backgrounds, they communicated in Aramaic, the language everyone understood. From here to the end of ch. 7 the entire narrative is in Aramaic. No satisfactory explanation has been found as to why this section of the book has not come down to us in Hebrew. (CSB)

Common language in the Near East. Dn was written in both Hbr (1:1–2:4a; 8:1–12:13) and Aram (2:4b–7:28). (TLSB)

O king, live forever! Common form of address. (TLSB)

show the interpretation. Explain the dream’s meaning. (TLSB)

2:5 Nebuchadnezzar sought an explanation of what he had seen. Perhaps he also had some difficulty recalling the details of this disturbing experience (cf v 9). (TLSB)

word ... is firm. Nebuchadnezzar’s mind was made up (v 8). (TLSB)

I HAVE ...DECIDED – The king’s advisors ask him to recount the dream, as they would normally expect him to do. However, Nebuchadnezzar tells them in no uncertain terms that he has already made up his mind that this dream is too important for such an approach. It would be relatively easy for occult practitioners (or charlatans) to speculate about the possible meaning of a dream that was described to them. They could then make flattering predictions about the future (as did the false prophets in 1 Kings 22). Nebuchadnezzar anticipates that his advisers would concoct an interpretation that would please him, but that would be no divine revelation. (CC)

The king knows because of his troubled night that this dream is not an ordinary dream, but a communication from the supernatural realm. Therefore he wants to hear its

“meaning” (פִּשְׁטָר): what future it actually portended. This future could only be made known by another supernatural revelation. The king’s requirement that his advisors recount the dream itself to him is intended to ensure that their interpretation too, like their recounting of his dream, is the result of a divine revelation to them, not a flattering concoction. His zeal to ascertain the dream’s meaning explains his threat (2:5) and promise (2:6) contingent on the performance of the wise men. (CC)

CUT YOU INTO PIECES – Nebuchadnezzar’s threat to dismember those with whom he is displeased and to destroy their houses (2:5) will be repeated in 3:29, but there it will be issued against those who speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The depiction of Nebuchadnezzar as having no qualms about carrying out his threat is confirmed by his earlier treatment of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (3:20–21), and also by his treatment of the Judean king Zedekiah (2 Ki 25:7) and the Judean rebels Ahab and Zedekiah (Jer 29:22). Moreover, this type of punishment was not unusual in the ancient Near East, Although Daniel and his companions are not part of the group currently assembled before Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel the author has skillfully begun to heighten the reader’s anxiety for the Judeans at this point in the narrative. (CC)

The dream’s importance to the king was reinforced by the severity of punishment. (TLSB)

2:7 ONCE MORE THEY...TELL – The plea from the wise men is an admission that they cannot do what Nebuchadnezzar requires. Just as he began the conversation with an unspoken request for them to tell him what he dreamt, so now they concede the unspoken admission that they cannot do it (2:7). (CC)

2:8-9 Nebuchadnezzar’s reply (2:8–9) voices the unspoken concern behind his original request: he expects that they will give him an answer that will not match the future portended by the dream. He is sufficiently bothered by the dream that he wants to ensure that he receives its real meaning. He charges them with “buying time” (2:8) and devising “a lying and corrupt response” (2:9). They are using a delaying tactic, hoping to get more information about the dream so that they can fabricate a flattering explanation to please him. Barring that, they may hope that if enough time passes (“the time changes,” 2:9), Nebuchadnezzar might relent about his threat, lose interest in the dream, and forget the entire incident. But Nebuchadnezzar remains determined to carry out his threat unless they can deliver the genuine meaning. (CC)

That Nebuchadnezzar would be able to recognize the dream when it is recounted (2:9) demonstrates that he remembered the dream’s major features. His wise men’s request in 2:7 also assumes that he knows the dream. (CC)

2:8 *trying to gain time*. Stalling, since the king’s request placed them in a life-threatening position. (TLSB)

2:9 Nebuchadnezzar did not fully trust his dream experts. His angry request implies that they had been unreliable. *till the times change*. Hoping the king would tell his dream. (TLSB)

2:10 The dream experts assert that the king will find no help in understanding the dream because he refuses to work within the typical rules. (TLSB)

not a man on earth. Anticipates God’s intervention through Daniel. (TLSB)

