

# DANIEL 2



T. M. Moore

*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*Daniel 2*

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## Daniel 2: Introduction

The action picks up quickly as Nebuchadnezzar has a troubling dream. He commands his advisors to tell him the dream and the interpretation, and when they can't, he condemns them all to die. Including Daniel and his friends.

But Daniel seeks the Lord and learns the dream and the interpretation from Him. Nebuchadnezzar is pleased, everyone's life is spared, and Daniel and his friends are promoted. Things are looking good.

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We hope you find this study of Hosea instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 And All Babylon with Him

### *Introduction*

Kings are powerful people. Especially when they're tyrants like Nebuchadnezzar or Herod. When Herod was troubled, all Jerusalem was troubled with him (Matt. 2.1-3). When Nebuchadnezzar became troubled, he made *sure* that others were troubled as well. Asaph wasn't afraid of troubled kings, because he knew and trusted a King Who not only troubles kings, but fills them with shame, and turns their hearts to seek Him. Daniel knew this God, and probably Asaph's prayer, too.

*Read Psalm 83, a Psalm of Asaph.*

*Read Daniel 2.1-6.*

### *Think it Through*

1. Is there ever a time, place, or condition in which God is *not* sovereign? Was God sovereign in Nebuchadnezzar's dream? Review Genesis 41.1-25. With this in the background of our understanding, how should we think about the dream Nebuchadnezzar had? How do you suppose Daniel thought about it? Was God using the story of Daniel as a parallel and reminder of the story of Joseph? For whom? An interesting linguistic sidelight comes in at this point: Daniel 2.4 to Daniel 7.28 are written in Aramaic, not Hebrew – one of only a few such sections in the Old Testament (Ezra 4:8-6:18;7:12-26). This indicates that the book was written for people who spoke mainly Aramaic, which is a cognate of Hebrew and would have been used by the captives in Babylon, especially toward the end of their captivity. How does this help us in understanding Daniel's intended readership? Given this, why is the allusion to Joseph and Pharaoh particularly apt?

2. What kind of man was Nebuchadnezzar? How does what we see of him in Daniel 2.1-6 add to what we've learned about him already in our study? What must it have been like to be governed by such a man? We might know some people like this – narcissistic in the extreme, scornful of others, degrading, demeaning, even vicious. Certainly, well beyond the reach of God's grace, right?

### *Meditate*

“There is a type of dream that comes from God, since he has promised to pour out the grace of the Holy Spirit on all flesh and has ordained that his sons and handmaidens shall utter prophecies and dream dreams. Such dreams may be compared with the grace of God as being honest, holy, prophetic, inspired, edifying and inducing to virtue. Their bountiful nature causes them to overflow even to the unbelievers since God with divine impartiality causes the rain to fall and the sun to shine on just and unjust alike.” *Tertullian (155-250 AD)*

*In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will... Ephesians 1.11*

*Heavenly Father, You work all things according to the counsel of Your will, and You are sovereign over all people, all situations, and all...*

*Pray Psalm 83.14.*

**Psalm 83.1-8** (*St. Chrysostom: We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

O God, do not be quiet now; do not be silent, nor be still!

See how Your foes erupt in a row and those who hate You chafe at Your will.

Shrewdly they plan, conspiring as one, against Your daughters and Your sons.

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“Come, let us wipe them out,” they say. “Let Israel’s name no more be heard!”  
Bold they conspire to do us away, and covenant against You, O Lord.  
Peoples and nations cast in their lot for this ambitious, wicked plot.

## 2 Tipping Point

### *Introduction*

We suspect that Nebuchadnezzar had become impatient with his “wise men” and suspected them of conspiring to deceive or flatter him. The dream God sent to him caused him such anxiety, that it brought matters to a tipping point. Nebuchadnezzar put all his cards on the table, and he let his “wise men” know that he was finished with them and their conniving ways. King Ahab of Israel maintained a similar gaggle of “wise men.” But there was among them one who was willing to tell the truth. Daniel must have known the story of Micaiah, as surely as he knew how God used Joseph to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams.

