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**Welcome** to *EndTime Issues*...

Daniel 2 has rich historical information extending from the seer's day through final end-of-time events. A consummate fulfillment is also remarkably evident, linking its storyline to earth's final drama.

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## **Daniel 2 – An Apotelesmatic Chapter Part 1a**

### **Introduction**

Daniel lived throughout the entire Neo-Babylonian period. Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of the Egyptians at Carchemish in May–June 605 B.C. anchored his power over the expanding Babylonian Empire. He became the greatest ruler of Babylon and its most competent monarch of ancient times.<sup>1</sup>

- Shortly after that Egyptian victory, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah. During that campaign Daniel and his three friends were taken captive.
- Later, in Babylon, these four passed an “intelligence” test, permitting them to receive special training to serve in the royal court.

This education culminated after three years, permitting a “graduation” following an oral exam by the king. They did excell and were considered part of the “*wise men*” of Babylon. ***It was at or toward the end of this schooling that life-changing sagas occurred.***

***“In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep” (Daniel 2:1).***

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Stephen R.; *The New American Commentary, Daniel*, vol. 18 (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), p. 44.

According to the Babylonian method of calculating regnal years, the two years noted likely occurred during Nebuchadnezzar's third year of reign [part of one year (his accession year was not counted), a full year of reign, then part of the current year] (cf. 1:5, 18).<sup>2</sup>

This king had a dream that he couldn't remember. Dreams from God are classed in His Word with visions and even with the fruits of the Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Hebrew manuscripts suggest that he entered a "state of dreaming."<sup>4</sup>

- He awoke. Suddenly, he had amnesia regarding what he had just seen or experienced.
- The king became agitated.<sup>5</sup> He was deeply convicted that it was relevant to himself personally. Perceiving its gravity could not be dismissed.

Ancient Babylonians believed that dreams often contained messages from the gods. To understand them was critical.<sup>6</sup>

***"The king issued an order to summon the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and wise men in order to explain his dreams to him. So they came and awaited the king's instructions. The king told them, 'I have had a dream, and I am anxious to understand the dream.'" (Daniel 2:2-3 – NET).***

The "*magicians*" are today thought of as those involved with deception, but the Hebrew word referenced an engraver or writer. These men meticulously chronicled with a stylus on clay events of the kingdom and the movement of stars. "*Astrologers*," in turn, gave meaning to those celestial bodies' movements, related to the present and the future."

The "*enchanters*" and "*sorcerers*" were "*necromancers*" and "*incantation priests*." They communicated with the dead and spirit world. The "*soothsayers*" were priests and interpreters of future events."<sup>7</sup>

All these men illustrated the best "science" and "worldly wisdom" of that era. However, they were inadequate to deal with this God-inspired dream.

1. Beginning ~749 B.C. they started to make accurate astronomical observations.
2. The Babylonian astronomer Naburimanhu (500 B.C.) calculated the length of a year as 365 days, 6 hours, 15 minutes, and 41 seconds (only 26 minutes and 55 seconds too long!<sup>8</sup>
3. The Babylonian astronomer Kidinnu (~390 B.C.) later made other precise astronomical calculations.

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<sup>2</sup> Baldwin, Joyce G.; *Daniel* (Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL), p. 85. Driver, S. R.; *The Book of Daniel*, CBSC (Cambridge University, 1922), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 569-570.

<sup>4</sup> Montgomery, James A; *The Book of Daniel* (Varda Books; Stokie, IL; 2016), p. 142.

<sup>5</sup> Keil, C. F. and F. Delitzsch; *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts 01961-3473; 2006 – 2<sup>nd</sup> printing), vol. 9, pp. 86-87.

<sup>6</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73, 78-80.

<sup>8</sup> Whitcomb, John C.; *Daniel* (Moody Press; Chicago, IL – 1985), p. 37.

Nebuchadnezzar's story became part of a unique, divine plan to recognize that Daniel's God was the God of all gods! The failure of his impressive list of skilled secular experts would be offset by Daniel's success.<sup>9</sup>

Called before Nebuchadnezzar, these Chaldean wise men spoke to the king in Aramaic (Daniel and his companions were absent).