2:11 *do not live among men.* Are not readily accessible. (CSB)

gods. Babylonian gods were remote and inaccessible. The wise men could only hope that they could learn divine mysteries through forms of magic, divination, and sorcery. (TLSB)

Desperate to escape the king’s wrath, the Chaldeans point out that no king, no matter how powerful, has ever made such a demand. Moreover, they assert that there is no one else (וְאֵלֶּיךָ לֹא אֵינִי, literally, “another there is not,” 2:11) who can tell the king his dream—implying that he might as well recount his dream to them so they can interpret it, since no other person will be able to do any better. The only exception they give is “gods, whose dwelling is not with mortal flesh” (2:11). Their view is that the gods do not dwell among mortals nor reveal such things to people. This statement reveals more about the Babylonian view of deity than they probably intended. They believed that they could determine the gods’ intentions through methods of divination, through manipulation of items or interpretation of sign, but they could not communicate directly with the gods because they were remote and inaccessible to mortals. (CC)

Of course, Daniel the author quotes those words to imply that their theological assumption is wrong and leads them to the wrong conclusion. In fact, there is a God who dwells among humans! He dwelt among his chosen people Israel in the tabernacle (e.g., Ex 29:45–46; 40:35; 2 Sam 15:25; 1 Chr 23:25) and then in the temple in Jerusalem. Ultimately, in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4), he would come to dwell among us as the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14; Col 1:15–19; 2:9). Though God’s dwelling place is in heaven (1 Ki 8:39, 43, 49; 2 Chr 6:30, 33, 39), he who fills all things dwelt in a special way among his people in Jerusalem. Had the Babylonians known this God, as Daniel knew him, they would not have made this statement. Thus by recording their assertion about the gods, Daniel helps the reader anticipate the story’s climax. (CC)

2:13 *Daniel and his companions.* They “stood before the king” (1:19) and so were included among the wise men to be destroyed. However, as vv 15, 17 show, Daniel and his companions were not a part of the discussion recorded in vv 3–11. (TLSB)

While it is only the Chaldean wise men who cannot tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream, his fury is so strong that he issues the order to execute also all the other courtiers who were not part of this conversation about his dream. Daniel and his companions are about to be caught in the executioner’s dragnet. Up to this point, Daniel the author has been heightening the tension in the story by not answering the question of whether the young Judeans too are in danger. He answers that question in 2:13 where “Daniel and his companions” are mentioned for the first time in the chapter. But this leads to a greater tension, because the reader moves from suspecting that the Judeans may be in dire straights to knowing that they are in mortal danger. (CC)

2:14 *Arioch*. Meaning uncertain. It is also the name of a Mesopotamian king who lived centuries earlier (Ge 14:1, 9). (CSB)

He was the captain of the king's guard. It literally means "chief of the slaughters." (TLSB)

WITH WISDOM AND TACT – Two different verbs in two verses (הָתִיב, literally, "he returned [a prudent judgment]," in 2:14, and עָנָה, "he answered," in 2:15) state that Daniel replied to Arioch. This implies that Arioch had announced the king's edict that the wise men should be executed. Daniel's prudence is demonstrated by his question, which does not challenge the king's authority or judgment (as the Chaldeans had in 2:10–11). Instead, Daniel inquires as to the reason for the severity of the king's decree. (CC)

2:16 *appoint him a time*. As the king's adviser, Daniel had access to Nebuchadnezzar and asked for an appointment to interpret the dream. (TLSB)

It is obvious that at this time Daniel is not a high-level official, since he does not have access to information about the prior events in Nebuchadnezzar's court (2:1–13). However, he is able to obtain access to the king. Daniel is able to obtain a grace period from the king precisely for the reason that the Chaldeans were not: he does not challenge the king's insistence that his wise men must recount to him his dream itself before explaining its meaning. Instead, Daniel merely asks for time to prove that he can explain the true meaning of the dream. It is clear from the king's question in 2:26 and Daniel's subsequent reply that Daniel also sought and received from God the contents of the dream itself; it was part of the "mystery" (2:19) revealed to him. (CC)

