

Daniel 2:1-16

A Nightmare Scenario

¹ In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. ² Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. ³ And the king said to them, "I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream." ⁴ Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation." ⁵ The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. ⁶ But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation." ⁷ They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation." ⁸ The king answered and said, "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm— ⁹ if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation." ¹⁰ The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. ¹¹ The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

¹² Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. ¹³ So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them. ¹⁴ Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁵ He declared to Arioch, the king's captain, "Why is the decree of the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. ¹⁶ And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king. — Daniel 2:1-16 ESV

Daniel and his three companions have been elevated to positions of honor and distinction within Nebuchadnezzar's court. Having excelled at their training and passed their oral exam with flying colors, they are part of the royal retinue and in the king's employment. Their rise to prominence is part of Yahweh's strategic plan and positions them perfectly for their next assignment.

The timing of this chapter is difficult to discern. The text describes it as "the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar" (Daniel 1:1 ESV). History records that he assumed the throne in 605 B.C., the same year his father died. But his official reign did not begin until the following spring on the first of Nisan, 604 B.C. The prior year was credited to his father's reign. Therefore, the second year of his reign would have begun in 603 B.C. and ended in 602 B.C. This would have

allowed Daniel and his friends to complete their training and enter Nebuchadnezzar's employment as the text suggests.

It is also possible that the four Hebrew young men excelled at their studies and "graduated" early, having caught their instructor's eyes and garnered the king's favor. But regardless of the timing, they were officially trusted advisors to the king when the events of this chapter begin.

It is important to recall what the author stated in the opening chapter: "God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (Daniel 1:17 ESV). This almost comes across as a parenthetical statement that has no context. The reader is forced to question why God would have given Daniel this supernatural ability when no dreams or visions are mentioned in chapter one. But the author knows where the story is going and he is preparing his audience for the events of chapter two.

It just so happened that Nebuchadnezzar became plagued by a series of repeated dreams that disturbed his sleep and unsettled his mind. These vivid and realistic dreams left him sleep-deprived and anxious to know their meaning, so he sent for his "enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans" (Daniel 2:2 ESV). These are the same men mentioned in Chapter 1.

The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service. Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom. — Daniel 1:19-20 NLT

But Chapter 2 mentions another group of individuals called the Chaldeans. They were a semi-nomadic tribe that lived in the southern part of Babylon. Over the centuries, several Chaldeans served as kings in Babylon, including Nebuchadnezzar and his father. In time, the term *Chaldean* became interchangeable with *Babylon*. As a Chaldean himself, Nebuchadnezzar likely filled his administration with members of this elite, well-educated ruling class. These men were known for their wisdom, not for their skills in magic, sorcery, or the dark arts. The king included them in all matters of state and commanded them to come to his chambers to help discern the meaning of his dreams.

When these wise men and their occult-practicing companions appeared before the king, they had no idea what awaited them. Exhausted from lack of sleep and the disturbing nature of his dreams, the king commanded that his counselors provide him with an explanation. He was convinced these nightmares were premonitions about the future and was determined to know their meaning.

It seems that the Chaldeans were the first to speak up. These wise men offered to interpret the king's dream but only on the condition that he divulge the content. The text indicates that the rest of the conversation between the king and his advisors was in Aramaic, the lingua franca of the land. From verse 3 to the end of the chapter, the dialogue is in Aramaic, not Hebrew. This

note seems intended to highlight the stark difference between the four Hebrew men and their Babylonian peers. While it is certain that Daniel and his friends learned to read, write, and speak Aramaic as part of their 3-year training program, they were not in the room when these conversations took place. Despite their superior “wisdom and understanding” (Daniel 1:20), they had not been summoned to the king’s presence. The entire exchange was an in-house matter, between the king and his fellow Babylonians.

But these men were caught in a dilemma; they could not discern the meaning of the king’s dreams unless he told them the content. This is especially noteworthy considering that these men were renowned for their ability to speak with the dead, read the stars, and predict the future. These self-proclaimed fortune tellers were stumped.