*Read 1 Kings 22.6-18.*

*Read Daniel 2.7-13.*

### *Think it Through*

1. What does it say about Nebuchadnezzar’s level of anxiety, that he was willing to destroy all his “wise men” if they failed to give him both the dream and its interpretation? The “wise men” (*Chaldeans*) insisted that the king was going beyond Babylonian tradition in making such a demand (v. 10). They maintained that only “the gods” could do what the king demanded, and, well, they weren’t available. Is there a measure of truth in their reply to Nebuchadnezzar in verse 11? Explain.

2. Nebuchadnezzar doesn’t care about tradition, precedent, or standard operating procedures. He’s done with these fools, and his dream has given him just what he needs to clean house and start over again. Nebuchadnezzar is the quintessential *autonomous* king, making up the rules to suit himself. Do we see any of this tendency in our own civil government? Explain. Furious at being rebuffed, Nebuchadnezzar begins the blood-letting. And Daniel and his friends are on the list as well. But what do we know about Daniel that neither Nebuchadnezzar nor his “wise men” do (Dan. 1.17; 2.11)? Jesus is Immanuel, God-with-Us. What can you expect of Him today?

### *Meditate*

“While the demand in these words was high-handed and insane, the accusation was very true: You want to learn what the dream was, he is saying, so as to hatch in common some false interpretation and trick me as usual, using the lapse in time as an advantage and waiting for the moment of fulfillment.” *Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD)*

*So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”* Matthew 1.22, 23

*You are with me today, Lord, as You are every day. Let me not fear what men might say or do, but looking to You...*

*Pray Psalm 83.1-4.*

**Psalm 83.1-8** (*St. Chrysostom: We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

O God, do not be quiet now; do not be silent, nor be still!

See how Your foes erupt in a row and those who hate You chafe at Your will.

Shrewdly they plan, conspiring as one, against Your daughters and Your sons.

“Come, let us wipe them out,” they say. “Let Israel’s name no more be heard!”

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Bold they conspire to do us away, and covenant against You, O Lord.  
Peoples and nations cast in their lot for this ambitious, wicked plot.

### 3 Look to the Source

#### *Introduction*

The wise men among the Chaldeans looked to Nebuchadnezzar to reveal his dream to them. Then they would consult with one another to figure out what it meant, and bring to the king what they hoped would be a favorable interpretation. They were looking in all the wrong places. Daniel, meanwhile, like Joseph before him, understood where dreams come from, but also interpretations of dreams and wisdom, too. He counted on the mercies of God, not merely to answer the king's demand, but to save His faithful servants.

*Review Genesis 41.14-37.*

*Read Daniel 2.14-23.*

#### *Think it Through*

1. By now we know God was at work in the situation involving Daniel and his three companions. But just *how* was God working? Compare Daniel 2.16 with verses 7 and 8 of this same chapter. What's the difference? How can we account for this difference (Prov. 21.1)? Do you believe God can soften the hearts of even the most recalcitrant of unbelievers? How should that encourage us? Should we pray that He will do so? Explain.
2. Daniel didn't pester Nebuchadnezzar about the dream, nor try to coax the content of it out of him. Daniel knew where dreams come from, because he undoubtedly knew the story of Joseph. Daniel had the gift of understanding visions and dreams, but he did not rely only on himself for the right use of that gift. He enlisted his friends to seek the Lord with him concerning this matter (vv. 17, 18). Do you think it's typically the case that we need others to support us as we carry out our callings or exercise the gifts God has given us? Explain. Note also Daniel's prayer of thanks and praise to God (vv. 20-23). How many different ways did Daniel acknowledge the sovereignty of God? Is He still sovereign in all these ways? Explain.