Once again we see the skill of Daniel the author as a storyteller. He does not record his conversation with Nebuchadnezzar. The text does not even explicitly state that Daniel received a reprieve. Recording the conversation and response would have slowed down the pace of the narrative. Instead, Daniel wants his readers to move directly to his psalm of praise to God so that the focus is on God's grace in answering the Judeans' prayer. God's grace in providing the revelation is so great that it rescues not only the four young Judean men, but also the wise men of Babylon. This can be seen as at least a preliminary fulfillment of God's ancient promise to Abraham that all nations (even Gentiles) would be blessed through him and his seed (e.g., Gen 12:3; 22:18), a promise fulfilled in Christ (Galatians 3) and evident beginning on Pentecost (Acts 2) and continuing in Acts, as the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Messiah sent by Israel's gracious God, spreads to all peoples. (CC)

2:1–16 The many Babylonian wise men are unable to recount or interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and their gods are mute idols. But Daniel is confident that his God will help. Today, when life's mysteries or challenges threaten you, turn for guidance and comfort to the Lord and His Word. He knows all things and will hear your prayer. He knows what is best for you, and His Son, your Savior, intercedes for you. • Dear Jesus, may I never think of You as being distant or absent but always present for me in Your Word and Sacrament. Amen. (TLSB)

2:17 RETURNED...FRIENDS – Daniel immediately seeks out his fellow believers in Yahweh. Not only are they facing the same danger as he, but also they alone can share in prayer to God in true faith, asking that he deliver them. This seeking the company of other faithful followers of God to worship and pray, especially in times of crisis, is characteristic of the saints throughout history (e.g., Acts 4:23–31). (CC)

2:18 Since Daniel had confidently promised Nebuchadnezzar an interpretation of his dream, he and his companions turned to God in prayer, seeking His help. (TLSB)

PLEAD FOR MERCY – The young Judeans set about seeking God’s “mercy” (Aramaic רַחֲמִין, Dan 2:18). Daniel and his companions know that they can only rely on God’s mercy. They have no right to demand anything from him, but can only trust his promise, since he is the God to whom belong, literally, “the mercy [the Hebrew cognate הַרְחַמְתִּים] and the forgiveness [וְהַסְלַחְתָּ]” (9:9). (CC)

God of heaven. See **note** on Ezr 1:2 – (Of the 22 OT occurrences of the phrase, 17 occur in Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel. (CSB)

The religious language of this decree does not mean that Cyrus was a true believer in the God of Israel. Historical documents report that Cyrus restored the temples of Babylon and many other temples. The fact that the language of Cyrus’s decree sounds very “biblical” may very well be due to the influence of Daniel or other Jews at the court of Cyrus. They may even have composed the decree for him and pointed out the prophecies of Isaiah which name him as the restorer of Judah. (PBC)

mystery. † A key word in Daniel (2:19, 27–30, 47; 4:9). It also appears often in the writings (Dead Sea Scrolls) of the Qumran sect (see “The Time between the Testaments,” p. 1437). The Greek equivalent is used in the NT to refer to the secrets of the kingdom of God (see **note** on Ro 11:25). (CSB)

Word borrowed from old Persian and always used in Dn for a revelatory dream; key word in ch 2 (vv 19, 27–30, 47; cf 4:9). Here it describes the dream and its meaning. (TLSB)

FRIENDS...BE EXECUTED – The verb in the negated purpose clause in 2:18 has a vaguely defined antecedent (רַי לֹא יִהְיֶה דָּוִן רַגְיָאֵל וְחַבְרוּהִי), “so that *they* might not destroy Daniel and his companions”). This allows Daniel to move the focus of the story from Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians (the implied subjects of the verb) to God and his action on behalf of his people. (CC)

2:19 DANIEL PRAISED GOD – While much attention has been paid to the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, this poetic prayer actually functions as the theological center of this chapter. We learn that God answered the prayer of the four young Judeans with a vision that came to Daniel at night. This is clearly a parallel to Nebuchadnezzar’s nocturnal dream. (CC)

However, there also is a contrast between God's enigmatic dealings with a pagan king, who was troubled because he did not understand what he saw (2:1–3), and God's compassion toward his people, for whose sake he gives understanding to Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar received an important revelation from God in a dream. He sensed its importance and divine origin, but he was unable to make sense of it, since God did not reveal its meaning; to him it remained a mystery. In contrast, Daniel also received a revelation from God, but this revelation explained the "mystery" (הַרְוּ, 2:18–19). (CC)

