

## UNIT 1: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Lesson 9

May 3, 2026

# God Speaks Through Daniel:

## God can speak through those wholly devoted to Him.

### THE LESSON OVERVIEW

Daniel 2 serves as a foundational lesson for the rest of the book, highlighting God's sovereignty. In this chapter, God granted King Nebuchadnezzar a historically significant dream, which Daniel, through divine insight, interpreted. This interpretation not only spared Daniel and others from death but also revealed a profound vision of God's intentions for His people and the world. The chapter demonstrates the unmatched authority of God, surpassing all human power, and reminds us of His deep care for His people. It offers a timeless perspective on divine governance and human history within God's ultimate plan.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

King Nebuchadnezzar, one of the ancient world's most prominent rulers, ascended to Babylon's throne in 605 BC after triumphing over Egypt. Under his leadership, Babylon flourished as the dominant power in the region, leaving a lasting legacy until his death in 562 BC. His successor, Evilmerodach, marked the beginning of a series of weak and corrupt rulers (see 2 Kings 25:27-30). Despite Babylon's eventual fall to Persia in 539 BC, Nebuchadnezzar's reign remains historically significant, notably influencing the narrative of the book of Daniel and shaping the region's political and cultural landscape during his time.

### THE LESSON OUTLINE

#### 1. NEBUCHADNEZZAR SEEKS A DREAM INTERPRETER: Daniel 2:1-13.

- A. A Troubled King, (1-6)
- B. An Impossible Assignment, (7-13)

#### 2. GOD GIVES DANIEL A VISION: Daniel 2:14-23.

- A. Brave Man of God, (14-16)
- B. Call to Urgent Prayer, (17-23)

#### 3. DANIEL INTERPRETS; NEBUCHADNEZZAR BELIEVES: Daniel 2:24-49.

- A. Divine Answer, (24-30)
- B. Historic Revelation, (31-49)

## DISCUSSING THE LESSON

### 1. NEBUCHADNEZZAR SEEKS A DREAM INTERPRETER: Daniel 2:1-13.

#### A. A Troubled King, Daniel 2:1-6.

The Book of Daniel has long challenged interpreters of the Bible who have questioned whether its prophets genuinely foretold the future. Why? Chapter 2 lays out the history of that region of the world from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar until modern times. It opens by stating that in the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. Like many in the ancient world, the Babylonians believed dreams were messages from the gods, so it was essential to understand what they meant. And this was no ordinary dream for Nebuchadnezzar. It upset him so much that he could not sleep (v. 1) as he discerned an important and ominous message in the dream.

It was the job of royal assistants, or “wise men” such as “magicians ... astrologers, and ... sorcerers” (v. 2) to provide an interpretation. They were happy to oblige, but first they needed to hear from the king (vv. 3-4). However, Nebuchadnezzar insisted that they must tell him what he had dreamed and then interpret it. Worse yet, failure to do so would bring dreadful consequences. They would be killed, and their families would be left homeless and destitute (v. 5). Conversely, success would bring incredible rewards to the interpreter (v. 6). Their task was set, one way or the other. There was no middle ground.

#### B. An Impossible Assignment, Daniel 2:7-13.

The wise men were powerless to answer Nebuchadnezzar’s request, thereby, escalating the situation (vv. 7-9). They offered no solution, and he recognized that they were unable to meet his demand, perhaps sensing that they were trying to mislead him. In their effort to escape death, they accused Nebuchadnezzar of being unreasonable: No human could do what asked – and no king had ever even asked such a thing (vv. 9-11). Only the gods themselves could know a man’s private dreams, they argued.

Nebuchadnezzar was not interested in reasoning with them. This dream was uniquely with them. This dream was uniquely troubling. No matter how impossible the task was, he needed to know what the dream meant. He then ordered the execution of all of his wise men – including those he had not consulted (v. 12). Among them were Daniel and his friends (v. 13). At this point, the situation looked hopeless – for Nebuchadnezzar as well as all the wise men.

Life can get tough, and we all face moments that leave us feeling frustrated or overwhelmed. It’s natural to want to fix things our way, but sometimes that approach can backfire, hurting us or others unintentionally. When you are feeling troubled, take a step back and think about how you’re reacting. Instead of rushing to act, ask God for guidance to respond in a way that is thoughtful, kind, and aligned with what’s right.

### 2. GOD GIVES DANIEL A VISION: Daniel 2:14-23.

#### A. Brave man of God, Daniel 2:14-16.

Verse 14 reminds us of the spiritual gifts God gave these four men, so it should come as no surprise that Daniel did not panic. Instead, he relied upon his giftedness: “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” (v. 14 NKJV). God gave Daniel the ability to speak effectively and persuasively with Arioch at this moment of intense pressure when wisdom was most needed.

Daniel trusted the Lord, placing not only his life in God's hands, but also the lives of his friends and the other wise men.