“Please, Your Majesty. Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means.” – Daniel 2:7 NLT

But Nebuchadnezzar wasn’t buying what they were selling. He demanded that they prove their powers of perception by providing the content of the dream as well as its meaning. Failing to do so came with a stiff penalty: death.

“I know what you are doing! You’re stalling for time because you know I am serious when I say, ‘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.” – Daniel 2:8-9 NLT

They reacted in panic. Despite their illustrious titles, they knew they could not do what the king demanded. They couldn’t know what the king dreamed unless he told them. But King Nebuchadnezzar stuck to his original plan, threatening to kill them if they failed to do what he said. Under the threat of execution, they finally owned up and confessed the obvious.

“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! The king’s demand is impossible. No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people.” – Daniel 2:10-11 NLT

What a perfect set-up. Faced with the impossible task of discerning the king’s dreams and their meaning, they admitted that the request was above their pay grade. They were out of their league, and fearing for their lives, they told the king that this was a job for the gods, who don’t inhabit the realm of men. This admission speaks volumes because it reveals the sad reality of their theology. Their gods were distant and disinterested in the affairs of men. They were inaccessible and out of reach. Amazingly, none of these men suggested that their gods be consulted or considered as the logical solution to the dilemma. Instead, they use the gods as an excuse.

But their ploy failed. Instead of releasing these men from their obligation, the king doubled down on his threat and sentenced them all to death. But this is where the story gets interesting. The king's edict was all-inclusive, condemning every magician, enchanter, astrologer, and Chaldean in his realm. News of this fateful death sentence spread fast and reached the ears of Daniel, who was informed that his name and those of his friends were included on the list of those to die.

When the captain of the king's guard appeared at Daniel's door to carry out his execution, Daniel didn't panic. Instead, he "handled the situation with wisdom and discretion" (Daniel 2:14 NLT). Unaware of what precipitated his death sentence, Daniel asked the captain for an explanation. When he heard the details behind the king's edict, he immediately requested an audience with the king.

There is no indication that Daniel had ever used his God-ordained gift of interpreting dreams and visions, or that he was even aware that he possessed such a unique capability. Verse 17 of Chapter 1 seems to be a premonition or prediction of things to come. It prepares the reader to expect something to happen in the chapters ahead. Daniel has never interpreted dreams before and, but he is nonplused by the king's decree and appears confident that he can decipher the dream's meaning.

Unlike his Babylonian counterparts, Daniel knew that his God was accessible and fully capable of assisting him in his time of need. He didn't panic or fly off the handle in a fit of rage. He reasoned wisely and discerningly with his executioner, buying time to seek God's divine assistance. Faced with the threat of death, Daniel gathered his three friends and sought the favor of Yahweh. Daniel and his companions would have been well-versed in the Hebrew Scriptures, including the Psalms. So, as they considered the life-threatening nature of their circumstances, they may have turned to the words of the psalmist for encouragement.

*In my distress I prayed to the Lord,
and the Lord answered me and set me free.
The Lord is for me, so I will have no fear.
What can mere people do to me?
Yes, the Lord is for me; he will help me.
I will look in triumph at those who hate me.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in people.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in princes. – Psalm 118:5-9 NLT*

Daniel 2:17-30

There is a God in Heaven

¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸ and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. ²⁰ Daniel answered and said:

*"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
to whom belong wisdom and might.*

²¹ *He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding;*

²² *he reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what is in the darkness,
and the light dwells with him.*

²³ *To you, O God of my fathers,
I give thanks and praise,
for 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 matter."*

²⁴ Therefore Daniel went in 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; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation."

²⁵ Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: "I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation." ²⁶ The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?" ²⁷ Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: ²⁹ To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. ³⁰ But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind. — Daniel 2:17-30 ESV

Upon hearing that he and his companions were facing death because of the king's recent edict, Daniel responded with deep concern but never panicked. Instead, he appealed for a brief

reprieve to seek out the meaning of the king's dream. Desperate to have his disturbing dream explained, Nebuchadnezzar granted Daniel's request. No longer under the immediate threat of death, Daniel gathered his three Hebrew friends and encouraged them to take the matter to Yahweh.

