

## Daniel Study 8 Ch 2

Our studies tonight both cover world history down to the coming of Jesus Christ.

Now some of you may have been wondering why we waited so long to reach this point, as Daniel is known for it's prophecies.

There are 2 reasons.

First, I have chosen to follow the chiastic structure that we have mentioned several times.

Second, and most important, the whole message of Daniel, in one form are another, is about God delivering his people. If he can deliver from the fire, the lions and insanity (yes, I believe that Nebuchadnezzar was one of God's people!) he can deliver you, now, or at the end of time.

But by the same token, if you defy God, whether you are a king, an official, or a large worldly power, your day in judgment before God is coming. Maybe not today, but it will not be avoided in the end.

I also believe that there is a sub theme running through the book that God's people are not just Hebrews, but those who listen to him.

Daniel chapter 2 and 7 deal with the same general subject. They present an outline world view from the days of the Golden Kingdom of Babylon to the return of Jesus to set up his Eternal Kingdom.

There are several differences between Daniel 2 and Daniel 7.

First, Daniel 2 was given to a pagan king. Daniel 7 was given to God's faithful prophet. This accounts for some of the differences between the prophecies.

Then Nebuchadnezzar's dream was much more simple than that of Daniel in chapter 7. You will see that as we go along.

The king's dream was a inert metal man. It did not move or talk. The only action is when the stone strikes the image and grinds it to powder.

(I know I'm giving away some of the story!!)

In Daniel's dream we see creatures that are alive and acting. Those actions become a major part of the story, as we will see.

Daniel 2 is dated the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

Daniel 7 is dated to the first year of Belshazzar's reign.

The final difference we will discuss here is this: The introduction to the dream in chapter 2 is fairly long. It tells us the story behind the dream.

The introduction to Daniel 7 seems to be more to date the dream than anything else and is very short.

Let's read the story out of the New Living Translation to get the story.

**Daniel 2:1-13 (NLT)**

<sup>1</sup> One night during the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had such disturbing dreams that he couldn't sleep.

<sup>2</sup> He called in his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers, and he demanded that they tell him what he had dreamed. As they stood before the king,

<sup>3</sup> he said, "I have had a dream that deeply troubles me, and I must know what it means."

<sup>4</sup> Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "Long live the king! Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means." (by the way, this verse is where the Aramaic parts of Daniel begin.)

<sup>5</sup> But the king said to the astrologers, "I am serious about this. If you don't tell me what my dream was and what it means, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be turned into heaps of rubble!

<sup>6</sup> But if you tell me what I dreamed and what the dream means, I will give you many wonderful gifts and honors. Just tell me the dream and what it means!"

<sup>7</sup> They said again, "Please, Your Majesty. Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means."

<sup>8</sup> The king replied, "I know what you are doing! You're stalling for time because you know I am serious when I say,

<sup>9</sup> 'If you don't tell me the dream, you are doomed.' So you have conspired to tell me lies, hoping I will change my mind. But tell me the dream, and then I'll know that you can tell me what it means."

<sup>10</sup> The astrologers replied to the king, "No one on earth can tell the king his dream! And no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer!

<sup>11</sup> The king's demand is impossible. No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people."

Have you ever tried to recall a dream? Have you puzzled over it for a time only to have something trigger the recollection?

This is what had the wise men in trouble. If they made up a dream, and then suddenly the king remembered what it was, they were dead.

The king suddenly realized that it was very possible that they had made up meanings for his dreams all along.

So the wise men were forced to admit that they couldn't tell the dream. They argued that the king was unreasonable. And they had to admit that they had no connection with the gods. They just admitted that they could not do what they were hired to do.

But they couldn't tell what the dream was. They were very good at interpreting dreams. They could read the stars, sheep livers and many other signs in nature, but they were stumped here. They even declared that it was possible only with a direct connection with the gods. Which, by the way, is what they claimed to have. Reading on:

<sup>12</sup> The king was furious when he heard this, and he ordered that all the wise men of Babylon be executed.

<sup>13</sup> And because of the king's decree, men were sent to find and kill Daniel and his friends.

If these men could not do what he needed to be done, they were useless to him, and at best a drain on his treasury, and at worst frauds and charlatans.

Now Daniel and his friends were not at that meeting with the king as they were neophytes. But they were in the class of people the king was angry with.

Imagine being interrupted by a armed soldier pounding on you door!! With them is Arioch, the one charged with carrying out the king's orders to kill them all. He was also the one in whose eyes Daniel and his friends had found favor.

Rather than panic, Daniel asks what is going on. Arioch gave him the short version, and Daniel asks to be brought before the king.

Now the king and Arioch were more interested in a solution to the problem than killing the wise men. After there was a lot invested in these men.

So the king gave Daniel was some time.

Daniel goes home and they have a prayer meeting. This was a sincere, urgent, heartfelt prayer meeting. It was a life and death prayer meeting. And God hears and answers the prayers.

Daniel is given the dream and the meaning.

Daniel is thankful, and sings a psalm of praise to his God.

### **Daniel 2:19-23 (NLT)**

<sup>19</sup> That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven.

<sup>20</sup> He said, "Praise the name of God forever and ever, for he has all wisdom and power.

<sup>21</sup> He controls the course of world events; he removes kings and sets up other kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the scholars.

<sup>22</sup> He reveals deep and mysterious things and knows what lies hidden in darkness, though he is surrounded by light.

<sup>23</sup> I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors, for you have given me wisdom and strength. You have told me what we asked of you and revealed to us what the king demanded."

Daniel recognizes that God is not just an abstract concept. He is real. He answers prayers. He knows the deep mysteries. He gives wisdom and knowledge to his people.