Another contrast is between Nebuchadnezzar's response to God's revelatory dream and Daniel's response. Nebuchadnezzar's troubled bewilderment led him to issue an impossible demand, followed by anger and the threat of death for other humans, which he was in the process of carrying out. Daniel's understanding leads to praise and blessing for God. (CC)

In contrast to pagan gods, the God of heaven reveals mysteries (cf v 47). This revelation is the critical turning point in the story. (TLSB)

vision of the night. Dream. (TLSB)

blessed. Daniel's confession of praise follows in vv 20–23. (TLSB)

He changes times and seasons. God is the master of human history. (TLSB)

kings. Even one so powerful as Nebuchadnezzar was ruled by God's will. (TLSB)

2:22 *He reveals deep and hidden things.* Including esp the mystery of the Gospel (Eph 6:19; Col 4:3). (TLSB)

light dwells with him. See Ps 36:9. (CSB)

All realms are ultimately under His control. (TLSB)

Daniel Interprets the Dream

²⁴ Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him." **²⁵ Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and said, "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means."** **²⁶ The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?"** **²⁷ Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these: ²⁹ "As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to**

happen. ³⁰ As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind. ³¹ “You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. ³² The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. ³⁴ While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. ³⁶ “This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. ³⁷ You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; ³⁸ in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. ³⁹ “After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. ⁴⁰ Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. ⁴¹ Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. ⁴² As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. ⁴⁴ “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. “The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy.” ⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. ⁴⁷ The king said to Daniel, “Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.” ⁴⁸ Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. ⁴⁹ Moreover, at Daniel’s request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

2:24 *Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon.* Compassionately, God allowed Daniel to save the lives of these pagan Chaldeans. (TLSB)

2:25 Arioch was no doubt surprised that this foreigner and young apprentice ventured to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream. (TLSB)

2:28 *reveals mysteries.* Cf v 19. (TLSB)

latter days. End times.

2:30 *not because of any wisdom that I have.* Daniel humbly attributed all his wisdom to God alone. (TLSB)

2:17–30 Daniel would not have known Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation except for God's revelation. Neither are we able to know the mysteries of God, except what the Father has revealed to us in Christ (Rm 16:25–27). Like Daniel, we praise God for His mercy to us and His revelation in the Gospel. • Heavenly Father, thank You for making me wise unto salvation through faith in Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

2:31–35 While the dream's meaning is not apparent in Daniel's description of it (2:31–35), there are clues to important features. The stone hewn without hands points to divine activity. The striking of the statue on its feet (2:34) indicates that the destruction will happen during the time signified by the iron part of the statue. While the statue's feet are crushed by the falling stone, apparently the rest of the statue is crushed by falling on the stone (2:35). Baldwin notes that the statue would have been top-heavy and fragile, prone to falling and being shattered. (CSB)

2:31 *great image.* Colossal statues and figures were common art in Babylon and Persia. (TLSB)

2:32–33 Statue consisted of an odd mixture of four metals: gold, silver, bronze, and iron (mixed with clay). (TLSB)

2:34 *stone.* Natural material; used as a hammer to break the statue's feet into pieces. (TLSB)

by no human hand. Implying divine intervention. (TLSB)

2:35 *broken to pieces.* See Mt 21:44. (CSB)

not a trace of them could be found. Setting up a contrast to what follows. (TLSB)

great mountain ... whole earth. Symbolic of its dominance and importance. Aph: "He showed beforehand with regard to Christ that the whole earth shall be filled with Him. For lo! by the faith of Christ are all the ends of the earth filled" (NPNF 2 13:347). (TLSB)

2:36–43 Daniel begins his interpretation by a flattering, hyperbolic description of Nebuchadnezzar. This is designed to put the king at ease, since he had been troubled by the dream. Moreover, it softens the news that his kingdom will eventually fall to another. At the same time, Daniel is able to make an important theological point: the power and glory that Nebuchadnezzar enjoys are not his own doing, but the result of God's gift. This is the same point Daniel the author made in 1:2: "the Lord gave into his [Nebuchadnezzar's] hand" Jerusalem and even the temple vessels. Since Jerusalem (the capital of God's chosen people Israel) with its temple (the place of sacrifice for the

forgiveness of sins) was indeed the center of God's dealings with all humanity, Nebuchadnezzar's dominion over it could be extrapolated theologically to mean that he was ruler over the whole world (2:38). (CC)