***“O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation.”***  
**(Daniel 2:4 – NKJV).**

This is a common address before a king. In a pagan context it is understood as a prayer to the gods, especially the patron god of Babylon, Bel (also called Marduk).<sup>10</sup> “May you have eternal life.”

- Nebuchadnezzar is, however, a mere mortal.
- In contrast, later in this prophetic saga, God's kingdom will be forever (2:44; cf. 3:33, 4:31, 6:27, 7:27).

Though the language of culture and scholarship in Babylon was Akkadian (a blend of Semitic and Assyrian languages), Aramaic was already becoming the dominant commercial language of the empire. Much of Daniel (chapters 2–7) is written in Aramaic, as is confirmed in several Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>11</sup> The remainder is Hebrew.

The pressure on these wise men is now compounded.

- They are to relate to the king what he dreamed.
- Then – its meaning.
- The king's emotions were intense. He was agitated.

***“The king replied to the wise men, ‘My decision is firm. If you do not inform me of both the dream and its interpretation, you will be dismembered and your homes reduced to rubble! But if you can disclose the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts, a reward, and considerable honor. So disclose to me the dream and its interpretation’*** (Daniel 2:5-6 – NET).

This angry threat of heinous violence gives clarity to how deep his feelings and convictions were in what that dream meant!

The king's anxiety has now fully surfaced. Eastern superstition claims that not remembering a dream could make his personal god angry. This added to the vehement reaction of Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Lucas, Ernest C.; *Daniel* (Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL; 2002), p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> Steinmann, Andrew E.; *Daniel* (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 2008), p. 117.

<sup>11</sup> Whitcomb, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38. Lucas, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

These lethal threats would likely be carried out!<sup>13</sup> Such violence is already found in other incidents, e.g., against the Judean King Zedekiah (II Kings 25:7), against the Jewish rebels in Babylon, Ahab and Zedekiah (Jeremiah 29:22), and later against Daniel's three friends (Daniel 3).

- Nebuchadnezzar feared some speculative or even a deceptive interpretation!
- If they could recount the dream, likely its meaning would be accurate.<sup>14</sup>

Though not a majority opinion, some scholars conclude that the manuscripts' Aramaic words actually mean that the king remembered the dream and wanted the wise men to reiterate it as part of their test!

- That would mean that his vivid memory would be used as a "measuring stick" against their understanding.<sup>15</sup>
- Again, Daniel and his companions were not present.

This horrific sentence reveals the deep fear and apprehension of this king. He dreaded that the gods might not be honored and might bring revenge.<sup>16</sup>

***"They again replied, 'Let the king inform us of the dream; then we will disclose its interpretation.' The king replied, 'I know for sure that you are attempting to gain time, because you see that my decision is firm. If you don't inform me of the dream, there is only one thing that is going to happen to you. For you have agreed among yourselves to report to me something false and deceitful until such time as things might change. So tell me the dream, and I will have confidence that you can disclose its interpretation. The wise men replied to the king, 'There is no man on earth who is able to disclose the king's secret, for no king, regardless of his position and power, has ever requested such a thing from any magician, astrologer, or wise man. What the king is asking is too difficult, and no one exists who can disclose it to the king, except for the gods – but they don't live among mortals!' Because of this the king got furiously angry and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. So a decree went out, and the wise men were about to be executed. They also sought Daniel and his friends so that they could be executed"* (Daniel 2:7-13 – NET).**

The Chaldeans were stalling. They were unable to reveal what the king dreamed. They firmly contended that only the gods could do that! These wise men further noted that those gods are the only source of such a revelation, but they don't live among human beings. Yet, they claimed power to make contact with them!

- It is remarkable that the Chaldeans did not turn to their gods for help – either in prayer or ritual. They clearly were convicted that this would be of no benefit!
- This failure will, however, sharpen the contrast with Daniel's God.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Steinmann, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>14</sup> Lucas, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>15</sup> Whitcomb, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>16</sup> Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>17</sup> Collins, John J.; *Daniel* (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN – 1993), p. 157.