And, Daniel adds, "You have shown me what the king wants to know."

I am sure that Arioch was at Daniel's door bright and early the next morning. He had more to gain from this than Daniel did, for he had brought Daniel to the king. He also had as much more to lose.

As Daniel approaches the king he assures Nebuchadnezzar that he has an answer for him.

The king asks if Daniel can give the interpretation of the dream. Daniel tactfully and mercy to the wise men says: "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise *men*, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king.<sup>28</sup> 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."

Daniel validates the statements of the wise men, which saved their lives, but also reinforced the confession that they were not in communion with the gods as they claimed to be.

Then he goes on: "Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these:...."

And Daniel proceeds to tell the king that he saw a great but strange image. It was made of different metals. The head was gold, the arms and chest were silver, the belly was brass, the legs of iron, and the feet made with iron and clay.

As the king contemplated this in his dream, a stone cut out of a mountain without human hands, came slamming into the image and ground it into powder. A stone that was stronger than gold, silver, brass, or iron. Then that stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

As we contemplate the image we see that each successive metal is of less value than the previous one. We also see that the metals also increase in strength as they move down the image.

They also increase in hardness. Interestingly, the clay mixed in with the iron in the feet could really be translated ceramic, which is brittle, but wear resistant, but of little value otherwise.

I can imagine Nebuchadnezzar beginning to nod his head as the dream comes back to him. From time to time he might have said. "Yes" as Daniel made a point. When he finished the retelling of the dream, then Daniel begins to give the interpretation. We cannot do much better than to read the text here.

### **Daniel 2:36-45 (NKJV)**

<sup>36</sup> "This *is* the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king.

<sup>37</sup> "You, O king, *are* a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory;

<sup>38</sup> "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.

It is not unrealistic to claim Nebuchadnezzar as the head of gold. He was the one who gave the kingdom its strength. He reigned through about 2/3 of the life of the kingdom. He build up the empire, and the beautiful city of Babylon. He was the head of gold.

However:

<sup>9</sup> But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.

<sup>40</sup> 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.

<sup>41</sup> 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.

<sup>42</sup> 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.

<sup>43</sup> 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.

<sup>44</sup> 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.

<sup>45</sup> 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."

There would be another kingdom that followed Babylon. Daniel 7 defines it as Medo-Persia. Then a third, Greece, a fourth, the iron rule of Rome, and then a division of the kingdom with small nations.

We have already seen how the Persians took Babylon. They diverted the Euphrates river and walked under the walls and took the city, probably with some inside help. And how were the Persians inferior? They claimed more territory than Babylon. They had larger armies. They lasted longer.

Babylonian culture was seen as superior. Think Paris, Rome, or London. Persians were seen as country bumpkins. They had no written language until the time of the empire, when they wanted to start recording their feats. They more commonly used the Elamite language more commonly. On the other hand, Babylonian language went back over 2000 years, and helped preserve the rich learning of science, religion, and culture of the Babylonians back to the first Babylonian empire.

But the Persians were not to last forever. Looming on the western frontier of Persia was the kingdom of Greece and Macedonia. From that area came the lightning advance of one of the world's greatest generals, Alexander the great. Although the reign of Alexander was relatively brief, his accomplishments were unparalleled to that time. Darius III's armies of over a million men were defeated by Alexander's approximately 20,000 highly mobile soldiers.

We will see more on this later.

Alexander dies in Babylon. His kingdom is divided into 4, all of which were eventually absorbed by the iron rule of Rome.

But even that immensely powerful kingdom would not last forever. Will a greater kingdom arise?

The prophecy says no. The dream describes the power of Rome being divided by divisions that are partly strong and partly weak.

The Emperor Justinian made a second capital of Rome in Constantinople. Many people compare that to the two legs of iron. That division began the weakening of the empire. The city of Rome fell to the Ostrogoths in 476 A.D., who fell in turn fell in 555, at which point historians begin to refer to Medieval Rome, which was a divided, fairly weak kingdom. The city of Rome entered that century a prosperous, beautiful, and powerful city. It exited the century as a broken down, depopulated city that controlled virtually nothing.

The church father Jerome lived through some of this time and he wrote:

"Moreover, the fourth kingdom, which plainly pertains to the Romans, is the iron which breaks in pieces and subdues all things. But its feet and toes are partly of iron and partly of clay, which at this time is most plainly attested. For just as in its beginning nothing was stronger and more unyielding than the Roman Empire, so at the end of its affairs, nothing is weaker. *Commentary on Daniel*, comments on (Dan.)2:40, column 504.

The divided kingdoms would have their own cultural, linguistic, and territorial heritage, but they would never have the power once enjoyed as part of the Roman empire.

They might join for their own interests for a short time, but would never cleave, or adhere to each other for long. This is exactly what we have seen in Europe over and over.

This is not the end of the vision. We still have the stone that destroys the image. This is the apex of the dream. The whole point. Earthly kingdoms will come to an end and God will set up a kingdom that will last forever. It will never be destroyed. It will never be replaced. It will never be divided. It will remain strong eternally. It is the eternal kingdom of God. This is where history is heading.

God cared about an ancient king. He cares about humanity so much, that he gave that ancient king this dream, to be preserved forever, so we may know where this planet is headed.

And he also cares about you individually. He sent his son to help us prepare for that earth-shattering event. He wants us to be ready. He wants to take us home with him. He wants to restore this earth to it's pre-sin condition.

And that restoration is soon to come. The 4 great kingdoms are history. We live in the divided kingdoms. Soon the stone will strike the image and destroy it. Will you be ready for that?

Our Gospel text for this session is:

**Revelation 5:9-10 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

<sup>10</sup> And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."