#### *Meditate*

“And through the testimony of blessed Daniel, we see the beloved youth given straightaway the revelation concerning the dream, not because of his calculations but simply because it was [the] proper time to hand [it] over to the one who prays. He alone was of great courage, but at the same time his companions jointly took up the prayer. For none had abandoned the hope.” *Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD)*

*For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many. 2 Corinthians 1.8-11*

*Lord Jesus, many faithful and gifted men and women serve You in our church, and I want to uphold them in prayer as they use their gifts. Today I remember...*

*Pray Psalm 83.13-18.*

**Psalm 83.13-18** (*St. Chrysostom: We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

Make them like whirling dust, O God!  
Scatter them like the windblown chaff!  
Rage like a fire consuming a wood,  
like flames that burn a mountain pass!  
Blow like a tempest, bring them to harm,  
and terrify them with Your storm!

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Fill with dishonor every face that they may seek Your Name, O Lord.  
Bring them to shame, dismay, and disgrace, and let them perish under Your Word,  
That they may learn Your infinite worth, O God Most High of all the earth!

## 4 An Unlikely Vessel

### *Introduction*

Daniel is clear that God spoke to Nebuchadnezzar and revealed a secret which he, Daniel, would interpret for the king. We can understand Daniel being involved with divine revelation. But Nebuchadnezzar, the enemy of God and destroyer of His temple? Well, God had spoken to the Pharaoh in Egypt. It's not unlike Him to speak even through unwilling or unwitting vessels.

*Review Genesis 41.1-25.*

*Read Daniel 2.24-30.*

### *Think it through*

1. We note that Daniel had no animus against the king's advisors; instead, he sought to spare their lives (v. 24). Why might it have been a good idea for them to be around when Daniel interpreted the king's dream? But did this also hold potential trouble for Daniel and his friends (cf. Dan. 3.8-12; 6.1-4)? Why? The first part of Daniel's reply to the king's question (vv. 26, 27) seems designed to humiliate the Chaldeans. But he was only commenting on what everyone knew was true. Why do you suppose Daniel felt it was necessary to mention this?

2. The rest of Daniel's answer (vv. 28-30) was very wisely and carefully crafted. First (v. 27), what did Daniel say about God, and how would that have positioned God *vis à vis* the wise men of Nebuchadnezzar's council? Next (vv. 28, 29), how did Daniel position Nebuchadnezzar in relation to God? Let's think about this: Do you think it's possible to see something of God, or God's grace, in every person? Can you give some examples? Do you think it can be useful to point this out to them? Finally, look at verse 30, especially the last part. How do you suppose this might have affected Nebuchadnezzar's view of God? Does God love even His enemies? Does He do good even for those who don't know or who deny Him? Is it a good idea for us to point this out?

### *Meditate*

"He who knows the secrets of all and searches the thoughts of the hearts revealed to him by means of the image the things that were to be. But he hid from the king the vision, in order that the counsels of God might not be interpreted by the wise men of Babylon but that by the blessed Daniel, as a prophet of God, things kept secret from all might be made manifest." *Hippolytus (fl. 222-245 AD)*

*"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."* Matthew 5.44, 45

*"Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."* Acts 14.17

*Lord, I should look more carefully to see the ways you bless and love even those who do not know you, so that I...*

*Pray Psalm 83.16-18.*

**Psalm 83.16-18** (*St. Chrysostom: We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

Fill with dishonor every face that they may seek Your Name, O Lord.

Bring them to shame, dismay, and disgrace, and let them perish under Your Word,

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That they may learn Your infinite worth, O God Most High of all the earth!

## 5 Daniel Tells It like It Is

### *Introduction*

Imagine Nebuchadnezzar's surprise and delight as Daniel first, reported his dream, then explained the meaning of it, making Nebuchadnezzar himself the star of the show. He must have wondered to himself, "How does he *do* that?" He would find out soon enough. And how Daniel must have thrilled in his soul to gain this additional insight to what ancient prophecies had foretold.

