

Wisdom From Above

Daniel 2

Wisdom From Above: Daniel 2

- I. The Unsuccessfulness of the Wisdom of Babylon
 - A. Ultimately, the wisdom of the world
 1. Cannot alleviate us from the anxiety of life.
 2. Cannot provide answers to big questions of the heart.
 3. Cannot comfort us during the dark nights of the soul.
- II. The Strength of the Wisdom of God
 - A. We also learned from Daniel's worship that to:
 1. God belongs might.
 2. God is omnipotent; he is all-powerful.
 3. He has the power and ability to bring whatever He wills.
 - B. For Daniel, he must give praise and glory to God.
- III. The Superiority of the Kingdom of God
 - A. Daniel shares the dream's interpretation, reminding the king that God gives all.
 - B. The historical outline looks like this:
 1. Head of Gold- Babylon (612-539 BC)
 2. Chest of Silver- Medo-Persia (539-331 BC)
 3. Belly/Thighs of Bronze- Greece (331-63 BC)
 4. Legs of Iron- Rome (63 BC-476 AD)
 - C. The Stone- Final King- Jesus

Introduction: The Mars Climate Orbiter (formerly Mars Surveyor '98 Orbiter) was a robotic space probe launched by NASA on December 11, 1998, to study the Martian climate, atmosphere, and surface changes while serving as a communications relay for the Mars Surveyor '98 program. However, on September 23, 1999, communication was lost as it attempted orbital insertion. The spacecraft approached Mars on a trajectory that was too close, leading to its destruction in the atmosphere. An investigation found that the failure resulted from a measurement mismatch between two systems: SI units (metric) used by NASA and US customary (Feet) units used by spacecraft builder Lockheed Martin.

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-Not knowing basic math is a major oversight for such a large group. You can easily compute this on your phone. Even worse, it was an error that went unnoticed during planning and throughout the nine-month journey to Mars. This intense complexity requires the collective wisdom of top minds, yet despite all this expertise available to the mission, contractors, and NASA, it still crashed and burned.

In Daniel chapter 2, King Nebuchadnezzar had access to Babylon's vast wisdom and resources. Despite leading a prosperous kingdom, he remained deeply insecure and feared its collapse. The wisdom and power of Babylon must have impressed any audience in the 6th century BC. They had just defeated Egypt and Judah, becoming a cultural powerhouse in the region.

Things we learn from our text aren't as they seem. In Daniel 2, the prophet reveals the emptiness of Babylonian wisdom. Despite its outward impressiveness, this wisdom fails to solve the king's dilemma. Daniel later offers a clear interpretation and solution to the king's distress. We see that the wisdom of Babylon and other kingdoms will ultimately be surpassed by the wisdom of the kingdom of God.

The message to exiles in Daniel's day and today is the same: God's wisdom surpasses the world's. This is our main idea. We will explore how God's wisdom, though seemingly unimpressive, is superior to worldly wisdom. We'll divide our discussion into three parts.

- ` 1. The Unsuccessfulness of the Wisdom of Babylon
- ` 2. The Strength of the Wisdom of God

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3. The Superiority of the Kingdom of God

I. The Unsuccessfulness of the Wisdom of Babylon

Read Chapter 2:1-13

We learn early that we are in the second year of King Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Commentators note that at this point, he had much on his plate. He had already defeated Egypt and conquered other peoples, including Judah. As he sought to expand his kingdom in the ancient Near East, he faced increasing resistance. There's a lot happening for Nebuchadnezzar in his second year as he focuses on building his kingdom. One evening, he falls asleep and has disturbing dreams that prevent him from resting. When he wakes, he summons all the experts in his kingdom to help interpret his experiences.

- A. At this point in the narrative, Nebuchadnezzar feels the dream is significant and must seek serious help. He summons the best in Babylon: the Chaldeans, enchanters, and sorcerers, who specialize in wisdom. This council is called to interpret important matters like his dream. Confident in their skills, they are unprepared for his impossible demand: they must both interpret and recall the dream. Nebuchadnezzar believes this is essential to verify their authenticity and trust any interpretation they provide.
- B. The council knows that this is impossible. Yet, despite politely informing the king, "sir, we can't quite do that for you," Nebuchadnezzar grows more and more agitated and irrational. The

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council that he's surrounded by becomes increasingly helpless as they try to maneuver around the king's demand.

C. The Chaldeans tell the king that no man can meet his demand, and no one can show it to him except the gods, who do not dwell with the flesh. This request is theologically impossible for Babylon's gods.

However, Nebuchadnezzar, a man determined to conquer the world and named after the Babylonian god of wisdom, finds these answers insufficient. He orders the destruction of all Babylon's wise men.

D. He doesn't trust them and won't take "no" for an answer. Despite all the wisdom at Nebuchadnezzar's disposal, Babylonian wisdom only breeds insecurity, anxiety, and anger when confronting the major theological questions weighing on the king. It fails to understand the present, assure him about his kingdom's future, or provide confidence about the days ahead.

