



DANIEL 2:1-30

1 In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. 2 Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. 3 And the king said to them, "I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream." 4 Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation." 5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. 6 But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation." 7 They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation." 8 The king answered and said, "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm— 9 if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation." 10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. 11 The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." 12 Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. 13 So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them. 14 Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. 15 He declared to Arioch, the king's captain, "Why is the decree of the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. 16 And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king. 17 Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, 18 and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. 20 Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. 21 He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; 22 he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. 23 To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter." 24 Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation." 25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: "I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation." 26 The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?" 27 Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, 28 but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: 29 To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. 30 But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind."

STRUCTURE

- I. **The king's troubling dream and Babylon's failed wisdom (1-11)**
 - a. Heaven unsettles earthly power; the king cannot sleep (1)
 - b. Babylon's wise men are summoned; their wisdom proves powerless (2-7)
 - c. Imperial insecurity demands certainty and suspects manipulation (8-9)
 - d. Human wisdom collapses and confesses divine distance (10-11)
- II. **The king's furious decree and Daniel's wise response (12-19a)**
 - a. Imperial rage hastily demands death and reveals its own instability (12-13)
 - b. Quiet wisdom patiently answers fury and reveals its divine source (14-16)
 - c. Exiles seek mercy from the God of heaven together (17-18)
 - d. God reveals the dream—and His superiority (19a)
- III. **Daniel praises the God of heaven: He rules history and reveals mysteries (19b-23)**
 - a. God rules forever with wisdom and might (19b-20)
 - b. God rules over times, seasons, kings, and empires (21a)
 - c. God reveals mysteries to His covenant people (21b-22)
 - d. God answered Daniel's prayer (23)

IV. *Daniel proclaims the God of heaven: He alone rules history and reveals mysteries (24-30)*

- a. Covenant faithfulness becomes common grace—Daniel saves the wise men (24–25)
- b. The king's question exposes the issue: "Are you able?" (26)
- c. No human system can reveal the mystery; there is a God in heaven (27–28a)
- d. The dream concerns the latter days—God's sovereign future over empires

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

This is a story about a king gone mad and a God who reigns. He reigns over tyrants and their brutal empires. He reigns over His covenant people. And He reigns through wisdom—wisdom that surpasses the phony expertise of Babylon.

The story begins with a dream. It troubles the tyrant; he feels unsettled like the throne he occupies. Summoning his elite force of wise men, King Nebuchadnezzar demands the impossible: not only must they tell him the meaning of his dream—they must also tell him the dream itself! The "wise men" balk. They insult the king's rationality, claiming such revelation belongs only to "the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (2:11). Their statement bleeds with irony: in denying that the gods dwell with flesh, they unwittingly prepare the stage for the very thing they think impossible—a God who reigns in heaven yet draws near to His servants, revealing His mysteries to a man in exile. And with a New Testament lens, the irony deepens. God indeed dwells with flesh in the incarnate Son. Jesus is the "one like a Son of Man" who appears in Daniel's later vision, the true King who receives everlasting dominion over all earthly kingdoms (7:13).

Tyrants don't respond well to verbal jabs. Infuriated by the response of cabinet, Nebuchadnezzar accuses these supposed masters of revelation of being experts in manipulation. He hastily decrees their execution. Life and death hang on the mood of an unstable tyrant—or so it seems. When the sentence reaches Daniel and his friends, they respond with the calm that characterizes God's kingdom. Unshaken, Daniel steps forward with patience, wisdom, and humble dependence—the opposite of Babylon's frantic elite. And in doing so, he does more than preserve his own life. He saves the very pagans who could not save themselves. In seed form, this is the Gospel according to Daniel: the righteous servant becomes the means of deliverance for those who stand under judgment.

Rather than insulting the king, Daniel and his friends bow before the One who reigns above him. "The God of heaven" stoops to meet His servants on earth. What Babylon's diviners declared impossible, He makes plain: both the dream and its meaning. Daniel's first response is to praise the God of heaven, and his blessing becomes the theological center of the passage: God rules over men, empires, and history—even its darkest corners—for they are light to Him. In covenant mercy, He discloses dark riddles to the humble. He opens the eyes of blind tyrants. God is the great Revealer of Mysteries. And in that sense, Nebuchadnezzar was right: his "wise men" were phonies.