First, Daniel questioned the severity and the urgency of the king's harsh and hasty decree (v. 15). Daniel's question was logical, given the situation. After hearing the details, Daniel rushed to the king, requesting time to provide the correct interpretation (v. 16). Daniel showed unique confidence in God at this moment. As a devout Hebrew, Daniel already knew from the story of Joseph that God could give interpretations of dreams (see Genesis 40). Daniel's boldness and trust in the Lord were about to be tested in high-pressure circumstances.

### **B. Call to Urgent Prayer, Daniel 2:17-23.**

We can see the Lord's favor on Daniel, as Nebuchadnezzar allowed him time to seek an answer to his dream. Daniel immediately rushed to tell his three friends what was unfolding, and they immediately engaged in intense prayer amid this life-and-death crisis (vv. 17-18). God answered Daniel's prayer: "Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision" (v. 19 NKJV). The wording is important: Daniel received a vision, which, unlike a dream, occurs when a person is awake. Daniel and his friends likely prayed well into the night until God answered with a vision. Also, the term "secret" highlights that Daniel's vision involved what was unknown, even unknowable, to any human being. This was a supernatural moment.

Daniel's response to the vision was fitting for a faith-filled man of God: "Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven" (v. 19). A central theme of the Book of Daniel is that the Lord alone is the one true God, who is greater than all other powers. Daniel's prayer of praise builds on this truth. In this prayer, Daniel identified God as eternally wise and powerful (v. 20). He is sovereign over the forces of nature and the mightiest of "kings" (v. 21). He grants revelation and discernment to His people, for He knows all things and is the source of "light" (v. 22). He can be trusted to grant wisdom and knowledge when we struggle with the obscurity of limited human understanding (v. 23). He enlightens our path with help, direction, and knowledge.

Life's most difficult moments reveal what truly matters to us. When things feel chaotic and anxiety take over, it's easy to feel lost. But as Christians, there's comfort in knowing God is always there, ready to exchange our worries for His peace. Even in the darkest moments, when trusting feels hard, He calls us to let go of our fears and lean on Him. It's a beautiful reminder that He cares deeply for us, as 1 Peter 5:7 says: "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."

## **3. DANIEL INTERPRETS; NEBUCHADNEZZAR BELIEVES: Daniel 2:24-49.**

### **A. Divine Answer, Daniel 2:24-30.**

One can only imagine the array of emotions facing Daniel (vv. 24-30). His joy erupted into praise when God answered his and his friends' prayers. Yet, Daniel also had a face a king who had decreed their execution. The exercise of Daniel's faith was far from finished. Two points deserve special attention. First, Arioch identified Daniel as "a man of the captive of Judah" (v. 25). Second, when the king asked if Daniel could describe the troubling dream and interpret it, Daniel did not claim to hold such ability himself. Instead, he reaffirmed what the wise men had said: No man could do what the king asked. "But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets" (v. 28). Furthermore, Daniel said "this secret" had not been revealed to him because he

had “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” (v. 30 NKJV).

Only the one true God of the exiles from Judah could reveal Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. And God had done so through Daniel. Moreover, this was taking place to reveal to “Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days” (v. 28). There are two crucial points here: First, this was God’s message to Nebuchadnezzar regarding future events, even centuries ahead. Second, only the living God could provide this information. Thus, God was asserting His sovereign power and authority over all other powers, both gods and kings. He alone knows and controls the future.

## **B. Historic Revelation, Daniel 2:31-49.**

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the future took the form of an enormous statue with a head of gold, a chest and arms made of silver, a belly and thighs of bronze, and legs and feet of iron (vv. 31-33). However, the iron in the feet of the image was mingled with clay, making it unstable. Then, a rock suddenly appeared and crushed the image into dust, which was carried away by the wind. In turn, the rock became an enormous mountain filling the whole earth (vv. 34-35). This vision is rich in symbolism vital to its interpretation. The components of the image declined in value going from top to bottom. The rock was identified as divine in origin, and it obliterated all traces of the statue before growing to fill the entire earth.

This statue represented the kingdoms that would dominate the region of the Bible lands from the time of Nebuchadnezzar forward. The golden head, made of the most precious material in the statue, represented Nebuchadnezzar (v. 38). He exercised total control over the kingdom of Babylon, which extended from [modern] Egypt and Saudi Arabia, north to Turkey, and across into modern Iran. However, Daniel said Nebuchadnezzar’s authority was not his own: “The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory” (v. 37).

Babylon was mighty and influential under Nebuchadnezzar. But when he died, the kingdom quickly declined due to weak leadership. It was overtaken by the “silver” Medo-Persian Empire, which would rule from approximately 539 to 330 BC. This empire is mentioned in Daniel 7 and 8, and its Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes appear repeatedly in Scripture – Cyrus throughout Ezra; Darius in Daniel 5 and 6; Xerxes throughout Esther; Artaxerxes in Nehemiah 2, 5, and 13.