Faced with death at the hands of a psychologically disturbed pagan king, Daniel sought the counsel of the God of heaven. He did what Nebuchadnezzar's magicians, astrologers, and Chaldeans failed to do; he appealed to a higher power. Those men had assured the king that his demand that they interpret his dream was impossible because "no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Daniel 1:11 ESV).

These celebrated soothsayers and fortune-tellers could read the stars and predict the future but were powerless to decipher the king's dream, let alone its meaning. Faced with an impossible task, they never sought the aid of Marduk, the chief Babylonian god. Even with a death sentence hanging over their heads, the magicians failed to take their dire situation to Enki, the Babylonian god of magic. Either they believed their gods were distant and disinterested in the affairs of mortal men or they had no faith in their existence at all.

But Daniel and his friends believed in Yahweh and took their predicament to the only one who could do anything about it. And though Yahweh's "dwelling is not with flesh," He answered their prayers. Sometime during the night, Daniel received a divinely inspired vision that disclosed the content of the king's dreams. But Yahweh didn't stop there; He also provided Daniel with the interpretation. This entire sequence of events reveals God's sovereignty over the affairs of men. He is the one who ordained that Nebuchadnezzar would invade Judah and take its people captive.

*"Raise a signal flag as a warning for Jerusalem:
'Flee now! Do not delay!'
For I am bringing terrible destruction upon you
from the north."* – Jeremiah 4:6 ESV

*His chariots are like whirlwinds.
His horses are swifter than eagles.* – Jeremiah 4:13 ESV

He had sovereignly orchestrated the capture and deportation of Daniel and his three friends, and planned their meteoric rise to prominence within Nebuchadnezzar's administration. He is the one who exposed the king's wise men as frauds but gave Daniel and his friends wisdom and discernment. God interrupted the king's sleep with disturbing dreams. He is also the one who endowed Daniel with the ability to interpret dreams and visions. It had all been His doing from start to finish.

Yahweh could disclose Nebuchadnezzar's dream because He was its author. He could discern its meaning because He had determined its content. None of this had been a matter of chance or

blind fate; it had been part of the sovereign plan of God Almighty. And Daniel recognized it as such and offered Yahweh the praise He justly deserved.

*"Praise the name of God forever and ever,
for he has all wisdom and power.
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.
He reveals deep and mysterious things
and knows what lies hidden in darkness,
though he is surrounded by light."* – Daniel 2:20-22 NLT

Daniel responds in praise and thanksgiving for the wisdom, power, and omniscience of God. While the gods of the Babylonians did "not live here among people," the God of Daniel did, and He heard Daniel's prayer and did the seemingly impossible. Daniel knew what Jesus Himself would later express, "What is impossible for people is possible with God" (Luke 18:27 NLT).

Daniel was living in the most powerful nation on earth and serving in the court of its king. Yet he recognized that Nebuchadnezzar ruled at the behest of God. Yahweh even referred to the Babylonian king as "my servant Nebuchadnezzar" (Jeremiah 43:10 NLT). Daniel was not impressed by Nebuchadnezzar's power or threatened by his edict because Yahweh "controls the course of human events" (Daniel 2:21 NLT). Daniel's God was superior and sovereign over all things, include sleep-deprived, yet powerful kings.

Daniel and his friends sought God's help and He graciously responded. Their prayers had not informed God about the day's events because He was already intimately knowledgeable and completely responsible for all that had happened. But in taking their need to God, they became aware of His plan and His intention to involve them in it. There is no indication in the text that Daniel had ever utilized his gift of interpreting visions. It isn't even clear if he was aware he had the gift. This was all new territory for Daniel, but not for God. Daniel was likely familiar with the story of how God gave Joseph the ability to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh. If Daniel had been aware of his God-given gift, he would have availed himself of it. But instead, he encouraged his friends to join him in praying for God's intervention and interpretation, and they got what they asked for. In response to God's gracious answer, Daniel offered praise and thanksgiving.

