

Study of Daniel
Enduring Word Daniel 2
Nebuchadnezzar Dreams of an Image
October 11, 2026

A. Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

1. (1) The troubling dream.

Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him.

a. In the second year: It is difficult to understand the exact time this speaks of. Some commentators say this happened while Daniel was in his three-year training course; others say that it was soon after he finished.

i. The ancient Babylonians spoke of the beginning and end of the reign of their kings in a way that often overlapped years. Therefore, the year 602 B.C. could be both the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign and after three years of training for the Hebrew youths.

b. His spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him: There was something disturbing about this dream and Nebuchadnezzar knew that it was unusually significant.

2. (2-9) Nebuchadnezzar demands to know the dream and its interpretation from his wise men.

Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream." Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation." The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap. However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation." They answered again and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation." The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, *there is only one* decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation."

a. Make known the dream to me: It is hard to say if Nebuchadnezzar really remembered the dream or not. Perhaps he had a general sense of it but only a vague remembrance of the details.

b. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation: Nebuchadnezzar couldn't know for certain that the wise men gave a correct *interpretation* of the dream. But he could test their ability to tell *what* he dreamed.

i. Despite their protests, Nebuchadnezzar didn't ask too much of these magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans. These men made their living on their supposed ability to contact the gods and gain secrets from the spirit realm. If they were really what they claimed to be, they should be able to tell Nebuchadnezzar *both* the dream and its interpretation.

c. You shall be cut in pieces: The harsh threat of Nebuchadnezzar and the method of execution he described are both perfectly consistent with the character of ancient eastern monarchs.

- i. Archer described one method of dismemberment: four trees were bent inwards and tied together at the top. The victim was tied to these four trees with a rope at each limb. Then the top rope was cut and the body snapped into four pieces.
- d. The Chaldeans: This is the first mention of the Chaldeans as a class of soothsayers to the king. Critics take the use of this word as a mistake that only a second century B.C. writer would make. Critics suppose that in Daniel's day, the term Chaldean was *only* used as a racial designation, describing what the Chaldeans thought was the master race who ruled Nebuchadnezzar's superpower empire.
 - i. But linguistic research has demonstrated that the Babylonian word for an astrologer-priest and their word for their supposed master race were homonyms, both having the sound Chaldean (*kas-du* in Babylonian), but each retaining their own meaning. This is the same way that the English sound *tu* can mean *to*, *two*, or *too*.
 - ii. Daniel's understanding of this is clear from the text, because he *also* used the term Chaldean in its racial sense ([Daniel 3:8](#) and [5:30](#)).
- e. Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: From [Daniel 2:4-7:28](#), the Biblical text is in Aramaic – not Hebrew. This is one of only three sections of the Bible written in Aramaic (see also [Ezra 4:8-6:18](#) and [Ezra 7:12-26](#)). Aramaic was the language of the Babylonian Empire.

3. (10-11) The wise men explain the impossibility of Nebuchadnezzar's request.

The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has *ever* asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. *It is* a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

- a. There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter: When the Chaldeans said this they admitted that true revelation comes from God down to man. They understood – perhaps against their own inclinations – that revelation was not the *achievement* of man.
 - i. Despite all their wisdom – real and imagined – these wise men had no answer for Nebuchadnezzar, because only *God* could bring an answer to the king.
 - ii. "They were like some modern ministers of our own day who spend their time studying philosophy, psychiatry, psychology, social science, political science, and then continue under the pretense of being God's messengers to men." (Strauss)
- b. No king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things: The strategy of the wise men was to convince the king that he was unreasonable, not that they were incompetent.
- c. Except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh: As far as these pagan magicians, astrologers, and wise men knew, this was true. They did not know what we know so plainly since the revelation of Jesus – that He is *Immanuel*, *God with us* ([Matthew 1:23](#)).

4. (12-13) A furious Nebuchadnezzar sentences all his wise men to death.

For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave a command to destroy all the wise *men* of Babylon. So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise *men*; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill *them*.

- a. The king was angry and very furious: Though he was a despot, Nebuchadnezzar knew that false religion is worse than useless. He knew that it was a curse, and he had no use for wise men that could not bring him wisdom from God.

b. Gave a command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon: As a new king, Nebuchadnezzar also perhaps used the situation to test the suitability of his father's old advisors. The dream provided him with a good reason to clean house.

B. God reveals the dream to Daniel.

1. (14-16) Daniel reacts to Nebuchadnezzar's decree by asking for a brief extension.

Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise *men* of Babylon; he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel. So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation.

a. With counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch: Daniel was obviously innocent in all this, yet he calmly and discretely dealt with the crisis. Daniel's calmness in this crisis showed what kind of man he really was. In one sense, crises do not *make* the man. Instead, they *reveal* the man.

b. Asked the king to give him time: This wasn't just a stalling tactic. Daniel knew that it takes time to listen to the Lord and to wait upon Him, and Daniel was willing to take the time if the king would grant it.

2. (17-18) Daniel asks his companions for prayer.

Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise *men* of Babylon.

a. That they might seek mercies from the God of heaven: Daniel was in the type of situation where only God could meet his need. Therefore, he knew how important it was for both him and his companions to pray.

i. The battle was won when Daniel prayed with his friends. Praying friends are a blessing, and "In prayer meetings such as this history has been made." (Strauss)

b. Concerning this secret: Daniel had confidence that God could do an unprecedented miracle. Joseph had interpreted dreams with God's help, but had not reconstructed the dreams.

c. Might not perish: Considering what was at stake, there is little doubt that their prayers were extremely earnest. God listens to earnest prayer.

3. (19) God reveals Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation to Daniel.

Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

a. The secret was revealed to Daniel: This was not *religion*, but *revelation*. Daniel did not find it out, God revealed it to him.

i. Christianity begins with the principle of *revelation*. What we know about God is what He has *revealed* to us. We do actively seek Him, but we seek what He has *revealed*. Our job isn't to figure things out about God, but to understand what He has revealed to us.

b. In a night vision: We don't know exactly what this is. It may have been a dream, or a supernatural vision that happened at night.

4. (20-23) Daniel praises God for this revelation.

Daniel answered and said:

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His.

And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings;
He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding.
He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what *is* in the darkness,
And light dwells with Him. I thank You and praise You,
O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might,
And have now made known to me what we asked of You, For You have made known to us the king's demand."

a. He changes... He removes... He knows: Daniel praised God for His power and might. Daniel thought of how God is in command of all things, and how God is mightier than a mighty king like Nebuchadnezzar.

b. He gives... He reveals: Daniel praised God for His *communication* to man. All God's power and might were of little help to Daniel if God stayed silent. Daniel was grateful that God revealed His great knowledge.

c. You have given... You have made known to us: Daniel had the certainty of faith to believe that God gave him the answer, even before confirming it before Nebuchadnezzar.

i. Our level of faith is often indicated by how long it takes us to start praising God. If we won't praise Him until the answer is in hand, then we don't have much faith. Greater faith is able to praise God when the *promise* is given and received.

C. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation.

1. (24-30) Daniel is ushered into the king's presence, and gives glory to God for revealing the dream. Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise *men* of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise *men* of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation." Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation." The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?" Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise *men*, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: As for you, O king, thoughts came *to your mind while on your bed, about* what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for *our* sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

a. I have found a man: Arioch tried to glorify himself and Daniel for the answer to the king's dream. But Daniel refused to take credit, recognizing that the credit went to God, who revealed this dream to Daniel.

b. What will be in the latter days: Nebuchadnezzar's dream didn't just concern himself for his kingdom, but the whole span of the future – which was to Nebuchadnezzar the latter days.

2. (31-35) Daniel describes Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

"You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor *was* excellent, stood before you; and its form *was* awesome. This image's head *was* of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched

while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”

a. Behold, a great image: Daniel’s description was clear. This was a massive and spectacular image made of different materials (fine gold... silver... bronze... iron... partly of iron and partly of clay).

i. The materials descended in value from top to bottom, with gold at the top and iron mixed with clay at the bottom.

b. Broke them in pieces: This spectacular image was destroyed by a stone made without hands, and what remained of it was blown away like worthless chaff, while the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

3. (36-45) The interpretation of the dream.

“This *is* the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, *are* a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given *them* into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all; you *are* this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, *that kingdom* will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And *as* the toes of the feet *were* partly of iron and partly of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”

a. Now we will tell the interpretation: Daniel first accurately reported the *content* of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. This gave Daniel credibility when explaining what the dream *meant*: the interpretation.

b. You are this head of gold: Nebuchadnezzar was clearly said to be the head of gold. After him would come three other kingdoms, each represented by the different materials Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. After the succession of kingdoms, then came the final kingdom set up by God.

i. “Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom was likened unto gold because it was an *absolute* monarchy, God’s ideal government. Nebuchadnezzar was not, however, God’s ideal monarch!” (Talbot)

c. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure: This prophetic dream was clearly fulfilled in history.

i. Three dominating empires came after Babylon: Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The nature of these empires was accurately reflected by the nature of the image Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream.