*Read Genesis 49.8-11; Isaiah 9.6, 7.*

*Read Daniel 2.31-45.*

### *Think it Through*

1. Why do you suppose God gave this dream to Nebuchadnezzar in the form of a "great image"? Why didn't he just have Daniel come in and tell him what was going to happen in the years to come? Or write it out for him? Is there something about seeing things, if only in our minds, that has more impact and staying power? Explain. What is the dominant image in this vision?

2. In verses 36ff, Daniel continues to position Nebuchadnezzar in relation to God. What does he most want Nebuchadnezzar to understand about God and himself? Four kingdoms are in this vision, beginning with the Babylonian Empire. Then follows the Persian Empire ("chest and arms of silver"), the empire of the Greeks under Alexander and his successors ("thighs of bronze"), and finally the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire, unlike the other three, was a republic, a mixture of central and localized rule, hence "partly of iron and partly of clay." What does the stone cut without hands represent (v. 44)? When should we expect to see this stone ("these kings")? What is the effect of this stone's coming on the kingdoms of the world? Has this happened? If so, where is that stone today? How did Daniel position Nebuchadnezzar with respect to this vision (v. 44)?

### *Meditate*

"Christ is the stone that is cut out without hands, who shall destroy temporal kingdoms and introduce an eternal one, which is the resurrection of the just." *Irenaeus of Lyons (135-202 AD)*

*Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." Matthew 13.33*

*Father, where is Your Kingdom, that You established in the days of ancient Rome? What is my calling in that Kingdom (1 Thess. 2.12)? Today, how can I...?*

*Pray Psalm 83.13-18.*

**Psalm 83.13-18** (*St. Chrysostom: We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

Make them like whirling dust, O God! Scatter them like the windblown chaff!

Rage like a fire consuming a wood, like flames that burn a mountain pass!

Blow like a tempest, bring them to harm, and terrify them with Your storm!

Fill with dishonor every face that they may seek Your Name, O Lord.

Bring them to shame, dismay, and disgrace, and let them perish under Your Word,

That they may learn Your infinite worth, O God Most High of all the earth!

## 6 Changing Course

### *Introduction*

The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD,  
*Like* the rivers of water;  
He turns it wherever He wishes. Proverbs 21:1

God sometimes moves in surprising ways. When He moves, when He begins to accelerate things in the direction of His promises, people are always involved, and not all those people are *His* people. Nebuchadnezzar's heart had crashed like a raging tsunami over the city of Jerusalem and the temple of God, laying waste to Israel's freedom and hope. But now God was changing the course of his heart and using Daniel to accomplish His ends. What is written here is for our learning (Rom. 15:4).

*Review 2 Kings 25.1-21.*

*Read Daniel 2.46-49.*

### *Think it Through*

1. Read aloud verses 46 and 47, speaking Nebuchadnezzar's words as they must have sounded then. Compare what you read here with what we saw in 2 Kings 25.1-21. What is happening in Nebuchadnezzar's heart? Why? This is not what we would call a profession of faith in God, but it does mark a significant change in the course of Nebuchadnezzar's heart. Imagine a scale from 1 to 5, where 1=Totally committed to God, and 5=Hostile to God. Where was Nebuchadnezzar in 2 Kings 25.1-21? Where is he in Daniel 2.46, 47? What do we learn about God's role in changing hearts? About our role in God's work of changing hearts? How should we be encouraged by this changing course of Nebuchadnezzar's heart?
2. Just as Pharaoh had done with Joseph, so Nebuchadnezzar did with Daniel. In 2 Corinthians 10.13-16 Paul talked about his "sphere" of influence – what we refer to as his Personal Mission Field. What just happened to Daniel's Personal Mission Field? Why? What did Daniel do to fortify this situation? What can you learn from Daniel in this chapter about working your own Personal Mission Field – what to do, what to expect, how to conduct yourself, and so forth?

