

The Book of Daniel:
Comment and Commentary

Part I: The Life and Ministry of Daniel (and his friends), 1:1-6:28

- I. Daniel in Babylon (1:1-6:28)
 - A. The emergence of Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court, 1:1-21
 1. The Context, vv. 1-2
 2. The selection program of exiles for royal service, vv. 3-7
 3. The determination of Daniel, vv. 8-16
 4. The completion of the program, vv. 17-21
 - B. The First Perplexing Dream of Nebuchadnezzar, 2:1-49

Daniel's position in the royal court is vindicated by his ability to interpret the king's dream. It seems that these two chapters have the common theme of the rise of Daniel in the officialdom of Babylon and the humbling of powerful figures of state.



Chapter Lesson: Though kingdoms emerge displaying great power, they have a limited duration because only God's kingdom is eternal. We who live as exiles in a distant land should be encouraged that one day our exile will end, that God controls the ebb and flow of time. We are clearly in the end of times!!

1. The dream and the dilemma, vv. 1-13
 - a. The fact, v. 1

If the assimilation period for service in Nebuchadnezzar's court was three years for Daniel and his friends, beginning in the year of the king's ascension, how could it be said that the dream was in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign? Once again, Daniel followed the Babylonian calendar which counted the ascension year, even if less than a year, as the first year.

Profoundly (vv. 1, 3) troubled by a dream, dream-communication being highly valued, the king spent a sleepless night.
 - b. The appeal, vv. 2-3

The king sought the services of those with perceived capacity to receive communication from the gods who control the affairs of men.

- c. The astrologers' request, v. 4
The king must have lacked confidence in his advisors refusing to reveal the substance of his dream. He must have assumed that the ability to interpret was preceded by a knowledge of the facts. If the gods could reveal the meaning of something, they must also know the substance of that manifestation.
- d. The king's reply, vv. 5-6
Nebuchadnezzar delivered an ultimatum. Failure to reveal the king's dream and its meaning would bring destruction of life (usually by dismemberment) and property.
- e. The astrologer's second request, v. 7
The point that seems to be exasperated is that the astrologers did not have communication with the gods of wood and stone.
- f. The king's reply, vv. 8-9
- g. The astrologer's confession, vv. 10-11
They replied that what the king was demanding is impossible because the god's, being distant, cannot reveal things to people. In essence, we they are saying the demand cannot be met because the god's do not reveal things to mortals. (This prepares the reader for what is to follow because the God of Daniel, the only true God, can reveal the unknowable).
- h. The king's condemning decree, vv. 12-13
The decree was finalized because the astrologers admitted that they cannot know the dream. Sadly, Daniel and his friends were included in the death decree since they had passed the imposed training.
- 2. The intervention by Daniel, vv. 14-23
 - a. The inquiry, vv. 14-15
With appropriateness, Daniel approached the chief guard (the term means "executioner") to understand the crisis more fully.
 - b. The request, v. 16
To approach the king confirms that Daniel was placed in the king's confidence. The request was time to seek the Lord to reveal the dream and its interpretation to him. Thus, Daniel states that His God hears and answers prayer.
 - c. The involvement of friends, vv. 17-18
He involved his three friends through prayer for Daniel had promised a dream's meaning that he did not know, prayer being for mercy evidenced by access to the humanly impossible.
 - d. The disclosure, v. 19a
 - e. The praise, vv. 19b-23
The form of the prayer is that of thanksgiving/praise. Daniel extolls the character and actions of God. It is a most beautiful prayer.
 - 1) The focus of praise, vv. 19b-20
Daniel expresses praise for God's person ("name of God" being an equivalent) for two attributes: His wisdom and his power. He knows what others do not (wisdom) and He is all-powerful; He is all-knowing and lacks in no power of accomplishment. The name for God here is the great name that God gave to Moses (Ex. 3:14), "I AM," the eternally existent one. Praise is always a proper response to the reception of mercy.
 - 2) The cause for praise, vv. 21-23
 - a) His power over nations, v. 21a
 - b) For His gifting of wisdom, v. 21b

- c) For His all-encompassing knowledge, v. 22
- d) For His answer to their specific prayer request, v. 23
- 3. The interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, vv. 24-49

- a. The context, vv. 24-30

- 1) The request of Arioch, v. 24
Daniel approached the king's executioner seeking permission to come before the king, the ground being he was informed of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel will save the astrologers, but subsequent events will reveal their ingratitude.

