

God and by it he revealed his God to be superior to those of the Babylonians and indeed the Living God.

V. 19 They stood before the king – i.e. they were selected for important government posts.

In refusing the king's rich food they showed that they cared more for God than advancement and now because it was God's desire they became prominent.

V. 20 “*Magicians*” The term may be related to the word stylus, i.e. those who use the stylus– Sacred writers. “*Enchanters*” Priests of Babylon – neither term is used in its strictest sense. They are all “*Wise men.*”

V. 21 Critics claim an inaccuracy at this point, 10:1 revelation is given in the third year of Cyrus. The point is that Daniel lived through into the time of Cyrus. It does not say that he died then. This Chapter was perhaps written in the first year?

Chapter Two

Introduction

Here for the first time we are confronted by prophecy that requires some interpretation– Some basic ground rules need to be considered to avoid error and wild speculation.

1. Read what is written. Don't read into the text what is not there.
2. Interpret each vision separately. Symbols may have different meanings in each (eg. Revelation 12, woman = Israel; Revelation 18, woman = Babylon; little horn, Daniel 7–8)–
3. Don't make more of a symbol, parable, or vision than the writer does. Accept his interpretation where given and let the book interpret the book where possible.
4. The message was intended for those of the prophet's day; what did they understand by it?

5. Prophecy often loses its time perspective. Often only significant events are recorded.
6. Interpret literally unless there is some Biblical or obvious reason not to, and yet realise that a symbol is only a *sign* of a reality and does not reflect the reality in every detail.
7. See if the Bible interprets the prophecy of symbol.
8. Symbols may well be understood by the beholder; contemporary literature may help to understand.
9. See the vision; the main points may become obvious.
10. Distinguish between Scripture interpreting Scripture and using Scripture to support one's own views. See also the additional note on interpretation at the end of this book.

2:1

“*The second year of Nebuchadnezzar*” This is seen by some to be a problem. Probably Babylonian reckoning – would then be third year by Jewish reckoning. 605 part of year = one year, i.e. the accession year. 604, 603 = year one, and two. So probably at the end of the training period for the youths.

Nebuchadnezzar had dreams that disturbed him a great deal. A Chaldean proverb says “Woe and anxiety create only bad dreams.” Nebuchadnezzar ruled over a vast area. His army was responsible for the collection of taxes from subjugated lands. In 604 Ashkelon resisted and the city was reduced to rubble. In 603 ancient records reveal that troops were in the field for several months indicating that all was not well. The dream coming as it did at this time seemed to add to his uneasiness and feeling that all was not well. “*TROUBLED*” *The word is emphatic.* He was deeply disturbed.

2:2–3

The king summoned his wise men and demanded to know the dream. It is not clear as to whether

2:2-3 (Cont.) he had forgotten the content of the dream or simply wanted to make certain that what his counsellors told him was correct. “*Sorcerers*” Probably a group who used herbs and charm potions and sought help from evil spirits. “*Chaldeans.*” is used here in the sense of ‘Experts in Magic love.’ It is said that this usage became popular only after the rise of the Persian Empire.

2:4-11

“Then the Chaldeans said to the king.” “Chaldeans” here used to embrace all the wise men. The reply of the wise men is given in Aramaic. The narrative then continues in the Aramaic dialect through to the end of Chapter 7. “O king live for ever,” Simply Court etiquette.

V. 4 The counsellors request to know the dream that they might interpret it. Extensive dream manuals have been discovered. They consist of dreams and the events that followed. They are extensive and complex. They try to cover every eventuality. Only an expert could find his way through them.

V. 5 “The thing is gone from me.” or “The word from me is sure” R.S.V. “Gone” is probably here used in the sense of “gone forth” i.e. I have decreed. You will tell me the dream, rather than, “It is gone from me,” I don’t remember. Another proverb of Babylon says, “If a man cannot remember the dream he saw, his god is angry with him. If he did in fact forget then the import and impact of the dream remained with him and his forgetfulness may have disturbed him further.

Nebuchadnezzar was lavish in his rewards but he meant every word of this threat. The Babylonians were not what we would regard as civilized in such matters and we gain an insight into conditions that the Jews lived under.

V. 7 The Chaldeans repeated their request and without doubt Nebuchadnezzar was beginning to doubt their abilities. Their business was to make contact with the deities and be enlightened as to such mysteries.

V. 9 Nebuchadnezzar is firm.

V. 10 The Chaldeans try flattery. They suggest that Nebuchadnezzar is too great and powerful and wise to really expect such knowledge from his servants. The indication is that the king is wrong to ask such a thing. They virtually admit that their priestly claims of enlightenment by the deities are false.