### *Meditate*

"Observe the might of prophecy, how it changed that savage one and allowed him to be instructed and introduced him to faith." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

*We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us—a sphere which especially includes you. For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment. 2 Corinthians 10.13-16*

*Lord, who are the people in my Personal Mission Field, and how do You want to use me today to...*

*Pray Psalm 83.13-18.*

**Psalm 83.13-18** (*St. Chrysostom: We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

Make them like whirling dust, O God! Scatter them like the windblown chaff!  
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## 7 The King's Heart

### *Introduction*

Paul explained that civil governments are God's servants (Rom. 13.1-4). He sets kings down and raises them up (Prov. 8.15), and He causes all things that kings do to work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8.28). It may take a while for God's people to realize that, but they must cling to His Word and look to Him in faith. He moves the hearts of kings and rulers to accomplish His ends, as we see in Luke 2.1-3, and in Daniel 2.

*Read Luke 2.1-3.*

*Read and Meditate on Daniel 2.*

### *Think it Through*

1. God brought the people of Judah and Jerusalem to Babylon. He brought Daniel into Nebuchadnezzar's court. He brought a dream to Nebuchadnezzar. And He brought the interpretive abilities of the Chaldeans to naught. To this point in our study, why has God done all this? What did He want to "put on the table" through Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel? Why do you suppose God thought it important to do this at this point, three years into their seventy-year captivity? What are we learning about God's power to do the seemingly impossible?

2. Daniel presents a study in faithfulness. He was God's ambassador in a foreign court, and we can learn much from him about our calling as ambassadors of God's Kingdom in a secular world. Thus far, what are the most important lessons to be learned from Daniel? How should you apply these in your own Kingdom-and-glory calling in your Personal Mission Field (1 Thess. 2.12; 2 Cor. 10.13-16)?

### *Meditate*

"Such is the life of the devout, acknowledging that God is the source of understanding. He was the One who met Daniel's needs at the right moment and assured him a safe harbor. And after being well supplied with that which was the best, Daniel did not prove forgetful of the gifts but sang praises in response to his holy benefactor." *Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD)*

*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*  
2 Corinthians 5.20, 21

*Teach me, Lord, to focus not only on the "seens" of this life, but on the unseen things of Christ as well. Then I will...*

### *Pray*

Pray through Psalm 83. This psalm, like Psalm 74, was also written during a time of great prosperity and outward peace in Israel and Jerusalem. But Asaph could see into the hearts of Solomon and the leaders of Israel, and he knew where their compromising ways would lead. As you pray through this psalm, let it speak to you of God's sovereignty over the nations and His power to change hearts.

### **Psalm 83** (*St. Chrysostom: We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

O God, do not be quiet now; do not be silent, nor be still!  
See how Your foes erupt in a row and those who hate You chafe at Your will.  
Shrewdly they plan, conspiring as one, against Your daughters and Your sons.

"Come, let us wipe them out," they say. "Let Israel's name no more be heard!"

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Bold they conspire to do us away, and covenant against You, O Lord.  
Peoples and nations cast in their lot for this ambitious, wicked plot.

Deal with them, Lord, and bring them down, as You against old foes prevailed,  
When You Midian cast to the ground and all her kings and princes assailed –  
All who Your pastures sought to possess You brought to ruin and deep distress.

Make them like whirling dust, O God! Scatter them like the windblown chaff!  
Rage like a fire consuming a wood, like flames that burn a mountain pass!  
Blow like a tempest, bring them to harm, and terrify them with Your storm!

Fill with dishonor every face that they may seek Your Name, O Lord.  
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*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. How would you summarize what God was doing with Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2?
2. Daniel understood the importance of prayer in seeking the will of God. Explain.
3. Daniel's reporting and interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream put God and His Kingdom into the foreground. Why? Do you suppose God's people, captive in Babylon, would have heard about this?
4. What can we learn from Daniel 2 about serving God in a hostile world?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

*For prayer:*

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Thank you.