After praising the God of heaven, Daniel's second response is to proclaim Him. Worship gives way to witness. This foreshadows later chapters about "the wise" saints of the last days who "will make many understand" (11:33; cf. 12:3, 10). Babylon's wisdom trembles before dreams it cannot decode. But the wisdom that comes from above stands firm. It rests not in technique, but in the God who rules history and reveals His counsel to His friends.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

1 In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. 2 Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.

—"second year":

- Daniel usually marks his visions and experiences by year of the king's reign.
- The effect of timestamping visions is to invite accountability and to situate Daniel's visions within real political empires. This reinforces the theme of God's sovereignty over earthly kingdoms.
- Scholars have long debated how Daniel could have been counted among the "wise men" in the "second year" of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (Dan 2:1) if his training was to last "three years" (1:5). The tension is likely resolved by recognizing that Babylonians and Judeans calculated regnal years differently. Additionally, Daniel may still have been in the latter stage of his training at the time, which could explain why he was not summoned initially with the other wise men.

—"Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled":

- Other pagan royalty God speaks to through dreams:

- Abimelech (Gen. 20)—Warned in a dream not to take Sarah as his wife.
- Pharaoh (Gen. 41)—Given prophetic dreams about famine.
- Pilate's wife (Matthew 27:19)—Warned in a dream not to mess with Jesus.
- God speaks to pagan elites for two reasons: He loves them and rules over them.
- Nebuchadnezzar's troubled and anxious state signals divine speech in Daniel:
 - Dan. 4:5: "I saw a dream that **made me afraid**... the visions of my head **alarmed me**."
 - Dan. 5:6: "Then the king's **color changed**, and his thoughts **alarmed him**; his limbs gave way, and his **knees knocked** together."
 - Dan. 7:15: "As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was **anxious**, and the visions of my head **alarmed me**."
 - Dan. 7:28: "My thoughts greatly **alarmed me**, and my **color changed**, but I kept the matter in my heart."
 - Dan. 8:17: "When he came, I was **frightened** and fell on my face."
 - Dan. 8:27: "I, Daniel, was **overcome and lay sick for some days**."
 - Dan. 10:8: "**No strength was left in me**; my radiant appearance was **fearfully changed**."
 - Dan. 10:16-17: He trembles, stutters, and says, "**No strength remains** in me."
- Both pagans and faithful believers respond the same way to divine revelation.
- One way to know a dream or vision came from God is by the effect it has on you. If you wake up feeling overwhelmed, even troubled, this *can* signal a divine source.
- This response in Daniel emphasizes: when heaven breaks into history, it unsettles earthly power. Even Daniel feels unsettled because God's sovereign deposal of empires is frightening—even for those who long for God's kingdom. If, for instance, God gave you a dream tonight about the fall of the United States and its eventual replacement by His kingdom, you would rejoice at the final outcome—but you would still wake up unsettled. Not because you doubt God's rule, but because you live here. Judgment isn't theoretical when it's your world being shaken!

—"magicians... enchanters... sorcerers... Chaldeans":

- House: "The first term signifies Egyptian wise men able to interpret dreams; the second refers to individuals able to discern illness and to suggest a cure or perform an exorcism; the third may indicate persons able to cast spells against an enemy; and the fourth represents the ancient leadership group of wise men in Babylon."
- These roles overlap, which explains why they all fall under the category of Babylon's class of "wise men" (2:12-14, 18, 24).
- By multiplying categories, Daniel shows that Nebuchadnezzar called for "all hands on deck." Every spiritual specialist in Babylon was summoned. Early in his reign, still consolidating power after his father's death, the dream unsettled him enough that he refused partial answers. This wasn't curiosity; it was insecurity. If his kingdom was at stake, he wanted the full weight of Babylon's wisdom behind him.
- Even the most powerful kings in the world, deep down, are typically insecure. Just think of Herod slaying babies and toddlers to prevent the ascent of Christ (Matt. 2).
- Shakespeare (*Henry IV, Part 2*): "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown."

