

• Daniel emphasised that the revelation given to him was not the result of his own wisdom

Daniel can tell the king exactly what took place. ‘While you were on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future^{¶1}.’ Daniel knows even what was happening in the king’s thinking. But Daniel wants it clearly understood. ‘This mystery has not been revealed to me because of any wisdom residing in me, more than any other living man^{¶2}...’

¶1 2:29

¶2 2:30

He first tells the dream

• A statue – four parts – smashed by a stone that became an earth filling mountain

He first tells the dream. The king sees a magnificent statue^{¶1}. Its uppermost section is made of gold^{¶2}. A section below that is made of silver^{¶3}. Its belly and thigh are made of bronze^{¶4}, and its legs are made of a mixture of iron and clay^{¶5}. Then as the king was (in his dream) viewing the statue it was smashed to pieces by a stone that was miraculously taken out of a mountain^{¶6}. The statue was entirely destroyed^{¶7}, but the stone became a mountain and filled the earth^{¶8}.

¶1 2:31

¶2 2:32a

¶3 2:32b

¶4 2:32c

¶5 2:33

¶6 2:34

¶7 2:35

¶8 2:35

• Supernatural knowledge

Daniel had received a supernatural revelation. There is no way a human can have inside information about another person’s dream. It is sheer miracle. God has given Daniel supernatural knowledge so that the king will know without a doubt that the next part of Daniel’s word is equally miraculous and authoritative.

Next Daniel begins to interpret the dream

• It is God who gives earthly kingdoms power

Next Daniel begins to interpret the dream. He begins by emphasizing the powerful and extensive kingship of Nebuchadnezzar himself. ‘You, O king, are a king of kings...’. God has given Nebuchadnezzar such power that the king of Babylon rules other kingdoms besides his own^{¶1}. He has immense political power and earthly glory, yet he has it only because God has given it to him. Earthly kingdoms are subject to God’s kingly power. No one has any authority unless it is given to him by God. Nebuchadnezzar’s regime was extraordinarily powerful. He ruled even over the animals of the countryside and over the birds of the air. This is an exaggeration but it is a way of emphasizing Nebuchadnezzar’s immense power and authority. The four parts of the statue represent kings and their kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar himself is the golden head of the statue in the dream. ‘You are the head of gold’, Daniel says^{¶2}.

¶1 2:37

¶2 2:38

• Four successive kingdoms beginning with the head of gold – Nebuchadnezzar himself

• The new Babylonian empire that destroyed Jerusalem

Babylonia was to be found in Mesopotamia, the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. There were kings there from about 2800 BC. In 626 BC the ‘new Babylonian’ empire began. Its first king was Nabopolassar (626–605 BC) but Nebuchadnezzar (or Nebuchadrezzar) (605–562 BC) was even more powerful. It was Nebuchadnezzar who demanded the loyalty of Jehoiakim king of Judah in about 605 BC and at that time sent Daniel and others to Babylon. It was Nebuchadnezzar who when, after three years, Jehoiakim rebelled^{¶1}, captured Jerusalem in 597 BC and appointed Zedekiah (also known as Mattaniah) as king in Jerusalem. When Zedekiah rebelled it was Nebuchadnezzar’s armies which destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC.

¶1 see 2 Kings 24:1

• Belshazzar - the last ruler of the Babylonian empire – an abrupt end

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by three kings (562–560; 560–556; 556 BC) and then by Nabonidus (550–539 BC). Nabonidus’s son was joint-ruler with his father; the son’s name was Belshazzar. He was the last ruler of the Babylonian empire which came to an

abrupt end. We shall read about Belshazzar in Daniel chapter 5. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he himself is the golden head of the statue in the dream.

• A second part made of silver – an empire following the Babylonians

There is a second part to the statue. The four parts of the statue represent kings and their kingdoms, and the second part of the statue is a section made of silver. The silver represents an empire which is to arise after the days of the empire of which Nebuchadnezzar is the king. 'After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you...' At this point the kingdom is not given a name.

2:39a

• A third part belly and thighs made of bronze – a third kingdom

Then there is a third part to the statue. Its belly and thigh are made of bronze and the third part of the statue represents yet another empire which is to arise in the future. 'After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.' Again, at this point the kingdom is not given a name.

2:39b

• A fourth part – legs of iron and clay – a fourth empire

Then there is a fourth part to the statue. Its legs are made of a mixture of iron and clay. The fourth part of the statue represents a fourth empire which is to arise in the distant future. 'And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron...' Once again, the kingdom is not given a name.

2:40

Four Great Kingdoms will have dominion over Jerusalem

The Bible constantly makes the prediction that four great kingdoms will have dominion over Jerusalem. This is the dominant theme of the Book of Daniel. God has a purpose for the future history of the world. God is King and he is acting in kingly power in this world to bring it to salvation and fulfilment of God's original plans. When men and women fell into sin, God in no way abandoned his plans for the world. He plans to save the world and restore it to glory. This is what the Christian message is all about. God's plan makes use of the line of Shem, the family of Abraham, the people of Israel, the tribe of Judah, the royal line of David, the city of Jerusalem. Over and against God's plans for his kingdom, ungodly men have their plans for their kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar was the first emperor to have dominion over the city of Jerusalem. It looked to the people of Israel that any plans for God's kingdom to come through what he would do in Jerusalem must be doomed. But in the middle of Nebuchadnezzar's empire come visions through Daniel. The visions say that there must be three more pagan empires after that of Nebuchadnezzar – but then the kingdom of God will be set up in a greater way than anyone could have imagine.

• All within God's plan

• But then the kingdom of God will be set up in a greater way than anyone could have imagine



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