- ii. The empires succeeding Babylon were inferior to Nebuchadnezzar's head of gold in the sense of their centralization of absolute power. Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarch, and the succeeding empires were progressively less so. They were larger and lasted longer than Babylon, but none held as much centralized power as Nebuchadnezzar did.
 - iii. "Babylon, the head of *gold*, was an absolute autocracy. Persia, a monarchial oligarchy with the nobles equal to the king in all but office, is represented by *silver*. Greece is set forth by *brass*, indicated the still lower value of its aristocracy of mind and influence... Rome, a democratic imperialism, with military dominion dependent upon the choice of army and citizenry and administered in the spirit of martial law, is set forth by *iron*." (Newell)
 - iv. The third kingdom of bronze was the one which shall rule over all the earth. Indeed, Alexander's Grecian Empire was the largest among those compared in the image (except the final government of the Messiah).
 - v. The Babylonian Empire stood for 66 years; the Medo-Persian Empire for 208 years; the Grecian Empire for 185 years, and the Roman Empire stood for more than 500 years.
 - vi. Liberal commentators do not believe that the fourth kingdom is Rome, but they say it is Greece, and that the second and third kingdoms are Media and Persia respectively, instead of the Medo-Persian Empire as a whole. They interpret this way because they believe it was impossible for Daniel to predict the rise of these empires.
- d. In the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: This described the fulfillment of this prophecy in the future. The stone cut without hands shatters a confederation of kings, represented by the feet of the image, and then God's Kingdom will dominate the earth.
- i. Since Roman history provides no fulfillment of this federation of kings (which seems to number ten, because of the number of toes, and passages like [Daniel 7:24](#) and [Revelation 17:12](#)) this prophecy must still be future.
 - ii. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, there has never been a world-dominating empire equal to Rome. Many have tried – the Huns, Islam, the so-called Holy Roman Empire, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin – but none have succeeded. Each of these had amazing power and influence, but nothing compared to that of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire, in some form or another, will be revived under the leadership of the final fallen dictator, the Antichrist.
 - iii. It broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold: This described a single, decisive event that shattered the image representing the glory of man's rule on earth. Since the Church or the Gospel have not, in a single decisive event, shattered the reign of human kingdoms, this event is still in the *future*.
 - iv. This isn't the gradual salvation of the world by the church; "Smashing is not salvation. Crushing is not conversion. Destroying is not delivering nor is pulverizing the same as purification." (Heslop)
 - v. This stone cut without hands is the Messiah, not the Church. [Psalm 118:22](#), [Isaiah 8:14](#), [Isaiah 28:16](#), and [Zechariah 3:9](#) also refer to Jesus as a stone.
 - vi. Therefore, the final superpower of the world is thought to be a revival of the Roman Empire, a continuation of this image. This will be the final world empire that the returning Jesus will conquer over.

d. The kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile: This final world empire will be according to the nature of clay mixed with iron. It will have more the *image* of true strength than the *substance* of strength.

i. As a whole, the image accurately represented human power and empire. The image *seems* invincible, but it was actually unstable at its base. Therefore one blow to the foundation could topple the whole thing.

ii. It's also significant to see that the image described *devolution*, not *evolution*. Instead of man beginning in the dust and evolving into gold, this vision declares that man's dominion begins with gold and devalues into dust.

iii. Some 40 years from this, Daniel had a vision describing the same succession of empires. Daniel saw it from God's perspective, and Nebuchadnezzar saw it from man's perspective. Nebuchadnezzar saw these empires as an impressive image; Daniel saw them as fierce beasts.

f. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure: Daniel didn't guess or analyze. Through him God announced the future. The only reason that God can predict history is because he can control it.

4. (46-49) Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to Daniel's reporting of the dream and its interpretation.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God *is* the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret." Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise *men* of Babylon. Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel *sat* in the gate of the king.

a. Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face: This great king was obviously impressed. He wasn't in the habit of showing such respect to anyone, especially a foreign slave who was about to be executed with the rest of the wise men. This confirmed that Daniel accurately reported the dream and skillfully explained its meaning.

b. Your God is the God of gods: Nebuchadnezzar knew that it wasn't Daniel himself that revealed these things, but Daniel's God revealed it through Daniel. Daniel wanted the glory to go to God, and it did.

c. The king promoted Daniel: Daniel not only had his life spared, but he was promoted to high office – and he made sure his friends were also promoted. It was fitting that Daniel's friends got to share in his advancement, because they accomplished much of the victory through their prayers.