

For those who are gentiles this second chapter of Daniel speaks specifically covering off the development of God's plan through the times of the captivity of the Jews and the subsequent ascendancy of the gentiles who God had raised up to further His purpose.

Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarch who controlled a vast empire beyond the normal limitations of the extension of power. He could not rule over the vast conglomerate of diverse peoples without trustworthy and reliable agents who could rule on his behalf. The organisation and cohesion of his empire was only possible with the evolved political structures which had proven to work, so those who were his immediate circle were his executive staff and trusted advisers.

This young king was distrustful of religious influences and the priests and shamen who peddled their crafts outside the normal strictures of the exercising of political power. In the second year of his long reign, he evoked a harsh test of their capabilities provoked from their claims of ethereal power and contact with the realm of the gods. This reticence to play along must have come from somewhere, perhaps his parents had sowed the seeds of doubt, or he had experienced first hand the clash of power between religion and politics and did not wish to become a slave to something outside his control.

He was willing to put such claims to the test and when he awoke from a particularly vivid dream, he concocted a plan to rid himself of these apparent miscreants once and for all. On pain of death they were required to articulate the dream and only then give its interpretation. He knew all too well the devious art of interpreting dreams where a certain plausibility and ambiguity could be factored in depending on the client seeking their advice. He punishment he selected for failure showed the lack of regard he had for this class of charlatan "*their houses would become a dunghill*". Not only would they be removed themselves, but the fruits of their past labours would also be caught up in the retribution. He had a clear aversion to false religion.

That he was prepared to tolerate the possibility that the young captive Jew Daniel now renamed Belteshazzar, could actually provide clarity amidst the usual confusion seems to indicate a fair minded individual who did not shut down all input but required that it be carefully and personally filtered, this was a task he was not willing to delegate to a lesser agency, that would defeat the very issue he wished to address, the manipulation of the King by others.

Some portray this ruler as a megalomaniac who inspired only fear and dread in those who crossed his path, but he does seem to be a man tormented by a conscience. A conscience perhaps developed by his spiritual intercourse with men of God especially Daniel who as a eunuch was taught all the learning of the Chaldeans but remained in awe of the superiority of the God of the Hebrews, whom he served and wanted others to appreciate also.

Just as Nebuchadnezzar saw this intense dream as an opportunity to rid himself of false teachers, so Daniel understood that this was a providentially granted opportunity to touch the mind of so powerful a man as this heathen King, who would not be able to escape the divine nature of the circumstance.

Like wise Solomon before him, the King was musing about what the future state of affairs would be after his departure the interpretation was given so that he might “*know the thoughts of thy heart*” verse 30. He was concerned about the course of events in an unselfish way as many rulers just merely live for the day. “*There is a God in heaven that reveals secrets and makes known to the King Nebuchadnezzar what shall **be in the latter days***” verse 28. The essence of the dream is the latter days and the previous history only relevant in leading up to that crescendo.

What was revealed to him was the course of human history from the dramatic capture of Jerusalem until the re-establishment of God’s Kingdom upon earth after a long interlude. This was represented by an image, perhaps at first lying on its side as it did not stand upon its feet until the latter days. The superior head of gold came first and topped the monolith. A second inferior power

of silver came after, it constituted the chest and arms, the third section of bronze or brass came next and made up the belly and thighs, with the two legs of iron and finally the feet partly iron and partly clay. The value of the metal decreased over time, but the rigidity of the metal increased until it became mixed with miry clay. This abnormal attempt at an alloy was doomed to failure as it would never set to provide the necessary stability to permit the image to stand for more than a moment before it inevitably came crashing down, easily displaced by the appearance of a crushing force of rock, cut out with human hand.

Naturally speaking few rocks can crush metal but no doubt the clay yielded first and then the softer metals would yield to the relentless erosion of constant repetition grinding at the same place over and over again, until finally even the iron would succumb. The rock would not stop in its work of breaking down the refined construction of man's edifice. No timescale is given for its work to reach conclusion. Close up such an image might look appealing to the naked eye but the rugged beauty of the horizon filling mountain which the rock would become, would eclipse all, in the panorama which God has created. Individual details of the mountain are not apparent to the viewer from afar but at least its extent and powerful presence is unmistakable and all can see this even from a distance.

Gold for Babylon	absolute power vested in a capable individual does not last
Silver for Medo-Persia	bound by written laws the new power had constraints
Bronze for Greece	an alloy of weak parts forged together using man's wisdom
Iron for Rome	forged in intense heat of human endeavour doomed to rust

Clay for the adulterated humanity of modernity which even malleable Rome cannot absorb in its absurdity, trying though so hard to achieve it, as it is doing so even now, whilst seeking to

maintain the lie of “semper tempus” always the same! Really who actually believes that claim? The ridiculousness of that metamorphosing monstrosity should be plain for all to see! Why then are so few not deceived by its lies?

Looking up from ground level the image might look imposing, but any child knows that iron and clay mixed together cannot truly stand, it was to fall, and you had better not be in the way when it collapsed! The head aloof and out of reach, the final standing on its feet will be an attempt to restore the supreme sovereignty of human rule high above all, a last dictator who fancies himself capable of executing the task in hand to reign over all peoples. Hampered by the powerhouse of silver arms and legs it will not be so free to do according to his will alone, but the restraints will be there. It is a house divided against itself, no One Body is this edifice! Its belly and thighs will not provide food to ingest nor be strong enough to run or even walk although its one great exertion to stand will exhaust its meagre vitality. Greek democracy leading to Greek dictatorship will violent swings in between does not auger well for its future despite the learning of advanced philosophy and science including that falsely so called! The bronze section was also far reaching as the influence of Greece spread far beyond its original shores. The brutality and unyielding oppression of Rome permits the edifice to briefly stand upon its iron legs but any rain from heaven will compromise its makeshift foundation, more sand like than rock like!

Unlike man's kingdoms the stone power would be a Kingdom which will never be replaced but is destined to stand forever untouched by the ravages of time and the corruption of human failure. A new ruler whom Nebuchadnezzar in a way symbolises despite his shortcomings.

Nebuchadnezzar was moved by the immensity of the scope of what he had been granted to see. God had selected him to be the vessel who is forever linked with the destiny of the kingdoms of men. Few rulers from ancient history resonate quite like this towering monarch. Was it just an accident of timing, a king who

happened to be alive when Zion was at its nadir? Or was there more to it than that? Was he selected by God as an example of the accursed gentiles, the uncircumcised heathen who polluted the water of life by their very presence at holy sites? God even then hinting that Elijah and Elisha those great prophets were not limited to miraculous activity within the confines of the borders of Israel!

This is a man the Bible reader needs to watch closely and muse on his place in God's plan both representatively and individually as more information is provided in subsequent chapters. Unlike so many he was able to discern facts when he saw them

"Your God is a God of gods and a Lord of Kings and a revealer of secrets", spoken by a man who knew how to wield power effectively in the golden age of ancient Babylon, calling the truly wise like Daniel to assist him in that great work of ruling over God's children in an earnest of the more glorious future which lay ahead.

"Then the King made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon" he was made chief executive officer over Corporation Babylon, and he did not decline the responsibility to further influence this man, elsewhere called "El goyim", the power or god of the gentiles! Ezekiel 31v11.

Like him do we not wish to know what shall be in the latter days? The prophet Daniel under divine inspiration provides the answers for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see!