In verses 3-11, Nebuchadnezzar and the so-called wise men interact about his troubling dream. The insecure king demands they tell him not only the interpretation but the dream itself. The stakes are high: failure means torture, death, and ruin; success means reward and great honor. The wise men declare this is impossible—only "the gods" know what he dreamed.

—"the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic":

- Like English is today, Aramaic was the lingua franca of the Ancient Near East, spoken in diplomatic and commercial contexts.
- The text itself switches from Hebrew to Aramaic from 2:4b-7:28. This makes sense because the visions from chs. 2-7 concern the succession of global empires. From chapter 8 onward, the book returns to Hebrew, which also makes sense: the conclusion shifts more toward a focus on Israel (although empires are still in view).

- The Aramaic section mirrors Daniel's structure in another way. Daniel 2 opens with the vision of four successive kingdoms, and Daniel 7 closes with another vision of those same four kingdoms. The Aramaic portion is framed by these twin empire-visions, bracketing the rise and fall of the nations within a single unit.

—“Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation”:

- The wise men push back. They have been trained to interpret revelation—devoting their lives to the study of common dream symbols. But Nebuchadnezzar's insecurity and stubbornness provide a stage for God to show Himself as the true Revealer of Mysteries. The wisdom of Babylon cannot stand before Him.
- I am hesitant about Christian books that provide a list of dream symbols. While I agree that common themes appear, I fear becoming like the wise men of Babylon who rely on formulas and not God. Daniel's example shows that proper dream interpretation requires a friendship with the Revealer of Mysteries.

—“I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm”: Here we learn why Nebuchadnezzar places such a strict demand upon his wise men. He doesn't trust them. He accuses them of wicked motives—they “are trying to gain time”. He assumes their craft is manipulation, not revelation.

—“You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change”:

- Nebuchadnezzar doubles down. The accusation of trying to “gain time” (2:8) parallels his charge that they are stalling “till the times change” (2:9). The “change” he has in mind is that of his own deposal. He imagines they are stalling until a new king takes the throne and they can be relieved of his demand.
- Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar accuses them of conspiring to fabricate an interpretation. If the king tells them the dream, he's afraid they'll make stuff up—they'll lie—to preserve their status and soothe his fears until political winds shift.

—“The Chaldeans answered the king and said, ‘There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.’”

- The wise men provide two responses to explain why the king's demand is too difficult: (1) No king has ever asked this; (2) Only the gods possess this knowledge.
- Their response frames Nebuchadnezzar as unreasonable—a subtle punch.
- It is also ironic. They confess the very thing the book intends to prove: that true revelation belongs to God alone, and that human wisdom cannot access it.
- Even more striking, they claim that the gods “do not dwell with flesh.” Within a few verses, Daniel will reveal a God who does precisely what they deny—a God who discloses mysteries to a man. Later in the book, Daniel will see “one like a son of man”—Jesus—the God who indeed dwells with flesh and earns the world's worship.
- The irony highlights the impotence of man's wisdom, the transcendence of God's wisdom, and the immanence of God's friendship. God reigns supreme above earthly empires, but He draws near to His covenant people.

12 Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. 13 So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them. 14 Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. 15 He declared to Arioch, the king's captain, “Why is the decree of the king so urgent?” Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. 16 And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king.

—“the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed”:

- We see a similar response in Daniel 3:
 - 3:13: “Then Nebuchadnezzar in **furious rage** commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought.”
 - 3:19: “Then Nebuchadnezzar was **filled with fury**, and the expression of his face was changed.”
- I am reminded of a few other passages:

