

PANORAMA OF PROPHECY

A LIFE-CHANGING BIBLE STUDY!

DREAM OF THE EMPIRES

Daniel 2:1-49

THE STORY ...



The vast kingdom of Babylon was opulent and prosperous, yet Nebuchadnezzar the king stirred in his royal bed. How long would this golden era last, he wondered, and what would become of his powerful empire when he was gone?

With these disturbing questions in mind, the mighty monarch drifted off to sleep. That night, a vivid image of a towering multi-mineral man flashed into his mind with a panorama of color unlike anything he had ever experienced. Throwing aside his embroidered covers, the king jumped out of bed and shouted to his bodyguards: “Call all the magicians and astrologers to come at once. I must know the meaning of this dream!”

The king’s wise men were roused and herded into the presence of the bewildered sovereign. “And the king said to them, I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream.” Daniel 2:3. One of the phony prophets smugly responded, “Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation.” But as often happens with dreams, the details had already grown cloudy in Nebuchadnezzar’s mind. These men had claimed divine insight, but the king was beginning to doubt their abilities. This would be the perfect test. “Tell me the dream and the interpretation, and you will be rewarded,” the king told his counselors, “otherwise I will cut you in pieces and turn your homes into dumps!”

The magicians and astrologers had no choice but to admit that they were powerless to explain the king’s dream without first hearing it. Furious with these imposters, the king commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be gathered for execution. However, the Lord still had one person in Babylon who could explain the dream of the colossal Millennial Man.



THE STUDY

Fill in the blanks after reading each Bible text.

1. Why did God give the Babylonian king this dream?

Daniel 2:28 *But there is a God in heaven who reveals _____, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the _____ days.*

NOTE: In this dream of the multi-mineral image, God outlined for all future millenniums the rise and fall of the empires that would have a direct influence on His people.

2. When the king's counselors failed to reveal and interpret the dream, what was Nebuchadnezzar's command?

Daniel 2:12 *The king ... gave the command to _____ all the wise men of Babylon.*

NOTE: The astrologers and magicians of Babylon claimed to have supernatural power, but when they could not reveal the dream to the king, they were shown to be impotent imposters. If the king had recalled the dream, they would have simply manufactured a bogus interpretation. In his rage, Nebuchadnezzar commanded all the wise men to be slain—even those who were not present. Among those absent from the first meeting with the king was a God-fearing captive named Daniel, who had just been trained for the king's service.

3. When Daniel learned about the death decree, what did he ask of the king and what did he tell his friends?

A. Daniel 2:16 *Daniel went in and asked the king to give him _____, that he might tell the king the _____.*

B. Daniel 2:17, 18 *Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision _____ to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this _____.*

NOTE: Daniel requested a little time from Nebuchadnezzar and promised that he would reveal the dream and its meaning. The king, who was still desperate to know the significance of his vision, granted Daniel's request. Then he and his friends appealed to the only Source who could reveal the king's dream. They prayed to the God of heaven.

4. When the Lord revealed the dream to Daniel, to whom did he give praise and credit?

Daniel 2:23, 28 *I thank You and praise You, O _____ of my fathers. ... There is a _____ in heaven who _____ secrets.*

NOTE: The rise and fall of empires may appear as if happening by the will of men, but Daniel's prayer of praise clearly reveals the essence of divine intervention. Nothing happens that God is not already aware of and has not allowed. Sometimes we may not understand what is happening in our world today or why, but it is comforting to know that God is still sovereign. Only Daniel could reveal the dream to the king, yet he clearly gives the credit to the One who revealed the dream to him—the God of heaven.

5. What two objects did Daniel say the king saw in his dream?

A. Daniel 2:31 *You, O king, were watching; and behold, a _____*

B. Daniel 2:34 *You watched while a _____ was cut out without hands.*

NOTE: The first thing the king saw was a great image made of the following mineral elements:

1. The head was of **gold**.
2. The breast and arms were of **silver**.
3. The belly and thighs were of **brass**.
4. The legs were of **iron**.
5. The feet of **iron and clay**.

Next, the king saw a stone that had been cut without hands. At this point, King Nebuchadnezzar was no doubt sitting spellbound on the edge of his throne. Daniel had related the dream precisely as God had given it to him. Now the king eagerly waited, wondering what the dream meant. Daniel proceeded to explain the interpretation as the Lord had revealed it to him, and we would do well to take it just as He gave it. The only safe way to interpret the Bible and prophecy is to allow the Bible to explain itself.

LESSON 2

6. What does the head of gold represent?

Daniel 2:38 *You are this _____ of gold.*

NOTE: The king was regarded as the head of the state. This is why Nebuchadnezzar represented Babylon, the empire that began the prophecy. Neo-Babylon ruled the world from 612-539 B.C. as one of the mightiest empires of antiquity—one that could aptly be described as the head of gold. Notice that the prophecy begins with Daniel's time.

7. Would the Babylonian kingdom last forever?

Daniel 2:39 *But after you shall arise _____ kingdom inferior to yours.*

NOTE: Babylon's supremacy would not last forever. Succeeding kingdoms, inferior to Babylon, would rule in their turn. Just as silver is inferior to gold, so the kingdom that followed Babylon enjoyed diminished glory. Led by Cyrus in 539 B.C., the Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylon and reduced it to ruins. The Medes and Persians were the ruling world power from 539-331 B.C. During their reign, all taxes had to be paid in silver.