2:12-16 The king was furious and demanded the death of the wise men. Daniel and companions though not present were included in the execution order.

V. 14 Daniel’s reaction is remarkable. He appears confident and unshaken. Such confidence can only come from a sure faith that he is where God wants him to be and that God is working out his purposes through him. Because of the manner of his approach, Arioch was willing to listen to him. He respected Daniel.

2:17-18

From childhood Daniel had been taught the history of his people and told of the mighty acts of God in delivering his people and giving them victory. His experiences in Babylon had already verified that God could care for him and so now he naturally turns to prayer and calls on his friends to join him. Note here the Hebrew names used when associated with prayer and God. The Babylonians worshipped the starry heaven. Daniel urges his companions to call on the God of the heavens. (PL). The one who is over all. An appropriate name for God in the context of astral worship. “mystery” – another Persian word. The king’s decree was sure but Daniel knew that even the decree of a king was not final. Even his heart is in the hands of the Lord.

2:19-23

God graciously answered prayer by a “Vision of the night” given to Daniel. The meaning of the term is not clear. It seems to be distinguished from dream. 8:1-3. vision of the day. Visions and dreams are the means by which God communicates to his prophets. The mode is unimportant. The communication is. Spontaneous praise follows the

answered prayer. *“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever.”* The name of God is His revealed character and nature. It represents what may be known of God, (Exodus 6:3. The patriarchs had known Him as *E1-Shaddai*, God Almighty – by mighty acts of preservation and guidance and in the birth of Isaac. But now He was to reveal Himself as *YHWH*. The Covenant keeping God – merciful – slow to anger – forgiving) Daniel praised God for all that He had shown Himself to be.

Vs. 20 & 22 “To him belong wisdom and might ... He reveals deep and mysterious things.” – as evidenced by the vision.

V. 21 He removes kings – as the dream of the king revealed. A contrast to the fatalistic view of the Babylonians and even today many Christians find it hard to accept that God is in control when it comes to governments or even church politics.

V. 23 *“Praise you God of my fathers”* He senses his continuity with all who have gone before him. It is not just that God has spoken to Daniel but He has spoken to Daniel in the context of His people. He has spoken not just for Daniel but for His people and because He has entered Covenant with them. His revelations and gifts are always given in the context of His people, for His people. Our thrust today seems to be toward visions and revelations to edify the individual without much regard to the body, and only when we commit ourselves to each other as well as to Him will we begin to know many of the things that He has for us.

2:24-30

V. 27 *“Astrologers”* – a new term – those who consider the heavens and make predictions according to the movements of the heavenly bodies. The word is followed by reference to *the “God in heaven who reveals mysteries.”*

“Latter Days” It is important for the sake of proper interpretation to understand what is meant by the term. It is safe to say that it means those days that are referred to in the dream given to the king. As we will see the dream relates to the period from the Babylonian Empire through to the setting up of a Kingdom by the

God of heaven. We could simply read – *“What will be from here on.”* The term then includes much of what we now regard as history. It does not refer exclusively to days which are yet to come from our perspective.

V. 25 Arioch is not backward in capitalizing on the event. His attitude is in contrast to that of Daniel who acknowledges that God is solely responsible for the revelation. V. 30. He is not backward however, in pointing out deficiencies of the Babylonian experts

V. 27. Obviously this didn't win him many friends but it did highlight that his God alone is the revealer of mysteries. We can learn from Daniel how to handle the exceptional experience that God sometimes gives.

Israel was called to be a priestly nation and proclaim the name of God among the nations. Because of their disobedience in one sense they failed miserably. Yet of course by His dealings with them God has still revealed Himself for the nations to see. In Daniel we catch a glimpse of what might have been if all of His people had obeyed Him. We catch a glimpse of what might be if we obey Him.

2:31-35

The dream is told. The king saw a great image. Not an idol but a statue with a human form. It was immense. Its very size and brilliance was overwhelming. The head was of gold. The arms and breast silver, the thighs bronze, legs iron and feet were of iron and clay (the word is used of glazed china). A stone cut by no human hand smote the image and destroyed it. The stone became a great mountain that filled the earth.

It is interesting to note even at this stage a prophetic madness descends upon the commentators and speculation begins with regards to weights and specific gravities of the various metals mentioned? ? ?