- Ps. 2:1-2: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed."
- Matt. 2:16: "Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under..."
- Acts 4:24-28: "And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed"—for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.
 - Rev. 11:18: "The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged..."
- Rage is the pattern of pagan kings. Despite their immense power, tyrants quake with insecurity. They lash out against threats, both real and imagined. Insecurity drives expansion abroad and consolidation at home: imperialism on the outside, control on the inside.
- The repetition of Psalm 2 shows where God and His people fit into this story of imperial power and control. God and His Christ pose a threat, so kings clamp down. They silence dissent and persecute the saints. Daniel's later visions reveal this more clearly, where pagan kingdoms are pictured as devouring beasts. The Book of Revelation picks up this same theme—contrasting beasts that devour with a Lamb who sacrifices. Jesus lets the beasts devour Him, only to rise above them. Jesus fulfills Nebuchadnezzar's dream. He crushes evil empires by letting them crush Him—and rising again—to establish the sort of kingdom every human longs for.
- The kingdom we all long for, Isa. 9:6-7: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this."
- This broad biblical story moves me. Like Daniel, we live in a world of devouring beasts. We belong to God's kingdom, which bodes well for eternity. But in this life, we are exiles. Our hope is in the only kingdom that can never be shaken.
- In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar decrees the destruction of all Babylon's wise men. In Daniel 3, he concentrates his rage on faithful Israelites. The "beast" of empire devours not only saints but all who threaten their supremacy. I'm reminded of Revelation 18, where "Babylon" devours not just "prophets" and "saints" but anyone who gets in the way: "all who have been slain on the earth" (18:24). Empire, when absolutized, does not merely oppose God's people. It devours the weak and poor.
- How different is the kingdom of God!
 - Luke 6:20: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."
 - Luke 14:13-15: "But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just." When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, 'Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!'"

—"so the decree went out": The speed of the king's decree reveals the volatility of unchecked power. Empire operates by impulse and threat, not patience or mercy. Lives hang on a ruler's mood. The swiftness of judgment heightens the contrast with Daniel's calm deliberation and prayerful dependence.

—"they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them": Daniel and his friends had not completed their three-year training, but they were still reckoned among "the wise men."

—"Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch":

- In chapter 1, Daniel responded to the chief eunuch, Asphenaz (1:3), with quiet wisdom. He did not protest with obnoxious noise about his personal convictions. Rather, he proposed a ten-day test that would allow him to remain faithful without jeopardizing the safety of his overseer. He modeled how to

live inside the machinery of empire and beneath an unreasonable king. Rather than insulting the tyrant like Babylon's "wise men", he showed how quiet wisdom prevails.

- We observe the same wisdom here in chapter 2. Again, Daniel proposes an alternative, but without accusation, panic, or loud-mouthed defiance. He does not challenge Nebuchadnezzar's authority; he trusts God's sovereignty. In the face of imperial rage, Daniel remains composed.
- Quiet wisdom, anchored in prayer, achieves what outrage never could.
- The stories of Daniel 1-6 model how saints persevere in the apocalyptic "last days" visions of Daniel 7-12. As we approach the end, governments will become more totalitarian (Rev. 13, 16, 17, 19, 20). While there is a place for protest—particularly when they demand godless allegiance (Dan. 3, 6)—we more often save our heads through quiet wisdom.

—"And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king."

- "appoint him a time" is a theologically loaded phrase. It refers to more than scheduling an appointment. "time" is a great theme of both this chapter and the whole book of Daniel:
 - The Babylonian wise men sought to "gain time" (2:9)—stalling "till the times change" (2:10), and Nebuchadnezzar is deposed.
 - God "changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings" (2:21).
 - Later in Daniel:
 - "seven times" pass over Nebuchadnezzar (4:16, 23, 25, 32).
 - "for a season and a time"—evil receives an extension of life (7:12).
 - "A time, times, and half a time" (7:25; 12:7) = the reign of evil
 - Seventy "weeks" (9:24) = the time of God's triumph over evil
 - "The time of the end" (8:17; 12:4) = the last days
 - "1,290 days... 1,335 days" (12:11-12).
 - Even the test of Daniel 1 speaks of "time" when Daniel proposes a ten-day test, which occurs amid his three-year training regimen.
 - The point of it all is to show how empires think they control the clock, but the God appoints their rise and fall. Even when evil reigns, He reigns over evil. And He demonstrates this reign by setting limits to tyranny, humbling proud rulers, preserving His saints, and crushing empires—in His time.
- In Daniel, time is never governed by governors. It is measured, appointed, changed, and fulfilled by God. Empires issue deadlines. God determines destinies.
- So when Daniel asks the king to "appoint him a time," he is not scrambling for delay like the Chaldeans. He stands in confidence that time belongs to God.