*"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 2:23 NLT

Now, with the dream's interpretation in hand, Daniel's next assignment was to share it with the king. Arioch, the king's captain, rushed Daniel to the palace and informed Nebuchadnezzar of the good news.

“I have found one of the captives from Judah who will tell the king the meaning of his dream!” – Daniel 2:25 NLT

Arioch’s announcement comes across as a blatant attempt to score brownie points with the king. He claimed credit for solving the king’s dilemma, but Nebuchadnezzar was reticent to believe the good news, asking Daniel, “Is this true? Can you tell me what my dream was and what it means?” (Daniel 2:26 NLT). In a display of humility and reverence for Yahweh, Daniel announced, “There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can reveal the king’s secret. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future” (Daniel 2:27-28 NLT).

It’s likely that this entire exchange likely took place in front of all the other astrologers, magicians, and Chaldeans who had failed to discern the king’s dream and its meaning. Daniel’s statement must have infuriated them, but it only validated the conclusion they had already reached.

“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! The king’s demand is impossible. No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people.” – Daniel 2:10-11 NLT

In a real sense, their lives were in Daniel’s hands. If his God revealed the dream and its interpretation, the king’s wrath might be assuaged and his death sentence lifted. But their professional reputations were also at risk. If Daniel succeeded, their value to the king would be greatly diminished. So, they listened with rapt attention as Daniel made his announcement to the king.

“While Your Majesty was sleeping, you dreamed about coming events. He who reveals secrets has shown you what is going to happen. And it is not because I am wiser than anyone else that I know the secret of your dream, but because God wants you to understand what was in your heart.” – Daniel 2:29-30 NLT

Daniel could have used this moment to his own advantage but, instead, he gave full credit to God. He humbly acknowledged that the message he was about to reveal was not the result of his own wisdom; he was just an instrument. The dream was a divinely ordained message from Yahweh and Daniel was simply the messenger. What he was about to share was a word from his God that would reveal the future of Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom. And with that announcement, he had his audience in the palm of his hand.

Daniel 2:31-45

A Dream Come True (Soon)

³¹ “You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. ³² The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

³⁶ “This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. ³⁷ You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, ³⁸ and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. ³⁹ Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. ⁴¹ And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. ⁴² And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. ⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ⁴⁵ just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.” — Daniel 2:31-45 ESV

The tension in the room must have been palpable. Nebuchadnezzar sat in rapt silence as Daniel described the details of his dream. The magicians, conjurers, and Chaldeans listened in shocked silence as this young Hebrew pulled off a feat that they had deemed impossible. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego watched as their friend stood before the king and his court, unveiling the message he had received from Yahweh.

And everyone in the room must have been surprised at the nature of the dream. It was probably not what they expected. Daniel described a massive statue in the form of a man, comprised of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay. He acknowledged that the statue’s visage was frightening and confusing to the king but never discloses why. It seems unlikely that the statue’s composite makeup left the king trembling. Even the statue’s destruction by a massive

bolder should not have caused the kind of fear and anxiety the king experienced. The only logical conclusion is that the king recognized his image on the face of the statue. The golden head bore his own likeness.

In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar had been given a vision of the future. As Daniel proceeds to interpret the meaning of the dream, he will disclose that the golden head of the massive statue represents the kingdom of Babylon.

“Your Majesty, you are the greatest of kings. The God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor. He has made you the ruler over all the inhabited world and has put even the wild animals and birds under your control. You are the head of gold.” – Daniel 2:37-38 NLT

While Nebuchadnezzar’s initial glimpse of the statue might have produced feelings of pride, its destruction by the boulder was unexpected and frightening. There is no way he could have taken this disturbing scene as anything but a bad omen that presaged his death. But Daniel wanted the king to know that there was more to the vision than a prediction of his own demise. God was disclosing future events that would extend far beyond Nebuchadnezzar’s reign or Babylon’s 15 minutes of fame.