- 2) The report of Arioch, v. 25

- 3) The inquiry of the king, v. 26

- 4) The confession before the king, vv. 27-28
What the king's "wise men" could not do, there is the God of Heaven who can (all other "gods" lack power and knowledge). "There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries."

- 5) The purpose of the disclosure, vv. 29-30

- a) For Nebuchadnezzar, vv. 29-30b

The dream had to do with future events ("what is going to happen" in the "latter days").

- b) For Daniel, v. 30a

The meaning of the dream's disclosure was not because of his prowess ("...not because I am greater...") but a gift to the king for his understanding. Daniel was only a means, not the cause.

- b. The disclosure of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, vv. 31-35

The king saw a large statue (another in 3:1 was ninety feet in height composed of various metals of declining value) gold, silver, bronze, iron, and an iron/baked clay mixture. A stone from heaven decimated the statue to dust and oblivion and the rock that struck it became a kingdom.

- c. The interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, vv. 36-45.

The dream was a disclosure of the history of mankind, of successive nations until a final one comes from heaven.

-The various metals represent various emerging nations, each destroying the previous.

-Each successive nation is weaker than the one it destroyed. Most scholars argue that the "inferiority" is not in power or even grandeur, but in moral rectitude.



- The final kingdom will not be of human origin, but from heaven.
 - Nations, as known to us, will no longer exist.
 - The kingdom from heaven will fill the earth, having no end.
 - Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar represent the golden head of the statue.
 - The meaning of the other metals is not disclosed, that it will come later.
- d. The confession of Nebuchadnezzar, vv. 46-47
Nebuchadnezzar is simply astounded before Daniel, treating him as a god though Daniel consistently claimed that he was subservient to a higher authority (vv. 27-28), the one true God. Daniel would have been repulsed by the king's evaluation. (Subsequent action by the King [chap. 3] will demonstrate that he was far from a knowledge of the true God!)
- e. The elevation of Daniel and his friends, vv. 48-49
Daniel's place in the kingdom was established by the lavish gifts (ironically even over the magicians) and the highest appointment in the monarch's court. His three friends were honored also with administrative appointments in Babylon.

Thoughts:

1. Daniel was a remarkable young man. Through the tragedies of deportation and national dissolution, he kept his moorings with wisdom and prudence in a very hostile, pagan culture. His spiritual maturity, though youthful, was a stabilizer, as well as the fountain of strength. Should we not make it a priority to nurture a foundation of spiritual fortitude for our children and grandchildren as a secular, godlessness continues to sweep across our nation?
2. One of the beneficial traits in post-modern America culture is the priority that the young, emerging generation places on togetherness, though still plagued by loneliness and a radical moral individualism. Daniel and his three friends are great examples of the power of togetherness and the strength that comes from it. They were together in trials (the food issue); they comforted each other in a stressful situation with prayer and togetherness; and they took care of each other when one succeeded. What a model for all of us!
3. The dream itself provides important lessons for all of us. Kingdoms come and go, but the divine plan for a final, eternal kingdom, that looks so uncertain at times in our experiences, our day being one of them with international threats and societal decline, is sure. What we have in the dream is the story of the unfolding of human history in cryptic disclosure. History is progressing through gradual dissolutions, but the final form is that of an eternally blessed kingdom for God's people. Does this insight not fill you with joy, as well as perspective? How should these insights effect the way you live and the choices you make?
4. "The times of the Gentile," which began with Babylonian supremacy and the crushing of God's people, will end with the triumph of the people of God, Jew and Gentile, in a new kingdom that is eternal, not subject to disarray or decay.
5. Daniel's prayer is instructive for all of us. When God answers our need for mercy and grace, we should acknowledge it. Prayer should be based on our comprehension of the attributes of God, which is the foundation of our assurance, security, and ethics. Prayer extolls Him for all His beauty. Our God is a prayer-answer God!!!