17 Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, 18 and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

—"Daniel... made the matter known to... his companions":

- Verse 17 calls them by their Hebrew names, emphasizing that the gods of the Chaldeans are powerless to reveal mysteries. The contest is not finally between Israel and Babylon, but between their gods and our God.
- Even though Daniel addresses Arioch (v. 15) and Nebuchadnezzar (v. 16), and even though Daniel receives the revelation (v. 19)—he was no lone ranger. He relied on his friends. Wise people work together. The Old Testament book about wisdom, Proverbs, says the same: "He who isolates himself seeks his own desire" (Pr. 18:1).
- Again, Daniel's wisdom models how saints persevere in the last days—together.

—"seek mercy from the God of heaven":

- "mercy": Daniel is not asking for abstract compassion here. This Aramaic term overlaps with the Hebrew word, *hesed*—God's loyal mercy and covenant faithfulness. Even as an exile, Daniel believes God will be faithful to His covenant.

- When we pray, we do not just appeal to God's character—His love, mercy, or justice—we appeal as children of the covenant. Like a perfect spouse, God has bound Himself to our welfare with unbreakable promises.
- "God of heaven":
 - This title for God appears rarely before Israel entered exile (Gen. 24:3, 7; Jonah 1:9) but frequently afterward (Dan. 2:18-19, 37, 44; 5:23; Ezra 1:2; 5:11-12; 6:9-10; 7:12, 21, 23; Neh. 1:4-5; 2:4; 2:20; 2 Chron. 36:23).
 - Even the instances where "God of heaven" appears before exile, it occurs when Abraham/Jonah interact with foreigners. The title functions as an apologetic: The "God of heaven" reigns supreme over man-made gods.
 - It makes sense that this title would appear more frequently after exile—after Israel lost the temple and the land. Despite suffering such catastrophe, exiles declared their faith in a God whose reign is not limited by territory or earthly temples. The "God of heaven" transcends geography.
- In Daniel 2, covenant mercy and heavenly sovereignty converge: Daniel appeals to the God who reigns above empires yet draws near to His servants.

—"mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night":

- "mystery": The repeated use of "mystery" (2:18-19, 27-30) highlights that this chapter is not merely about dream interpretation but about access to God's hidden counsel. Revelation belongs to God alone, and He grants it to whom He wills. Daniel hears from heaven, not because of technique, but because of God's covenant.
- God revealed the mystery of Nebuchadnezzar's dream—in a dream given to Daniel.
- I have heard stories of people who prophetically revealed someone's dream to them like Daniel. But I have never experienced it myself.
- I must confess—I've never prayed for it! "You have not because you ask not" (Jam. 4:2).

—"Daniel blessed the God of heaven": Supernatural experiences should lead us to magnify God, not ourselves. Paul rebukes the Corinthians for this mistake (1 Cor. 12-14). Modern charismatics do well to follow Daniel's example, not the Corinthians'.

20 Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. 21 He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; 22 he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. 23 To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."

—Daniel praises God for His eternity ("forever and ever"), His character ("wisdom... knowledge"), His power ("might"), His sovereignty ("changes times and seasons... removes kings and sets up kings"), His generosity ("He gives wisdom... knowledge... reveals"), and His covenant ("God of my fathers").

—Another way of thinking about it is that Daniel praises God:

- For who He is (eternal, wise, mighty)
- For what He does in history (changes times, removes kings)
- For what He does for His people (gives wisdom, reveals mysteries)
- For what He does for Daniel personally ("you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you")

—"gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding":

- This is what we just observed. The foolish sorcerers of Babylon received nothing of God's wisdom and knowledge. But the truly wise servants of God heard from Him.
- Wisdom is compounding. God gives wisdom to those who value it. As Book of Proverbs 4:7 says, "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom." The first act of wisdom is to pursue it. The failure of the "wise men" was—they never asked God!
- This pattern carries into the teaching of Jesus.
 - In Matt. 13:11-12, after explaining why He speaks in parables, He says: "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven... For to the one who has, more will be given, and

he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

- The parables conceal truth from the proud and disclose it to disciples. Revelation does not flow indiscriminately. It is given to those who lean in.
- That theme runs throughout Book of Daniel. "The wise" are a recurring category (cf. 11:33; 12:3, 10). The wise understand; the wicked do not. The difference is not IQ but allegiance. The wise fear God, and therefore God entrusts them with insight.
- So when Daniel says God "gives wisdom to the wise," he is not describing favoritism. He is describing a spiritual principle: humility attracts revelation. Babylonian sorcerers—the "self-sufficient"—receive nothing.
- Throughout Scripture, God reveals His secrets not to the powerful but to His friends. "The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him" (Ps. 25:14), and "the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). As He said of Abraham, "Shall I hide from him what I am about to do?" (Gen. 18:17). Daniel stands in that same line: the God of heaven shares His counsel with those who fear Him—with His friends.
- What differentiates a servant from a friend is revelatory knowledge (John 15:15).