E. Nebuchadnezzar leads a powerful kingdom rich in wisdom, but his is not "the kind of wisdom that comes from above," as James states. Instead, it's earthly wisdom, characterized by jealousy and selfish ambition. This shows that he is not merely a historical Babylonian king to be dismissed; his heart reflects anyone intent on building a self-serving kingdom, relying on worldly wisdom to find answers that only God's wisdom can provide.

Illustration: One of the questions this passage leads us to ask of ourselves is, when we get angry, when we are overcome with anxiety, and when we are deeply insecure, why is that? I think if we're honest with ourselves, we're often

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much more focused on building kingdoms for ourselves than. We realize we see what the wisdom of the world has to offer and we feed upon that wisdom to give us security, to give us comfort, to prop up our own little kingdoms and to make us feel like we're in control of things that are really far outside of our control. When we do that, in the end we're often led to the same place as Nebuchadnezzar.

-Ultimately the wisdom of the world, just like the wisdom of Babylon,

- it cannot alleviate us from the crippling anxiety of life.
- It cannot offer satisfactory answers to the big theological questions brewing in our hearts.
- It cannot comfort us during the dark nights of the soul.

Ultimately, it exposes the folly of the kingdom we create. This reflects the wisdom Nebuchadnezzar seeks, which, as Paul states, is foolishness to God. As captivating as Babylon's wisdom was in the 6th century BC, and as enchanting as worldly wisdom is today, we must recognize its inherent weakness. We need a superior wisdom, a better kingdom, and a true king.

F. As Daniel 2:13 concludes, another issue arises: Will God's wisdom be heard in the king's court? Nebuchadnezzar ordered the destruction of the "wise men of Babylon," and in verse 13, we see that Daniel and his companions were also targeted in this decree.

G. Remember from chapter 1, Daniel and his companions faced a challenge, and God preserved them by giving Daniel wisdom. The question is: will God give again? Will Daniel and his companions

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survive this ordeal? Will the wisdom God gave Daniel shine now?

This leads us to our second point, where we see God's wisdom on display. Look at Daniel 2:13-30 and follow along as I read.

II. The Strength of the Wisdom of God

Read Chapter 2:13-30

- A. Now we see Daniel's response to Nebuchadnezzar's decree. As in chapter 1, Daniel's character and approach starkly contrast with Nebuchadnezzar's. While Nebuchadnezzar is demanding and impulsive, Daniel remains calm, even when facing death.
- B. Nebuchadnezzar demands immediate answers from the wise men and refuses to wait, but Daniel knows to trust in the Lord. He prays with his friends, entrusting the matter to God, and is able to fall asleep, which Nebuchadnezzar can't do since his dream.
- C. When Daniel awakens, he has gained insights hidden from Nebuchadnezzar and the wise men but doesn't rush to Arioch out of fear. Instead, he acts in a way that may seem foolish given his circumstances.
 - 1. He pauses and he worships.
 - 2. He gives thanks to the God who gives the gift of wisdom to his servants.
 - 3. Then Daniel pauses, and the narrative slows down almost to a screeching halt. Daniel reflects and invites us to reflect, praise, and worship the character and work of the God who gives.

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D. In verses 20-23, Daniel begins by praising the Lord for His character, simply for who He is.

1. Wisdom belongs to God, the only wise God. Everything God does is purposeful. Despite historical appearances in Daniel's time and ours, God's ways define wisdom.
2. We also learned from Daniel's worship that to:
 - a. God belongs might.
 - b. God is omnipotent; he is all-powerful.
 - c. He has the power and ability to bring whatever he wills.
 - d. As we continue through this block of worship, Daniel moves to praise God for his deeds, for what God does for his people.
3. We learn that:
 - a. The Lord is the one who changes times and seasons.
 - b. The Lord removes and sets up kings. Back in verse 9, Nebuchadnezzar feared changing times, the end of his reign. But as Daniel says, that's in God's hands, not his.
4. The Lord, unlike Babylonian gods, gives wisdom and reveals hidden things to his servants. He speaks to prophets throughout redemptive history, providing Daniel revelation through a vision.

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5. Even today, the Lord speaks to his church through his Word. In other words, the Lord is the kind of God who covenants with his people.

E. So, Daniel

1. praises God for his being.
2. Praises God for his works of providence.
3. He praises God for his work in this specific situation.

F. You see, even in the midst of exile amongst a cultural and military superpower, Daniel isn't phased with what Babylon has to offer. He's not phased with the threats, he's not phased with the glories,

1. he's captivated through and through by the Lord. His gaze turns ***immediately*** to the Lord who gives.

