

# Lessons from Daniel 2

BY EKKEHARDT MUELLER

Are you interested in the future? Daniel 2 is one of the best-known chapters in Scripture that deal with future developments. It contains an astonishing prophecy, reaching from the time of Daniel to the end of this world.

## I. Discussion of the Chapter

### A. The king's dream cannot be interpreted

1. **Verse 1**—During his reign as king of the Babylonian Empire, Nebuchadnezzar receives a special revelation from God.

2. **Verse 2**—Daniel and his friends are not invited with the wise men to interpret the dream.

3. **Verses 3–12**—*How does the king contrast with the wise men?*

*The king:*

- He does not tell them the dream.
- He is distrustful and afraid of a false interpretation.
- On one hand he pressures them; on the other he offers honor and gifts.
- His distrust increases.

He succumbs to wrath and issues a death decree.

*The wise men:*

- They demand to know the dream.
- They exhibit only human wisdom and a seemingly arbitrary interpretation.
- They make a second demand to be told the dream, exposing their insecurity and trickery.
- They refuse to meet the king's request on the grounds that it is humanly impossible to fulfill.

4. **Verse 13**—Although they are not present, Daniel and his friends are affected by the king's decree.

5. **Verses 14, 15**—Daniel gets more information.

6. **Verse 16**—*Why does the king grant Daniel's request for additional time when he had denied the wise men's request in verse 8?*

- The king is still disturbed by the dream and may be glad for another interpretation of the dream.
- Daniel was not with the other wise men when the king first asked for an interpretation. Possibly, the king considered it fair to allow Daniel to try.
- The wise men demanded to know the details of the dream. Daniel requests only time and not the details.
- God is involved behind the scenes.

### B. The prayer and its fulfillment

1. **Verses 17–23**—*What do we learn about Daniel's devotional life, especially his prayer life (see also Dan 6 and 9)?*

- Daniel approaches God for help. He trusts God. Therefore, there is no need for him to lament and complain.
- He has a season of prayer with his friends.
- He does not forget to express his gratitude. He praises God.
- Daniel is intensely, and on a daily basis, involved in prayer.
- He even risks his life for his desire to seek God regularly in prayer.

*What does Daniel know about God?*

- God is omnipotent and omniscient.
  - God is the Lord of history.
  - God is associated with light (e.g., John 8:12)
- Daniel considers himself to be a servant and steward. He remains humble.

### C. Daniel before the king

1. **Verses 24–30**—*What about Daniel’s character and philosophy of life can be derived from verses 24–30?*

- Daniel does not care only about himself. He attempts to help the wise men and his friends too. He supports the statement of the wise men in verses 10 and 11.
- He points to the true God and is a witness of God while being involved with the ruler of the Babylonian world empire (see also v. 37).
- This takes faith and courage.
- Daniel does not boast but regards himself a tool in God’s hand.

Daniel became a “man of God” because of his prayer life and his determination not to compromise but remain faithful to God’s will. This commitment allowed him to have great experiences with God.

2. **Verses 29**—Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is about the future.

### D. The dream

1. **Verses 31–35**—These verses contain a record of the dream. Even without the details, one notices that earthly things are transient and do not last.

### E. The interpretation of the dream

1. **Verses. 36–45**—*What is the time frame of the dream?*

- It starts with Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom.
- It ends with the kingdom of God.

The dream describes world history from the Babylonian time till the end of the world. The image consisting of different metals represents earthly kingdoms/empires.

Gold	–	Babylon (606–539 BC)
Silver	–	Medo-Persia (539–331 BC)
Bronze	–	Greece (331–168 BC)
Iron	–	Rome (168 BC–AD 476)
Iron-clay	–	Empires of Western Europe (AD 476–end of the world)

Some people have identified the following iron-clay nations:

Alemanni	–	Germany
Anglo-Saxons	–	Great Britain
Burgundians	–	Switzerland
Franks	–	France
Herulians	–	destroyed
Lombards	–	Italy
Ostrogoths	–	destroyed
Sueves	–	Portugal
Vandals	–	destroyed

Visigoths – Spain

The last part of the dream, which deals with the stone, is described in great detail.

*What statements are made about the iron-clay mixture?*

- It is a divided kingdom, and no longer a world empire.
- It still contains some of the hardness of iron. To some extent Rome continues to live on in the subsequent nations.
- All attempts to unify these nations fail. European politics of intermarriage between the royal houses did not work. Attempts to unify Europe under Charles the Great (eighth century), Charles V (sixteenth century), Louis XIV (seventeenth and eighteenth century), Napoleon (nineteenth century), Emperor Wilhelm II (twentieth century), and Hitler (twentieth century) were not successful. Today the European Union struggles to survive.

The climax of the prophecy is the stone. In the Old and New Testaments the stone is an image for God/Jesus (2 Sam 22:2; 1 Pet 2:4–8; Matt 21:42, 44). Our destiny depends on how we relate to Jesus Christ. He will return soon and establish His indestructible and eternal kingdom (Rev 11:15).

#### **F. Reactions of the king and Daniel**

1. **Verses 46–49**—Because of Daniel’s faithfulness and trust in the Lord, Nebuchadnezzar paid attention to the true God. Daniel again cares for his friends.

#### **II. Application**

- We do not fully understand world history. We do not see what happens behind the scenes. We are tempted to regard history as a purely human enterprise in which God is not involved.
- Yet history has a goal and is moving toward Christ’s Second Coming and the establishment of His kingdom.
- God is involved in human history. Even though humans make their free decisions, God still pursues His plans.
- As God guides human history, He is willing to guide my personal history and life and bring it to a good conclusion.

#### **Conclusion**

Because God is the Lord of history we commit our lives to Him. We trust Him, and are looking forward to a marvelous future.