24 Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation."

—Daniel does not just appeal for the king to spare him and his friends. He saves pagans.

—Daniel's example reminds us of Abraham saving Lot—and with him, the wicked king of Sodom and his allies (Gen. 14). Even more, it reminds us of Joseph who—living in exile—climbs the ranks of an evil empire by interpreting the king's dreams. As a result, God uses him to save both Jews and Gentiles (Gen. 37-50).

—These OT stories reveal the gospel in seed form. The "gospel of the kingdom" is the good news that God reigns through Christ over the devouring kingdoms of man, fulfilling His covenant to Israel, and saving the whole world. Jesus is our greater Abraham, who rescues not only righteous Lot, but wicked Sodom. He is our greater Joseph, who saves not only Israel, but Egypt. He is our greater Daniel, who saves not only His covenant people, but Babylonian astrologers. The gospel is not just for Israel but for all who believe.

25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: "I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation." 26 The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?" 27 Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, 28 but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: 29 To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. 30 But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind."

—"I have found": Arioch subtly takes credit when he says, "I have found..." (v. 25), though Daniel initiated the action. Babylonian officials posture for advancement, but Daniel deflects glory. The contrast sharpens the humility theme already emerging in the chapter. In God's kingdom, revelation produces worship, not self-promotion.

—"wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers": variations of this list occur in 2:2, 10, 12-14, 18, 24, and 27 (esp. 2:2, 10, 27). The repetition spotlights their collective failure.

—"No wise men... can show the king the mystery... but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries":

- Thus far, Daniel has exercised quiet wisdom. But we should not mistake this for remaining silent when opportunities arise to proclaim God's saving reign.
- Daniel's "gospel presentation" involves polemic. He critiques the "wise men" of Babylon—not by name-calling but by calmly telling the truth about their insufficient worldview. This occurs throughout Scripture.
- Faithfulness means knowing more than how to make a positive case for the gospel. We must also be able to articulate why false religions fail.

—“what will be in the latter days”: Some commentators interpret “latter days” to simply mean “the future.” I disagree. Throughout Daniel and the rest of Scripture, “latter days” carries a forward-leaning, climactic sense (Gen. 49:1; Num. 24:14; Deut. 4:30; Jer. 23:20; 30:24). While the phrase can refer broadly to the unfolding future of God’s covenant purposes, it consistently stretches toward the end of redemptive history. This holds true to the vision itself in Daniel 2, where God’s kingdom smashes earthly empires and fills the whole earth (Dan. 2:34–35, 44–45)—a kingdom inaugurated at Christ’s first advent and consummated at His return.

—“not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living”: Daniel is among the “wise” to whom God “gives wisdom” (2:21), but he refuses to let this fill him with pride. He postures himself humbly—the precise reason God revealed His mysteries to Daniel.

—Do you want to hear from God? Humble yourself and seek Him.

—The narrative moves from public imperial panic (vv. 2-13) to private prayer (vv. 17-18), to secret revelation (v. 19), and back to public proclamation (vv. 27-30). Empire rages in the throne room, but heaven answers in the quiet. The decisive turning point in history does not happen in the court, but in a prayer meeting. God overturns decrees through intercession.

—Longman: “In chapter 1, Daniel’s wisdom is similar to the kind of wisdom we find in the book of Proverbs: street smarts, knowing how to navigate life in the midst of troubles and obstacles, based on experience and what works... In Daniel 2 the kind of wisdom he displayed is more striking from a human perspective.” In other words, God’s wisdom is multi-faceted: it teaches us how to navigate earthly life, but it also reveals divine mysteries.



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