“You will be torn from limb to limb.” Nebuchadnezzar’s cruelty and ability to carry out this threat brought fear to these men.

God had challenged men claiming “mystical powers” over a century before (Isaiah 47:12-13).<sup>18</sup> Such specious skills are again on the line, this time by a secular king. The magicians were full of fear and trembling. They declared that the request of the king was unreasonable. The test was beyond what had ever been required of any man. The king would shortly let his uncontrollable passions end their existence.

Then verse 13’s Aramaic words suggest that they were being assembled for the formal execution. Suddenly, Daniel came onto the scene.<sup>19</sup>

- It is uncertain if Daniel and his three companions had formally commenced their royal “wisdom” role. However, they, too, were being sought for execution.<sup>20</sup> Again, they had not been present with the others during the fearful exchange before the king.
- This likely gave Daniel some leverage in his following request.

***“Then Daniel spoke with prudent counsel to Arioch, who was in charge of the king’s executioners and who had gone out to execute the wise men of Babylon. He inquired of Arioch the king’s deputy, ‘Why is the decree from the king so urgent?’ Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter. So Daniel went in and requested the king to grant him time, that he might disclose the interpretation to the king” (Daniel 2:14-16 – NET).***

One assumes that Daniel had previous positive contact with Arioch, the chief executioner.<sup>21</sup> His conversation suggests favorable negotiations to delay the king’s decree! “Why is the king so hasty?” The contrast with Esther going before the king is in play. Similar to here, which Josephus even recognized, going before the king could have been lethal!<sup>22</sup> “Taking his life in his hand, Daniel ventured to enter the king’s presence, and begged that time be granted in order that he might reveal to him the dream and its interpretation. To this request, the monarch acceded.”<sup>23</sup> This is startling because of the king’s fearsome emotions!

- Wisely, Daniel did not challenge the king’s insistence that the dream needed to be recounted.
- Just “give me time” and it ***will be given*** to you.<sup>24</sup>

The contrast between the tactics of the previous wise men, which provoked the king’s anger, and Daniel’s tact and his positive words, “I will tell you,” add wonderful drama in God’s favor!

***“Then Daniel went to his home and informed his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, of the matter and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning***

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<sup>18</sup> Whitcomb, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> Montgomery, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-150.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>21</sup> Collins, *op. cit.*, p.158.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *The Youth Instructor*, September 1, 1903.

<sup>24</sup> Steinmann, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

***this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon” (Daniel 2:17-18 – NRS).***

This is the first referenced prayer in the book of Daniel. Daniel and his companions are totally dependent on God’s mercy and intervention. The use here of the companions’ names in Hebrew (which had changed in the king’s court) was used in the context of faith and prayer!

- Daniel’s entreaty to the “*God in heaven*” is elevating and special. In the Babylonian culture, where astral worship was practiced, he is appealing to Yahweh, the Creator, the very God of heaven and earth.<sup>25</sup> “He did not trust in his own strength; he laid his whole soul and all his difficulties open to his heavenly Father, and he believed God heard him, and was comforted and blessed.”<sup>26</sup>
- This reveals that the three years of pagan training these men experienced had no adverse effect on their relationship with God!<sup>27</sup>

Most remarkable is Daniel asking his friends to petition God to preserve the other wise men! In prayer they pled that the “*mystery*” of the king’s dream/vision and its meaning would be revealed.

“The servants of Christ are to rely upon God as did Daniel in the courts of Babylon. Daniel knew the value of prayer, its aim and its object; and the prayers which he and his three companions offered to God after being chosen by the king for the courts of Babylon, were answered.”<sup>28</sup>

***“Then in a night vision the mystery was revealed to Daniel. So Daniel praised the God of heaven, saying: ‘Let the name of God be praised forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to him. He changes times and seasons, deposing some kings and establishing others. He gives wisdom to the wise; he imparts knowledge to those with understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things. He knows what is in the darkness, and light resides with him. O God of my fathers, I acknowledge and glorify you, for you have bestowed wisdom and power on me. Now you have enabled me to understand what we requested from you. For you have enabled us to understand the king’s dilemma’” (Daniel 2:19-23 – NET).***

The tension and expectation of the reader is high, then is released as the answer suddenly came, underscoring the superiority of the God of the Jews over the gods of Babylon.