THE HEAD OF GOLD

2:36-38

The king is addressed by his correct title, king of kings and yet Daniel does not hesitate to point out the kingdom is his only because God has given it to him. See Jer. 27:5-8. Romans 13

insists that every authority is of God. Even the beasts are subject to His rule, Genesis 1:28f. We will tell? Daniel and friends? Daniel and God? The head of gold represents Nebuchadnezzar– We will see as we continue that reference to a king usually implies his kingdom. King and kingdom are inseparable.

“CHEST AND ARMS OF SILVER BELLY AND THIGHS OF BRONZE” V. 39 Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom is to come to an end. It will be succeeded by an inferior kingdom, and this will be followed by yet another and this third kingdom will rule over *“all the earth.”* Critics attack this verse, claiming that historically the kingdoms that followed Babylon were more extensive than that of Babylon. Obviously inferior does not refer to size because of the comment regarding the third kingdom. The following kingdoms lacked the central and fine organization which characterized the Babylonian Reign. The visions of Chapter seven may further add to our understanding of the comment.

“LEGS OF IRON AND FEET OF IRON AND CLAY”

V. 40–43 More detailed explanation is given at this point of Iron section of the image. We notice that Daniel interprets as he proceeds.

V. 40 Iron symbolizes strength and the fourth kingdom is one of great strength– It breaks and shatters and crushes all that went before it.

V. 41 Strong though it is yet there is a weakness and it shall be divided. The division is indicated according to Daniel not by the two legs, but by the two ingredients of the feet and toes. Iron and potter’s clay.

Vs. 42–43 It is important to read these two verses correctly.

V. 42 The toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay. Indicating that the kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. The toes then are part of this fourth kingdom as seen by Nebuchadnezzar.

V. 43 *“As you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall be mixed with the seed of men.” RSV has “So they will mix with one another in marriage.”*

The phrase *“Seed of men,”* is a problem but the important thing to note is that it is the iron and clay that are mixed and not the toes of the previous verse. While they are mixed ‘by the seed of men’ yet they will not hold together even as iron and clay do not mix.

THE STONE

Vs. 44–45 A fifth kingdom is yet to arise. Not part this time of the dream image but a kingdom represented by the stone that was cut without hands. (Extra details are here added. The stone was cut from a mountain). – The God of heaven Himself will set up this kingdom. It will not be the work of man (without hands). It will contrast with the other kingdoms mentioned in that it shall never be destroyed. It shall stand forever and its sovereignty shall not be left to another people. This same kingdom will break in pieces all that precede it. *“A great God”* has thus made known to Nebuchadnezzar what shall be hereafter.

THE MEANING OF THE DREAM, ITS INTERPRETATION AND ITS PURPOSE.

2:36–45

V. 30 Indicates that the dream and its interpretation are made known so that Nebuchadnezzar may know the thoughts of his mind. God graciously favoured him with a view of things as they really are. This is part of God’s dealings with the king as we will see, to bring him to acknowledge the Sovereignty of God and bless and praise the Most High, 5:34f.

He is given to understand clearly that his kingdom, while majestic and more magnificent than others, is of limited duration. Three other kingdoms will follow his. They will each differ in their characteristics and yet are together all part of the one immense structure. The Most High will Himself set up a kingdom that is unlike those of the dream image. It will in fact bring about the destruction of those kingdoms and then endure forever.

The dream must have been a tremendous encouragement

to the young men and to all the exiles if it were widely known. If for a moment they believed the Babylonian propaganda that Marduck had conquered YHWH, now they would be reassured. Their God was Sovereign and in control. This same message applies today to the people of God everywhere and is especially relevant those in oppressed and troubled situations. We are to understand that the upheavals of human history and the collapse of Empires is due ultimately to the Kingdom of God which pushes in upon our world with powerful and even devastating effects.

The prophecies of both Daniel and Revelation are first of all to encourage the people of God, in exile or suffering persecution. They are given to assure that no situation is out of God's control and ultimately He will quell the rebellion, and make an end of man's sin, gather His people to Himself in love that they might obey Him and enjoy Him forever.

INTERPRETING THE INTERPRETATION

Prophecy is never presented merely to satisfy the idle curiosity as to what might be, or to promote undue speculation which can detract from getting on with life and what God has for us to be about. Yet if there is a prophetic word being worked out in our day it is given for our edification and ought not to be neglected.

To open the commentaries at this point is to be confronted with a veritable barrage of speculation. Because the dream relates to history, future from Daniel's view point and some at least past from our viewpoint, some elements can be discerned as having been fulfilled.

2:36–38

All agree the first kingdom is Babylon.