8. What metal would represent the kingdom that followed Medo-Persia?

Daniel 2:39 *Then another, a third kingdom of _____ ... shall rule over all the earth.*

NOTE: The brass kingdom of Greece came into power when Alexander the Great conquered the Medes and Persians at the battle of Arbela in 331 B.C., and Greece remained in power until about 168 B.C. Greek soldiers were called "brazen coated" because their armor was all bronze. Notice how each succeeding mineral depicted in the image is less valuable, yet more enduring than the one before it.

9. What metal represents the fourth kingdom?

Daniel 2:40 *The fourth kingdom shall be as strong as _____ .*

NOTE: The iron monarchy of Rome conquered the Greeks in 168 B.C. and enjoyed world supremacy until Rome was captured by the Ostrogoths in A.D. 476. Rome is the kingdom that dominated the world when Jesus Christ was born. Notice how Daniel foretold a thousand years of world history with unerring accuracy. The rise and fall of

these four world empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome—are clearly foretold in the Bible and proved by the history books.

10. What would happen after the fall of the Roman Empire?

Daniel 2:41, 42 *The kingdom shall be _____ As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile.*

NOTE: When the Roman Empire began to crumble in A.D. 476, it was not overtaken by another world power. Instead, barbarian tribes conquered the Roman Empire and divided it—just as Daniel prophesied. Ten of these tribes evolved into modern Europe. They were the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Alemannians, Sueves, Anglo-Saxons, Heruls, Lombards, and Burgundians. Seven of them still exist today in Europe. For example, the Anglo-Saxons became the English, the Franks became the French, the Alemannians became the Germans, and the Lombards became the Italians.

11. Would these 10 kingdoms ever succeed in uniting?

Daniel 2:43 *They will mingle with the seed of men; but they will _____ to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.*

NOTE: Through marriage, alliances, and treaties, men have vainly attempted to reunite the European continent. All throughout history, leaders such as Charlemagne, Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, Mussolini, and Hitler have fought to build a new European empire; but these words of Scripture have stopped every single would-be world ruler. Revelation 13 tells us there will be another attempt to establish a universal religion, but Daniel's prophecy clearly states that the world will remain politically divided for the rest of Earth's history.

12. Who will set up the final kingdom?

Daniel 2:44 *And in the days of these kings the _____ of _____ will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.*

NOTE: The next great universal kingdom will be the kingdom of heaven, which is described in Matthew 25:31-34.

LESSON 2

13. What does the stone do to the other world kingdoms?

Daniel 2:34, 35 *A stone was cut out without hands, which _____ the image on its feet of iron and clay, and _____ them in pieces. ... And the stone that struck the image became a great _____ and filled the whole earth.*

NOTE: The stone that was cut without human hands represents God's kingdom. It will not be a conglomeration of earthly kingdoms, but a total replacement (Revelation 21:1). The Scriptures declare that when Jesus Christ returns to earth, He will completely consume all the kingdoms of earth and establish an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 2:44). What exciting news! Jesus Christ is coming again! All history is moving toward this climactic conclusion, when the Son of God shall return in majesty to bring in the kingdom of everlasting righteousness. King Nebuchadnezzar may have thought that he had defeated the true God when he besieged Jerusalem and plundered the temple (Daniel 1:1, 2), but he was shown very quickly that God is ruler over all. Human events are under His control, and ultimately He will win the conflict. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the 10 divisions of the Roman Empire may have sought to usurp divine authority and destroy the people of God, but all earthly kingdoms will eventually be crushed by the coming of Christ. Thank God, He will win the great controversy!

14. After hearing Daniel's clear interpretation of the dream, what did Nebuchadnezzar say about the Lord?

Daniel 2:47 *The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the _____ of _____, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret."*

NOTE: Having seen that God has complete control of world events, even Nebuchadnezzar readily acknowledged that the God Daniel served was above all the heathen gods of Babylon. How quickly the picture had changed! Daniel and his friends, because of their faithfulness to God, were elevated from their initial captivity in Babylon to positions of prominent leadership for the kingdom (Daniel 2:48, 49). God always honors those who honor Him (1 Samuel 2:30).

YOUR RESPONSE

Recognizing that God is in full control of earthly events, are you willing to let Him have full control of your life?

ANSWER: _____

SUPPLEMENT

*This section provides additional information for further study.
Turn the page to learn more.*

Gold = Babylon

The head of gold represented Babylon, which was the ruling world power from 612–539 BC.

Silver = Medo-Persia

The chest of silver represented Medo-Persia, the ruling world empire from 539–331 BC.

Bronze = Greece

The thighs of bronze represented Greece, the dominant world ruler from 331–168 BC.

Iron = Rome

The legs of iron represented Rome, which enjoyed world supremacy from 168 BC–AD 476.

Iron and Clay = the Divided Empire

The feet that were partly iron and partly clay represented a divided empire that would not cleave together. No single power has ruled the world since AD 476, and it will remain divided until Christ's return.

Stone = Christ's Eternal Kingdom, His Word, and His Law