G. Then notice what happens right after he lifts up his voice in praise and worship to the Lord. A few verses later he comes before the king and Daniel declares in the courts of the greatest king of the day, Nebuchadnezzar, the supremacy of the one true God who gives

Illustration: If you're like me, the urgent often dictates my life. I rarely pause to meditate on God unless scheduled. This week, I read about Martin Luther's saying about prayer: "I have so much to do today that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." Isn't it counterintuitive? For Luther, urgent matters drove him deeper into fellowship with God. The same applies to Daniel: he prays and praises God privately, then declares Him publicly. Yet, the issue remains, with Daniel's life still in the balance. The narrative tension continues.

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H. For Daniel, he must give praise and glory to God, and only after he does that does he explain to Nebuchadnezzar what he saw along with his interpretation,

This then leads to our final point, where we see the vision. We now finally get to see what this was and ultimately see we in this vision The Superiority of the Kingdom of God.

III. The Superiority of the Kingdom of God.

Read Chapter 2:31-49

Daniel shares the dream's interpretation, reminding the king that God gives all. In verse thirty-seven, he emphasizes that the king's power and subjects come from the God of Heaven. Daniel teaches Nebuchadnezzar humility before interpreting the dream, serving as another lesson for this great king. Analyzing the colossal image and Daniel's interpretation raises a key question: what do these kingdoms represent in history?

- A. The head of gold corresponds to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, but what about the others?
- B. That question has been debated and continues to be debated, but the best answer seems to follow very simply upon what happened in Judah's history after Babylon.
- C. After Babylon fell and the sun set on Nebuchadnezzar and the kings that followed in succession in Babylon, another empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, came on the scene.

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1. Under Persian King Cyrus, as noted in Daniel 1, the exiled people of God returned to the promised land. However, after the Medo-Persia fell,
 2. Greece emerged, and the people faced its rule.
 3. Eventually, the Roman Empire occupied the promised land and suppressed God's people.
- D. This progression—from Babylon to Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome—aligns with the four kingdoms described in Daniel chapter 2, and relates to other texts we will explore later in Daniel.
- E. More important than identifying these kingdoms is that none will have the final word. In the days of the fourth kingdom, presumably Rome, God will establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed. It will shatter the other kingdoms and endure forever.
1. Commentators note in [Luke 20:17-18](#) Jesus alludes to this very passage in Daniel.

[Luke 20:17-18](#) ¹⁷ But he looked directly at them and said, “What then is this that is written: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone”? ¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

2. In Luke 20, Jesus presents a contradictory view of the stone: rejected and scorned yet powerful and honored. This captures the gospel's essence. Paul describes it as God's power and wisdom. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the rejected cornerstone—humiliated,

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beaten, bruised, and crucified for our salvation—is this stone, also the exalted one that crushes all human kingdoms.

F. Daniel now sees the kingdom God will establish when our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, arrives about 600 years later. This vision points to Jesus and the kingdom of God.

G. How does Nebuchadnezzar respond?

1. In verse 46, this news doesn't distress him as expected. Instead, he falls on his face, confessing that Daniel's God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings. He promotes Daniel and his friends to honorable positions and spares the messenger. Some note this reflects relief. He knows his kingdom will end, but suggests it will happen after his reign, emphasizing it will occur after, not while he's still on the throne. While his kingdom will eventually fall, he can accept that reality. Some experts question, what else could he have done?

Conclusion: As these realities become clear, we see God's wisdom and power far exceed the world's. Reflecting on our small kingdoms, which pale in comparison, may we respond with worship.

So, let's look at a few brief applications for this text.

Application

1. Pray for wisdom.

- Daniel's wisdom in this passage is unique and prophetic, a gift he prays for and receives. Scripture encourages us to pray for wisdom. As stated in James 1:5, "if you lacks wisdom let him ask God who gives generously

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to all approach and it will be given to you him.” We need the Spirit’s wisdom to understand and apply scripture as we navigate our lives. We face challenging relationships and must discern worldly wisdom, seeking God’s superior insight. James reminds us to count it all joy amid trials. So, pray for wisdom; we all need it like Daniel did.

2. Know that the kingdom of God is a present reality.

- Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that God establishes his kingdom through Jesus Christ. By repentance and faith, we are citizens of this kingdom. Though it seems powerless, it is ruled by our Lord, who offers nourishment greater than Nebuchadnezzar’s courts through the word and sacrament by the Spirit of God. The kingdom of God is present, prompting our prayer in the Lord’s Prayer for ‘thy kingdom come.’ We recognize its partial arrival and trust that, as stated in Revelation, the world’s kingdom will become our Lord's, and He will reign forever.

3. Know who God is.

- Studying this passage, I noticed the attributes and works of God identified by Daniel. In the worship block and verses twenty to twenty-three, Daniel praises God for His wisdom, power, omnipotence, providence, and goodness. He is a servant who knows God intimately. As we engage with God’s word and rest in His promises, we should consider how the text applies to our lives and what it reveals about our giving God. Like Daniel, as you explore God’s word and are nourished by

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it, I encourage you to understand what the Bible says about our God—
our source of hope in exile.