2:39–40

Conservative Scholars and the Church traditionally have interpreted the second kingdom as that of the Medes and Persians. The third as Greece and the fourth as Rome.

Liberal Scholars see Greece as the fourth kingdom – the

third then as the Persian and the second as the Median kingdom. The assumption is that the book is of the second Century B.C. and is history and not prophecy. Rome could not have been intended as it did not exist. Greece must then be intended seeing that the writer at that time having suffered under Antiochus was expecting the Kingdom of God to then be ushered in (he was mistaken). This means that the writer must have seen the Medo–Persian Empire not as one but as two. His historical facts were incorrect, (another evidence of a late date.) Such an interpretation hardly needs comment if we accept prophecy as genuine. A cursory reading of the book shows that the author was by no means confused with regard to the Medo–Persian Empire 5:28. The mention of Darius the Mede 6:1–9:1, tended to support the idea but if Darius is seen to be Cyrus, as Wiseman suggests then the argument is invalid.

The Jews hold a conservative position with regards to the first three, but then see the fourth as the Turkish Empire. By this they avoid the Christian claim that the kingdom was established by Jesus in the days of Rome.

2:41–42

Opinions differ widely. Many see the two legs as representing the division of Rome into East and West in A.D. 364, the Liberals, the Greek kingdom between the Ptolemies and Seleucids.

Note the earlier exegesis. The iron and the clay represent the division. Daniel does not draw attention to the fact that there are two legs. Many who hold such an opinion then go on to see the kingdom further divided into 10 toes representing 10 kings. Again we note that this is to go far beyond the interpretation given by Daniel in Chapter two. In fact it is to import elements of a later vision into this one (Chapter 7). Nothing is made of the toes and in fact ten is not mentioned. If we place emphasis on 10 toes then why not on fingers etc., (some undoubtedly do so). We are not at liberty to go beyond the interpretation given by the writer in interpreting symbols.

Many Pre-Millennialists go yet further—Wood for example mistranslates the “And” of V.42 as “Indeed,” and then proceeds to introduce a long time gap between *Vs. 41 and 42*, claiming that the Roman Empire will fall but then rise again at the end time and be reconstituted with ten kings represented by the toes. He errs at three points. 1. Mistranslates. 2. Reads Chapter 7 into Chapter 2. 3. Interprets the passage to conform to his own preconceived ideas. It may well be the case that the Roman Empire will be reconstituted but Daniel certainly does not say that in Chapter 2. If the Bible teaches this we will have to find it elsewhere. Similar fanciful interpretations are multitudinous.

2:43

“By the seed of men—”

1. Intermixing in marriage.
2. Democracy/Monarchy.
3. Democracy/Dictatorship.
4. All the national elements contained in the first three.
5. Have a guess?

2:44–45

The Stone points to a new feature in history. It represents a new power and is not under men’s control. It is agreed that this represents the Messianic Kingdom. The differences here revolve around the words “in the days of those *kings the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom*”

A-Millennialist generally see this as referring to the kings of the kingdoms mentioned above. (Note no kings apart from Nebuchadnezzar have in fact been mentioned only kingdoms). Hence see it as a reference to the Coming of Jesus and the institution of the Spiritual Kingdom of Christ.

Pre-Millennialist generally see V.44 as a reference to the Millennial reign and connect the stone shattering the image with Revelation 19:11–20 Christ smiting the nations with the rod of iron. “*These kings*” then refer to ten kings who appear at the end of time. Points for and against are many and the argument endless.

2:46–49

V. 46 “Homage” The word implies an act of worship. Josephus tells of Alexander the Great bowing before the Jewish High Priest. A General questioned his actions saying, ‘*Men bow to you, why do you bow to a priest.*’ Alexander replied, “*It was not before him that I prostrated myself, but the God of whom he has the honour to be High Priest.*”³ Nebuchadnezzar’s actions and intent may have been similar.

V. 47 The king uttered some impressive words. He was undoubtedly deeply moved by the whole experience. The implication of the dream is that there is only one true God. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that He is the God of gods but not the only God. He demands to be acknowledged as God alone. It is not sufficient to reach out to Him while still holding on to idols. Nebuchadnezzar was not ready yet to face the implications of the revelation.

2:48–49

Daniel and his friends were duly exalted in the kingdom. Here again we see God providing and caring for His people. The exiles were given good farming areas to live in, built their own homes, had freedom of movement about the city. Had their own Elders and form of Government and worshipped freely. During the exile the synagogue type of worship came into existence.