Daniel does not identify the head of gold with Nebuchadnezzar until after his description of Nebuchadnezzar's might (2:36–38). He once again is flattering by identifying Nebuchadnezzar alone, and not his kingdom, as the head of gold. Clearly, from the explanation of the statue, each metal stands for a kingdom, not merely one king. But Daniel prudently allows the implicit equation of Nebuchadnezzar with the kingdom of Babylon (2:38). (CC)

Daniel next moves to the silver part of the statue, which is said to be a kingdom that rises after Nebuchadnezzar and is inferior to him (2:39a). Daniel does not state why or in what way it is inferior. The message implied by the kinds of metals is that each is of inferior value to the preceding one. Since subsequent kingdoms, including the Persians, Greeks, and Romans, ruled over larger territory than Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian Empire, "inferior" must not be determined by geopolitical reach. (CC)

Like the second kingdom, the third kingdom, of bronze, is given little attention (only half a verse) in Daniel's explanation (2:39b). Daniel states that this third kingdom will rule the "entire earth" (2:39b), which was also implied about Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom (2:38). There are no such explicit statements about the second (silver) or fourth (iron) kingdoms, but this is implied, since the second (silver) kingdom supplants Nebuchadnezzar's worldwide kingdom, and especially since the fourth kingdom crushes all those that came before (2:40). (CC)

The most attention is given to the iron kingdom (2:40–43). The focus is especially on the feet and the meaning of their composition, a mixture of iron and clay. The major features of this kingdom are its ability to crush, signified by the iron; its brittle nature, signified by the clay; its population of a mixture of peoples, signified the iron mixed with clay; and its inability to remain united, signified by the iron and clay failing to adhere to one another. This lack of cohesion signifies the eventual dissolution of the Roman Empire, but the continuing influence of its institutions. Thus much of the heritage of Rome lasts even to this day, especially in the West (Europe and the Americas), but all attempts in subsequent history to revive a semblance of the Roman Empire with its power have failed. (CC)

The only kingdom that Daniel identifies in his explanation of the dream is that Nebuchadnezzar (monarch of the Babylonian kingdom) is the gold head (2:38). The lack of explicit identification of the other kingdoms has led to much argument over their identity. The two main views and their chief proponents are (1) evangelical scholars who identify the four kingdoms as Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome and (2) critical scholars who identify them as Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. A detailed discussion of the identities of these kingdoms, with specific reasons to accept the evangelical view, is provided in the excursus "The Four-Kingdom Schema in Daniel." (CC)

2:36 *we will tell*. Daniel alone had knowledge of the dream, but his companions may have worked with him to provide the interpretation. This would separate the Israelites from the other counselors. (TLSB)

2:37 *king of kings*. Title; most appropriate for Christ (Rv 19:16). (TLSB)

2:38 *head of gold*. Nebuchadnezzar had great power, might, and glory. (TLSB)

2:39–41 Second, third, and fourth kingdoms are not named. Suggested identifications are Media, Persia, and Greece (cf 7:17; 8:20–21). The chief message is that whichever kingdoms are meant, all have disappeared. But the kingdom established by God will remain. (TLSB)

2:43 *marriage*. Kings often sought to increase their power through marriage. (TLSB)

2:44 *days of those kings*. Refers ultimately to the time of the fourth beast (7:7–8, 19–27), which most likely represents the Roman Empire. (TLSB)

The fifth kingdom is the eternal kingdom of God, different from the sinful and transient empires of man. Its authority will extend over “the whole earth” (v. 35) and ultimately over “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev 21:1). (CSB)

Aph: “When King Messiah shall reign, then He will humble the fourth kingdom, and will break the whole image; for by the whole image the world is meant” (*NPNF* 2 13:357). (TLSB)

stand forever. God’s kingdom ends the other kingdoms and endures forever (Rv 11:15). (TLSB)