The composite nature of the statue is significant and, as Daniel discloses, it provides a visual representation of the future that moves from top to bottom. The head represents the reigning kingdom of the world: Babylon. Comprised of solid gold, it symbolizes the wealth and opulence of Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom as well as its global dominance. Much to Nebuchadnezzar’s surprise, Daniel announces that the Babylonian kingdom will be shortlived and ultimately be replaced by a larger but inferior kingdom. The statue’s chest and arms, crafted from silver, are larger than the head but of lesser value. They represent a nation that will rise and replace the Babylonians, only to find themselves supplanted by a still more inferior kingdom as reflected by the statue’s bronze belly and thighs. Moving down the statue’s length, Daniel describes its legs of iron, symbolizing yet one more kingdom to come. The fifth and final kingdom is represented by the feet of clay and iron.

In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, this strange compilation of body parts was suddenly destroyed by “a rock...cut from a mountain, but not by human hands” – Daniel 2:34 NLT). This massive stone struck the feet of the statue, causing the entire structure to collapse and disintegrate into a cloud of fine dust from the impact.

Daniel’s description of this one-of-a-kind statue was exactly what Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream, but its meaning remained a mystery. Apart from Daniel, no one in the room had any idea what the imagery was meant to convey. But there was far more going on than Nebuchadnezzar could imagine. Little did he know that his vast and formidable kingdom would be temporary in nature. Babylon would be a relative blip on the radar screen of human history. It would come and go, only to be replaced by yet another kingdom whose moment in the spotlight of history would also fade and be forgotten.

Despite Nebuchadnezzar's recent and highly successful world-domination tour, his kingdom would not last. The kingdoms of men are temporary and those who rule over them are destined to death and obscurity. The statue was that of a man, symbolizing the earthly rule of human kings.

"The figure of a man was employed here because God wished to make known what would transpire during man's day, the ages in which mortal man ruled the earth. Here, in one panoramic sweep, the whole history of human civilization is spread before us, from the days of Nebuchadnezzar to the end of time." – Charles L. Feinberg, *Daniel: The Kingdom of the Lord*

Long before the Babylonians invaded Judah and took Daniel and his companions captive, God had warned the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon that they too would suffer defeat at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

"Now I will give your countries to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who is my servant. I have put everything, even the wild animals, under his control. All the nations will serve him, his son, and his grandson until his time is up." – Jeremiah 27:6-7 ESV

Notice that God predicted the short-lived nature of Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty. It would eventually come to an end, "Then many nations and great kings will conquer and rule over Babylon" (Jeremiah 27:7 ESV). That is exactly what the statue was meant to convey.

"Nebuchadnezzar ruled about 45 years (605-560 B.C.), and his empire only lasted another 21 years. Nebuchadnezzar's father, Nabopolassar, founded the Neo-Babylon Empire in 627 B.C., and it fell to the Persians in 539 B.C. So it existed for only 88 years." – Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Daniel*

But what Daniel had unveiled was far more than the end of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom; he was making known God's plan for the end of the age. In a highly compressed timeline, God showed the rise and fall of the kingdoms of this world. There is much debate as to which kingdoms are symbolized by the multifaceted statue, but the general consensus is that the chest and arms represent the Medo-Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great, while the belly and thighs represent Greece under Alexander the Great. The legs of iron are believed to stand for Rome. But this once mighty kingdom, which ruled the world of Jesus' day, eventually fell due to its weakened condition (feet of clay and iron). While the mighty Roman Empire lasted for half a century, it too was destined to end.

But the world did not end with the fall of Rome. Other kingdoms have come and gone. Nations have risen to power only to disappear from the scene and become relegated to the pages of history. But Daniel prophecies about a future kingdom that will develop behind the scenes while these world powers are still large and in charge. Each of these unnamed kingdoms is meant to represent the kingdoms of this world. They are temporary at best and no match for the kingdom to come.

