

Daniel 2:20-45 – Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream Interpreted

At the beginning of chapter 2, we learned that Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that troubled him. He gathered the wise men of Babylon and demanded that they retroactively read his mind and tell him the dream that he had and then give him the interpretation. Twice, the wise men asked the king to tell them the dream. When the wise men finally said that it was impossible for any man to do what the king asked, the king ordered that all the wise men of Babylon be killed. When the captain of the king’s guard came for Daniel to kill him, Daniel made a deal. He asked the king for some time and then he would tell the king what his dream was and what the interpretation was. Daniel and his friends prayed to God and asked that God would reveal the mystery of the dream. God granted their wish and gave Daniel the answer in a vision of the night. You might think that Daniel would rush off and get word to the king that the mystery of the king’s dream was now revealed. But that is not what happened. The verses we covered last time ended with “Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven”.

Read Daniel 2:20-23.

By what name or phrase did Daniel address God in verses 20 and 23? In verse 23, Daniel said that he gave thanks and praise. What did Daniel praise God for? What did Daniel thank God for? In verse 21, Daniel’s prayer contained a hint at what the dream was about. God removes kings and sets up kings. Why did Daniel thank and praise God before letting the king know that the mystery was revealed? Couldn’t he have waited until after he found out that he was not going to be killed? (2:20-23)

Read Daniel 2:24-30.

After his prayer, Daniel went to the captain of the king’s guard and asked to be taken to the king because he now knew the dream’s interpretation. What did the captain of the guard say when he brought Daniel to the king? It is a bit of a challenge to reconcile verse 16 with verses 24-25. Some think that the captain did not know about the agreement that Daniel made with the king. They think that the captain, on his own, decided not to kill the wise men and therefore Daniel’s revelation would conceal the fact that he disobeyed the king by delaying the executions. That doesn’t make sense to me. Does it make sense to you? Some commentators resolve the issue by skipping over these verses. It could be called the ostrich method of interpretation. (2:24-25)

In contrast to the captain, how did Daniel respond when the king asked him if he could reveal the dream and its interpretation? Notice that in verse 11, the wise men said that only “the gods” could reveal the dream. In contrast, Daniel said there is “a God” as in “one God”. Do you think Nebuchadnezzar knew who Daniel meant when he said “God”? (2:26-28)

From verses 28 and 29, why did Nebuchadnezzar have the dream? From verse 30, why did God reveal the dream and its interpretation to Daniel? (2:28-30)

Read Daniel 2:31-45.

In verses 31-35, the dream was finally revealed. What did the king see in his dream? (2:31-35)

In verse 36 Daniel didn't bother to get confirmation from the king that this was his dream. God already confirmed that it was the dream. Daniel then moved on to the interpretation in verses 37-45. From verses 37-38, who was the head of gold? How was the head of gold described? (2:36-38)

The silver and bronze sections of the image only got a brief mention. They were two kingdoms which would come after Nebuchadnezzar. What was the subtle message about the endurance of the Babylonian empire? Which kingdom was the silver kingdom? Even though the silver kingdom was called "inferior", that inferior kingdom overthrew the Babylonian empire. Which kingdom was the bronze kingdom? Silver is worth more than bronze but once again the bronze kingdom overthrew the silver kingdom. In chapter 7, Daniel had a vision about four beasts that parallels Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In chapter 8, Daniel had a follow-up vision about a ram with two horns and a goat with one horn. Daniel was told that the ram represented the kings of Medo-Persia and that the goat represented the king of Greece. That king was most likely Alexander the Great. (2:39)

The dream had an image with 4 sections which represented 4 kingdoms, but there was a fifth kingdom in the dream. How was the fourth kingdom described? The term "feet of clay" was derived from this kingdom. What was the significance of the feet of iron and clay? What is the fourth kingdom? It seems natural to say that the fourth kingdom is the Roman empire which followed the Greek empire. Some argue that it is the kingdom which came after Alexander. The problem is that after Alexander, the empire was split up among four Greek generals. It was not a united kingdom. Also, the timing doesn't fit with the fifth kingdom. Others argue that this dream is parallel with the vision given to Daniel in chapter 7. The fourth beast which corresponds to the iron kingdom is understood by some to be the final kingdom before the second coming of Christ. (2:40-43)

What is the fifth kingdom? How was it described? What message did the fifth kingdom have for Nebuchadnezzar? What message did it have for Daniel and the other exiles? "The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure." (2:44-45)