2:45 *stone*. Christ, who will ultimately break into pieces all earthly kingdoms (Ps 118:22; Eph 1:20–22; 1Pt 2:6–8). (TLSB)

by no human hand. Iren: “His coming into this world was not by the operation of human hands... So, then, we understand that His advent in human nature was not by the will of a man, but by the will of God... The great God showed future things by Daniel, and confirmed them by His Son; ... Christ is the stone which is cut out without hands, who shall destroy temporal kingdoms, and introduce an eternal one, which is the resurrection of the just” (*ANF* 1:453, 555). Gr Nys: “Christ was born without a man. For as it is a new and marvelous thing that a stone should be cut out of the rock without a hewer or stone-cutting tools, so it is a thing beyond all wonder that an offspring should appear from an unwedded Virgin” (*NPNF* 2 5:521). (TLSB)

CUT OUT OF MOUNTAIN – In 2:44 Daniel explains the significance of the stone that crushes the statue, and then in 2:45a, he recounts details about that stone in the dream. Once again (2:45, as in 2:34), he affirms that the stone was hewn, but not by human hands, which affirms its divine origin. The metaphor that a stone is cut or hewn from a rock is used in Is 51:1–2 to say that believers are stones hewn from Abraham as their father. However, the “stone” in Daniel 2 has no human origin. This stone was cut “from the mountain” (אֲרָזִים)—a detail added in 2:45 that was absent in Daniel’s original description of the dream (2:34). This too points to this “stone” as the Messiah, who has divine origins and is himself divine (“whose origins are from of old, from days of

eternity,” Micah 5:1). Throughout the OT, the Hebrew cognate (צור, “rock”) to the Aramaic term here translated “mountain” (טור) is used as a metaphor to describe God as a “rock” of salvation and refuge. The Aramaic (and Hebrew) term אבן for the “stone” hewn from the “mountain/rock” is also used as a metaphor for God as the “rock,” the stronghold and Redeemer of his people (Gen 49:24), and specifically for the Messiah as the “rock” or “stone” established by God (Is 8:14–15; 28:16; Zech 3:9; 4:7; for Ps 118:22 see further below). Therefore the assertion in Dan 2:45 that the “stone” was hewn from the “mountain” reaffirms the divine origin and divine identity of the “stone,” which derives from God, the “mountain.” That the Messiah, God the Son, was preexistent from eternity with the Father and is eternally begotten from the Father is affirmed in other biblical passages (e.g., Ps 2:7; Jn 1:1, 14, 18; Hebrews 1) and in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. (CC)

2:31–45 God reveals through Nebuchadnezzar’s dream the final dissolution of all earthly kingdoms. Only one Kingdom will endure forever, the one proclaimed by Jesus: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15). That Kingdom awaits its full revelation at the end of history. We inherit His kingdom now in repentance and faith. • O King of kings, grant me hope and confidence in view of Your eternal rule. Amen. (TLSB)

2:46 *paid homage ... offering and incense.* Nebuchadnezzar honored Daniel as though he were a god (cf Ac 14:11–13). (TLSB)

2:47 Though mistaking Daniel for a god, Nebuchadnezzar did catch Daniel’s reference to “a great God” (v 45). He acknowledged that Israel’s God was greater than all other gods—an important step away from idolatry, though he still had much to learn. Nebuchadnezzar now understood how Daniel could out-rate his other wise men (cf 1:20).

2:48 *made him ruler ... chief prefect.* Daniel was placed over Babylon and all its wise men. (TLSB)

Cf. the story of Joseph (Ge 41:41–43) (CSB)

2:49 *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.* Daniel’s companions are reintroduced because they will be subjected to a severe test in ch 3. (TLSB)

king’s court. Lit, “king’s gate.” (TLSB)

2:46–49 Nebuchadnezzar is obviously impressed with the wisdom Daniel received from the God of heaven. This gives Daniel an opportunity to reveal more about the true God and His promise of a Savior. Today, pray for opportunities to proclaim the Gospel to others. The true God of heaven blesses and watches over you and will keep you to the end. • I praise You, God of heaven, for every evidence of Your wisdom and power. Help me use such knowledge as I witness to Your love in Christ. Amen. (TLSB)