“During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever.” – Daniel 2:44 NLT

While he is unaware of the full meaning of his interpretation, Daniel is communicating events that will happen with the return of Christ. The nations of this world will continue to vie for power and dominance, but none will be able to stand against the King of kings and Lord of lords when He returns to establish His eternal kingdom on earth.

The Book of Revelation reveals the final battle between Jesus and Satan, the prince of this world who will lead one final revolt in an attempt to overthrow the Kingdom of God.

Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True, for he judges fairly and wages a righteous war. His eyes were like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him that no one understood except himself. He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his title was the Word of God. The armies of heaven, dressed in the finest of pure white linen, followed him on white horses. From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty, like juice flowing from a winepress. On his robe at his thigh was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the world and their armies gathered together to fight against the one sitting on the horse and his army. And the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who did mighty miracles on behalf of the beast—miracles that deceived all who had accepted the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue. Both the beast and his false prophet were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Their entire army was killed by the sharp sword that came from the mouth of the one riding the white horse. And the vultures all gorged themselves on the dead bodies. – Revelation 19:11-16, 19-21 ESV

Little did Daniel or Nebuchadnezzar understand that God had just revealed the entire timeline of human history through a dream. His plan for the people of Israel, Daniel and his friends, Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom, and the future fate of the world was in place and working its way to completion, all according to God’s perfect timeline.

Daniel 2:46-49

Consider the Source

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. ⁴⁷ The king answered and said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.” ⁴⁸ Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. ⁴⁹ Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king’s court. – Daniel 2:46-49 ESV

After revealing the meaning of the king’s dream, Daniel confidently asserted, “A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure” (Daniel 2:45 ESV). The young man took the opportunity to promote the superiority of his God and the certainty of the vision and its message. Despite any aspersions the magicians, sorcerers, and Chaldeans might cast his way, Daniel wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know that his words could be trusted because their source was divine. Unlike the gods of Babylon, Daniel’s God was all-knowing and all-powerful. He could “predict” the future because He was already aware of it. He knew it in advance. According to the Book of Isaiah, the God of Israel operates outside the limits of time and space. He is transcendent and eternal, having no beginning or end.

*“Do not forget this! Keep it in mind!
Remember this, you guilty ones.
Remember the things I have done in the past.
For I alone am God!
I am God, and there is none like me.
Only I can tell you the future
before it even happens.
Everything I plan will come to pass,
for I do whatever I wish.” – Isaiah 46:8-10 NLT*

As a well-educated Hebrew, Daniel would have been familiar with the Psalms of David. In them, David acknowledged his own awareness of God’s omniscience.

*O Lord, you have examined my heart
and know everything about me.
You know when I sit down or stand up.
You know my thoughts even when I’m far away.
You see me when I travel
and when I rest at home.
You know everything I do.*

***You know what I am going to say
even before I say it, Lord.***

You go before me and follow me.

You place your hand of blessing on my head.

*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too great for me to understand!.* – Psalm 139:1-6 NLT

Nebuchadnezzar's dream had not been the result of indigestion from a poorly prepared; it was the handiwork of God. It was He who created its content and orchestrated its timing. Because God was involved, it was more than a dream; it was a prophetic message. God used Nebuchadnezzar's own political aspirations and dreams of world domination as the stage on which to reveal His own message of dominion. The vision was simply how God communicated His plans for Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom and the future of the world. The God of the universe was letting this power-obsessed king know that his authority was limited and his kingdom was temporary.

In a real sense, the interpretation of the dream was less for Nebuchadnezzar's benefit than it was for Daniel, his friends, and the people of Israel. God wanted His people to know that He was in charge. It was His plans that would be carried out, not those of Nebuchadnezzar. God held the fates of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in His hands; they were not the helpless pawns of the Babylonian king. Their deportation had been God's doing. Their recent graduations from the king's training program had been God's will. Daniel's capacity to interpret dreams and visions was a gift from God.