- Daniel agrees with the Chaldean men that the revelation could not be accomplished through human wisdom.
- What he reveals is entirely from his God. There is now an implied “put down” of the Babylonian gods.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>26</sup> *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1168.

<sup>27</sup> Whitcomb, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup> *The Youth Instructor*, August 18, 1898.

<sup>29</sup> Lucas, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

Captivating is Daniel's answer to prayer coming in a night vision, paralleling Nebuchadnezzar's nocturnal dream. God didn't give the king the meaning of his dream. "The Spirit of the Lord rested upon Daniel and his fellows, and the secret was revealed."<sup>30</sup>

Miller notes that Daniel's prayer of thanks is "one of the beautiful praise prayers of the Bible."<sup>31</sup> "This little psalm is a model of thanksgiving. No word is merely repetitive.... The symmetry and beauty of the poetry makes their own contribution to the praise of God."<sup>32</sup>

Daniel's prayer of thanksgiving is a theological study:

1. God is worthy of praise because He has all power and wisdom (cf. I Chronicles 29:11; Romans 11:33; Revelation 5:12, 7:12).
2. God exercises and grants power and wisdom to human authorities. He alone grants power to kings (cf. Romans 13:6, I Peter 2:13-14).
3. God is to be praised by the answers to prayer that He gifts to petitioners (cf. Ephesians 1:17, James 1:5).<sup>33</sup>

Daniel's prayer anticipates an answer. He senses his awesome relationship with God – a real Being who can answer petitions. Later, Daniel tells the king, "*The mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other men. God has divulged His secrets.*"

Daniel now recognizes that he holds the king's "secret." It is noteworthy that Daniel does not thank God for saving his life but for resolving the king's dilemma – an amazing man. He recognizes that this dream entails the destiny of the world:

***"Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation. Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation" (Daniel 2: 24-25 – KJV).***

Arioch was appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon. Once again, it's fascinating that Daniel had such accessibility and commanding power with this leader! There must have been mutual respect, based upon providence-led associations in the past! Arioch granted a delay in the execution. Arioch apparently conveyed enough details of the king's wishes, demands, and concerns to Daniel that the seer was confident to say, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon." Implied: "I was not there when the king needed help." "I will reveal the dream and its meaning!" "Stop the execution!"

- Alone and young, Daniel's words, then Arioch's action, countered the king. Nebuchadnezzar could have reacted adversely.

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<sup>30</sup> *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 411.

<sup>31</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*, page 86.

<sup>32</sup> Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>33</sup> Doukhan, Jacques B.; *Secrets of Daniel* (The Review and Herald Publishing Association; Hagerstown, MD 21740; 2000), pp. 27-28.

- However, Daniel clearly said, “I will interpret the dream for him.”<sup>34</sup>

The cause for the king's anxiety, anger, and lethal threats could now be neutralized.

- Though apparently Daniel had just seen the king (likely the previous day)
- He now follows protocol: “*Take me to the king.*” The God of the universe, a greater king, had been in contact with Daniel!

The Aramaic suggests that Arioch “made haste” – “immediately” taking Daniel before the king.<sup>35</sup> Arioch plays down Daniel’s credentials and claims credit for himself. “I have found a man from Judah who can make known what the interpretation of the dream means.”<sup>36</sup>

This will announce that the God of the Jews is superior to the gods of Babylon.<sup>37</sup> “Behold the Jewish captive, calm and self-possessed, in the presence of the monarch of the world’s most powerful empire.”<sup>38</sup>

Part 1b to immediately follow this Part 1a.

Franklin S. Fowler, Jr., M.D.  
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<sup>34</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>35</sup> Steinmann, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>36</sup> Baldwin, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>37</sup> Lucas, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>38</sup> *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 494-497.