The “bronze” Greek Empire followed, beginning with Alexander the Great’s rule in 330 BC. However, while it extended from modern-day India to Greece under Alexander, warring factions broke it into pieces after he died in 323 BC. (See also Daniel’s visions in 8:5 and 11:3-4). The Roman Empire followed, beginning in 27 BC, and the “legs of iron” foreshadowed its immense cruelty, as well as its relative inferiority to what came before (2:33). From the fall of Rome would come a succession of weak, short-lived states, the “feet ... part of iron, and part of clay” (v. 42). Some scholars see various historical leaders like Charlemagne, Napoleon, and others alluded to here, while others believe it refers to a relatively weak end-time coalition of nations.

In the climactic ending of the dream, the power and glory of human government, and political and social powers, were crushed into dust, destroying the wealth, strength, and self-

reliance embodied in vain ambition. In its place there arose, and continues to occur, a kingdom in Christ that will “never be destroyed” (v. 44). Ultimately, the kingdom was embodied in Christ’s first coming, and He will one day return to judge evil humanity and reward those who call upon Him as Lord. This is the great and precious hope we have in Christ.

The power and authority of Daniel’s interpretation are seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s amazing response (2:46-49). There, this king, who held unrivaled power and worshipped a pantheon of gods, declared the God of Daniel to be “a God of gods, and a Lord of kings,” meaning the greatest God of all (v. 47). After offering sacrifices to that God, Nebuchadnezzar elevated Daniel to be the highest administrator in Babylon. Daniel and his friends would oversee the personal matters of the king (vv. 48-49). Truly, God had spoken through Daniel in ways only God could do. As a result, God was preparing Daniel and his friends for even greater things ahead.

Daniel 2 is a fascinating example of Scripture’s divine inspiration, laying out the course of world history with stunning accuracy from 2,600 years ago. But it’s more than just a fascinating prophecy – it’s a reminder of how deeply God loves each of us. He cared so much that He sent Jesus to offer us salvation. It’s incredible to think that the God who guides history also cares about our personal lives. The best way to respond is by worshipping Him wholeheartedly and growing closer to Christ every day.

### **CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP**

Daniel 2 reminds us of the kind of hope disciples of Christ offer a lost world. God can speak through us, as He did through Daniel, to let the world know that God is still in control.

### **MINISTRY IN ACTION**

Find someone in your sphere of influence who needs encouragement. Pray with them, sharing that the Lord Jesus Christ desires to come alongside them in grace and mercy to strengthen them.

## WORKSHEET

### The Hymn of Three Young Men

**The story of the three young Israelite men** thrown into a fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar is told in the Book of Daniel, chapter 3. Their Hebrew names were “Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah” (1:6).

**In the Septuagint (Greek) version of Daniel**, included in the story is the “Hymn of the Three Young Men,” not in our English Bibles. This hymn runs to 39 long verses (3:51-90). Following is the introduction to the hymn, and a very few selected verses from it, taken from The Orthodox Study Bible (SAAS).

**“But the Angel of the Lord went down** into the furnace to join Azariah and his companions, and shook off the fiery flame of the furnace He made the inside of the furnace to be as though a dew-laden breeze were blowing through it, so the fire did not touch them at all, or cause them pain, or trouble them.

**“Then the three**, as if with one mouth, sang, glorified, and blessed God in the furnace, saying:

**“Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers,**  
For you are praiseworthy  
And exalted beyond measure unto the ages ....

**“Bless the Lord, O Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael.**  
And sing a hymn to Him,  
And exalt Him beyond measure unto the ages;  
For He delivered us from Hades  
And saved us from the hand of death.  
He rescued us from the midst of the burning fiery furnace  
And saved us from the midst of the fire.

**“Give thanks to the Lord**, for He is good,  
Because His mercy endures forever.”

## Uncompromising Faith

### Daniel 3

Hideyoshi was a warlord who ruled in Japan during the late 1500s. He commissioned a colossal statue of Buddha for a shrine in Kyoto. It took tens of thousands of men more than five years to build. The work has barely been completed when a 1596 earthquake brought the roof of the shrine down and wrecked the statue. In a rage, Hideyoshi reportedly cursed the Buddha and said something to this effect: “What kind of Buddha is this, who can’t even care for his own temple!”

1. Some two thousand years before Hideyoshi, another ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, commissioned an imposing statue. How does Daniel 3:1 describe this statue?
2. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refused to bow, who responded on behalf of the giant statue (vv. 19-20)?
3. How does this scenario reflect the description of idols in Psalm 135:15-18?
4. Name some of the “golden images” in our country to whom we might feel pressure to bow. How can we stand against them?

King Nebuchadnezzar had no problem with the Hebrews worshiping their God – as long as it did not affect their obedience to him. Joseph Stowell wrote, “Paganism allows your god as a preference but never as the singularly preeminent God” (The Trouble With Jesus).