No one in the room, including Daniel, understood the import of the interpretation. God provided little in the way of details. Even to this day, scholars debate the nature of the kingdoms represented by the statue. There is even disagreement about the dream's climactic ending as biblical scholars continue to debate the nature of the everlasting kingdom to come.

The whole point of the dream and its interpretation was to accentuate the will and sovereignty of God. Daniel and his friends needed to know that their God was in complete control of all that was going on in their lives, the world, and the future. Kingdoms come and go, but God is eternal, and the plans of men are powerless before His will. The gods of this world are no match for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Once again, the writings of King David must have brought comfort and encouragement to Daniel and his companions as they attempted to acclimate themselves to their new surroundings.

In times of trouble, may the Lord answer your cry.

May the name of the God of Jacob keep you safe from all harm.

*May he send you help from his sanctuary
and strengthen you from Jerusalem.*

*May he remember all your gifts
and look favorably on your burnt offerings. Interlude*

*May he grant your heart's desires
and make all your plans succeed.
May we shout for joy when we hear of your victory
and raise a victory banner in the name of our God.
May the Lord answer all your prayers.*

*Now I know that the Lord rescues his anointed king.
He will answer him from his holy heaven
and rescue him by his great power.
Some nations boast of their chariots and horses,
but we boast in the name of the Lord our God.
Those nations will fall down and collapse,
but we will rise up and stand firm.*

*Give victory to our king, O Lord!
Answer our cry for help. – Psalm 20:1-9 NLT*

Nebuchadnezzar was powerful but he was far from invincible. He could threaten his wise men with death, but he couldn't prevent his own kingdom's collapse. He could make plans to conquer the world but was incapable of controlling his own subconscious mind. Soon, his dreams of world domination would turn into nightmares of future devastation.

Daniel's Spirit-induced interpretation reflects the non-negotiable reality of God's sovereignty over the affairs of men and the future of mankind. Again, the words of the Psalms would have provided Daniel with comfort and security as he faced the threat of execution. He would have been reminded that, ultimately, all kings and kingdoms stand opposed to God. But God will have the last laugh.

*Why are the nations so angry?
Why do they waste their time with futile plans?
The kings of the earth prepare for battle;
the rulers plot together
against the Lord
and against his anointed one.
"Let us break their chains," they cry,
"and free ourselves from slavery to God."*

*But the one who rules in heaven laughs.
The Lord scoffs at them.
Then in anger he rebukes them,
terrifying them with his fierce fury.*

For the Lord declares, "I have placed my chosen king on the throne in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain." – Psalm 2:1-6 NLT

Daniel and his friends had nothing to fear; their God was in complete control. But they weren't the only ones who received an unforgettable lesson in Yahweh's sovereignty. The king was blown away by the entire experience and displayed his awe by bowing down before Daniel and worshiping him. The significance of that scene should not be overlooked. The most powerful man in the world was kneeling before a young man who was a member of a conquered and subjugated nation. It is unlikely that Nebuchadnezzar had ever treated his magicians, sorcerers, and Chaldeans with the same respect. But the king revealed the motivation behind his genuflection.

"Truly, your God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret." – Daniel 2:47 NLT

He knew that Daniel was nothing more than the spokesman for "the greatest of gods." But he also knew that Daniel had access to a deity who was preeminent and all-powerful. Daniel's God was worthy of reverence and, as his messenger, Daniel was deserving of honor.

Then the king appointed Daniel to a high position and gave him many valuable gifts. He made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, as well as chief over all his wise men. – Daniel 2:48 NLT

It's telling to note that Daniel's first official act in his new capacity was to request a promotion for each of his friends. He recognized that God had blessed him with the king's favor and he used it, not to his own advantage, but to secure the future of his companions. By seeing that his friends were elevated alongside him, Daniel ensured that he would have not only their companionship but also their spiritual support. He was living out the truth found in the Book of Ecclesiastes.

A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken. – Ecclesiastes 4:12 NLT