

## Daniel 2

### Daniel 2—The Times of the Gentiles

In Luke 21:24, Jesus was teaching about the end times when He would return in glory, but He referred to the period of time when Jerusalem would be “trampled underfoot by the Gentiles” as the times of the Gentiles. I believe He was speaking of that time period that began with the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586 BC until the second coming of Christ. Ever since the Babylonian Captivity, Jerusalem has been subjugated in some sense to Gentiles as a discipline from God against idolatry. In the book of Daniel, God gave Daniel the ability to interpret the king’s dream about the world empires from the time of Daniel until Jesus comes back. The Babylonians were great believers in the occult, and were very superstitious; so the king employed a huge staff of fortune tellers, conjurers, mediums, sorcerers, etc. When the king had a very troubling reoccurring dream, he called for all these wise guys to come help him with the futuristic dream.

### Sleepless in Babylon

In Daniel 2:1-6, early in the king’s reign, Nebuchadnezzar had the same dream every night that scared him terribly. As Shakespeare said, “Uneasy rests the head that wears the crown”. The king took this dream as a major crisis situation, and was unable to sleep because of the dream. The king called in all the high paid wise guys to tell him the dream and its interpretation. The wise guys very shrewdly told the king that if he told them the dream, then they could tell him the interpretation, but the king was too sharp to be fooled by this. He reasoned that if they could foretell the future, they certainly could tell him what the dream was and vice versa. In order to give them an incentive, the king gave them some bad news-good news. If you can’t tell me the dream, you all will be torn limb from limb, and your homes will be made a rubbish heap; but if you can you will receive gifts and honor. I’m guessing the bad news was the source of their greatest motivation.

### Clueless in Babylon

In Daniel 2:7-11, we see the wise guys continue to bargain with the king because they have no idea what the dream is, but the king was on to their tricks. Finally the wise guys of Babylon fessed up that “There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king...it is too difficult and no one else could do it except gods”. I think this whole drama served to bring out this great truth that mortals cannot tell the future. This is why today no psychic has ever won the lottery. Only the living God in heaven knows the future, and here in Daniel even the most superstitious and crooked con men must admit that this is true. The king became furious and ordered that all the wise guys be rounded up and executed.

### Helpless in Babylon

In Daniel 2:12-16, it looks like curtains for the wise guys, but it’s here that our hero steps in. Since Daniel and his friends worked in the king’s court, they also were subject to this order, so Daniel requested a little time to work on the dream. What Daniel needed was time to pray. I am reminded of Abe Lincoln’s quote during a crisis time of the Civil war, “I’m too busy not to pray”. In spite of the urgency of the situation, Daniel prayed to God, and when God answered, Daniel took the time to thank God, praise Him, and worship Him.

### Guiltless in Babylon

Daniel’s prayer was a prayer of mercy to “the God of heaven”. The basis of Daniel’s prayer was God’s mercy and compassion. Notice that Daniel never prayed to God based on any merit of Daniel. Unlike people today who think God owes them something, or they are even mad at God because of their circumstances, and demand that God fix things; Daniel humbly saw the only solution in God’s attributes of love and mercy. In fact, answered prayer is never based on our worth or character, but always based on God’s attributes. If we are waiting around for God to give us what we really deserve, I fear we will have a rude awakening. Daniel and his friends have a beautiful response to God’s answer to their prayer in Daniel 2:19-23. Daniel praises God for His wisdom and power, and makes the statement that is repeated throughout the book that only God is in control of times and epochs as He establishes kings and removes kings according to His will. All the wisdom and understanding that men have is given by God, and can also be taken away. Only God knows the future, and only God can

reveal the future. Daniel makes full disclosure that the interpretation of the dream, that will save everyone that works in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar, is solely a gift from God. Daniel is only God's vehicle of delivery. Great men, by the world's standards, always try to take credit, but to God alone goes all the glory and honor.

When Daniel is brought before the great king to interpret his dream, Daniel again tells the king that no human being could tell him the dream or its interpretation, but "there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to the king what will take place in the latter days." Then Daniel proceeded to tell the king his dream and its interpretation.

### The Future World Kingdoms

The king's dream was prophetic of the future Gentile kingdoms beginning with Babylon. The dream was an enormous statue with an awesome appearance. It had a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, and the legs were iron. The feet were partly of iron and partly of clay. Then the king saw a stone not cut by human hands that struck the statue on the feet and crushed them. Then the rest of the statue was also crushed into little pieces and became like chaff that was blown away in the wind. The stone that struck the statue grew into a huge mountain that filled the earth.

Daniel went on to tell the meaning of the dream. Nebuchadnezzar was the ruler of the first kingdom represented by the head of gold. After Babylon another kingdom would defeat and take over Babylon, and that would be Persia represented by the chest and arms of silver. No doubt the two arms symbolized the combined power of the Medes and Persians who would defeat Babylon in 539 BC. Then another third kingdom would supplant Persia, and then a fourth kingdom of iron would take over which would crush and break the others into pieces. The identity of the third kingdom was named in the eighth chapter of Daniel as Greece, and of course we all know that Alexander the Great defeated Persia and took all of Asia Minor and the entire Middle East circa 330 BC. The fourth kingdom was not named, but it is very obvious by the description here in ch.2 as well as ch.7-8, that it is Rome. At the time of this prophecy, Persia was a Babylonian province, Greece was just a collection of warring city-states, and Rome was a small village on the Tiber River.

What Daniel had prophesied about 603 BC was the course of history of the Gentile kingdoms which would rule over the Middle East and thus Israel. The fourth kingdom that we can assume was Rome just fell from within, as no other great kingdom ever arose. The Roman Empire that began as iron regressed to a divided state of clay mixed with iron, and in as much as iron and clay can't be mixed, it deteriorated. People like Charlemagne, Napoleon, and Hitler have been trying to put it back together for centuries and failed.

### The Rock of Ages

The last and most important part of the prophecy was that in the end times, all the kingdoms of this world will be put to an end, and the kingdom of God will be set up, and it will endure forever. All the supposedly great kingdoms of men were passing and transitory, but the kingdom of God is coming, and "the stone" in Daniel's dream will rule the Kingdom of God forever. In Matt.21:42-44, Jesus quoted from Psalm 118:22 identifying Himself as the Stone which Israel rejected, but which would become the cornerstone to that great building of God. Peter also quoted Ps.118 in his speech before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:11. The apostle Paul referred to Jesus as the cornerstone of that building which would be the "dwelling of God" in Eph.2:20-22. In 1 Peter 2:6-8, Peter wrote that Jesus was the stone sent by God to set up the Kingdom.

Daniel's prophecy was that in the end God will establish His Kingdom that shall never be destroyed as it will be the final and eternal kingdom. Through Daniel, God predicted in accurate detail all the future kingdoms that would dominate world history, but in comparison to the eternal kingdom of God, all those prior ones are just like a blink of an eye. All the men that ruthlessly ruled over those kingdoms arrogantly and vainly thought that their kingdoms would rule for thousands of years, and they would be immortalized, and now they are just dust in the wind.

This is why our hopes all reside in the return of Christ to set up His Kingdom. He alone is the Rock of Ages. Even now that great chorus in heaven is warming up to sing, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." (Rev.11:15)

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