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Digging Deeper

LESSON NOTES: WRESTLING WITH DANIEL AND HIS TIMES

INTRODUCING DANIEL TO OUR INTELLECT AND OUR HEART

OVERVIEW

Dreaming in Babi Babi Land

When we encounter defilement of the Lord God in our midst, we can proceed in one of four directions:

**A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:
WHY DID NEBUCHADNEZZAR DREAM?
HOW SO?**

1. North. We can pretend the defilement is mere cultural anomaly. For example, "... they just worship God in a different way;" i.e., we need to tolerate that worship or we too will be chastised for our style and object of worship. Or, we don't do "that," but to speak out against it would be cultural suicide.
2. South. We can take on the culture's defilement, re-dress it, and then tolerate same. For example, we will often bleep out "sh_t" or "f_k" from many TV broadcasts, but relatively rarely "Christ" or "damnation" or "God damn."
3. East. We can make the defilement part of our own *raison d'être*. For example, success is defined as "acquisition," acquisition of power, status, fiscal resources, or even sexual conquest. For example, Americans more easily tolerate sexual promiscuity among boys/men than girls/women; also, male homosexuality is considered more vile than female homosexuality. I assert it is a matter of acquisition; i.e., we're less concerned about female/female sexuality for it presumably affects "success" less.
4. West. We can create a hierarchy of defilement—some we will tolerate within our midst (e.g., adultery), and others we will not (e.g., homosexuality). While there are some forms of defilement (evil, aka "sin") which are worse than others (see John 19:11),¹ that hierarchy is not, and must not be determined by us. That is the province of the Lord God alone.

Daniel chose none of the above. Our study of Daniel sets a context in which we can learn a pragmatically superior, spiritually rewarding and most importantly, morally alternative so we can become the authentic witness for which we were destined. Serve the One who created us. How did Daniel succeed? Daniel chose a fourth direction, an alternative dimension. Up.

¹Jesus answered, "You [Pilate] would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

“**Jehoiakim**² (*whom Jehovah sets up*), called Eliakim, son of Josiah and king of Judah. After deposing Jehoahaz, Pharaoh-necho set Eliakim, his elder brother, upon the throne, and changed his name to Jehoiakim, B.C. 608-597. For four years Jehoiakim was subject to Egypt, when Nebuchadnezzar, after a short siege, entered Jerusalem, took the king prisoner, bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon, and took also some of the precious vessels of the temple and carried them to the land of Shinar.

JEREMIAH 22:18-19, 36:30

Therefore this is what the Lord God Yahweh says about Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah:

"They will not mourn for him:

`Alas, my brother! Alas, my sister!"

They will not mourn for him:

`Alas, my master! Alas, his splendor!"

¹⁹He will have the burial of a donkey--
dragged away and thrown
outside the gates of Jerusalem."

...

Therefore, this is what the Lord God Yahweh says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no one to sit on the throne of David; his body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night.

Jehoiakim became tributary to Nebuchadnezzar after his invasion of Judah, and continued so for three years, but at the end of that time broke his oath of allegiance and rebelled against him. (2 Kings 24:1) Nebuchadnezzar sent against him numerous bands of Chaldeans, with Syrians, Moabites and Ammonites, (2 Kings 24:7) and who cruelly harassed the whole country. Either in an engagement with some of these forces or else by the hand of his own oppressed subjects Jehoiakim came to a violent end in the eleventh year of his reign.

His body was cast out ignominiously on the ground, and then was dragged away and buried "with the burial of an ass," without pomp or lamentation, "*beyond the gates* of Jerusalem." (Jeremiah 22:18,19; 36:30) All the accounts we have of Jehoiakim concur in ascribing to him a vicious and irreligious character. (2 Kings 23:37; 24:9; 2 Chronicles 36:5) The reign of Jehoiakim extends from B.C. 609 to B.C. 598, or, as some reckon, 599."

²See *Smith's Bible Dictionary*; see <http://biblehub.com/topical/j/jehoiakim.htm> as perused, February 28, 2017. *The ATS Bible Dictionary* reads:

"... second son of Josiah, brother and successor of Jehoahaz or Shallum, king of Judah, for whom he was substituted by the king of Egypt. He was king during eleven years of luxury, extortion, and idolatry. In the third year, Nebuchadnezzar carried to Babylon a part of his princes and treasures. A year after, his allied the Egyptians were defeated on the Euphrates; yet he despised the warnings of Jeremiah, and cast his book into the fire. At length he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, but was defeated and ingloriously slain, B. C. 599, 2 Kings 23:34 24:6 2 Chronicles 36:4-8 Jeremiah 22:1-30 26:1-24 36:1-32."

We were exiled to Babylonia because we did not listen to the voice of the Lord God Yahweh, regarding keeping the covenant, Sabbath, and especially idolatry. We were first deported in 605, along with Daniel, then again in 597 along with Ezekiel, and finally in 586 when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. It was the worst of times for believers.

- Q Why was the Lord so vindictive (i.e., “seven times over”)?
- Q What were these “high places?”
- Q When did verse 33 come to bear? So what?
- Q What land will enjoy a Sabbath?

LEVITICUS 26:27-35

"If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me, ²⁸then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over. ²⁹You will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters. ³⁰I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars and pile your dead bodies on the lifeless forms of your idols, and I will abhor you. ³¹I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings. ³²I will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled. ³³I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. ³⁴Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. ³⁵All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.



Teraphim, Family gods from the time of the Patriarchs, Ancient Israel
The Bible Lands Museum | Jerusalem, Israel

Daniel 1:1-7. *New Names, New Roles*.

605 years before the Christ came to earth as Jesus of Nazareth, Jehoiakim³ ruled Judah. The Babylonians, whose king was Nebuchadnezzar, besieged Jerusalem. Our defenses were ineffectual because the Lord God delivered Jehoiakim, Judah's King, to Nebuchadnezzar's armies. In addition some of the articles from the Temple were delivered by God to the Babylonians.

These items were taken and placed in the treasury of Nebuchadnezzar's god, specifically in the treasure house of this god. Shinar (Babylonia) was to become the land where a Temple holy things were stored.

The chief of operations, Ashpenaz, was ordered by Nebuchadnezzar to deport Israelites with royal lineage, young men who were physically, aesthetically and intellectually superior. The goal was to teach them the language and literature of the Chaldeans. They were given a daily ration of food & wine—directly from the King's pantry. After three years, they were to enter Nebuchadnezzar's service.

Four men of Judah were of special interest —

DANIEL 1:1-7

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ²And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia [Shinar] and put in the treasure house of his god.

³Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—⁴young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians [Chaldeans]. ⁵The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

⁶Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

ORIGINAL HEBREW NAMES	ASSIGNED NAMES IN BABYLONIAN
ℵ Daniel = "God is my judge"	✂ Belteshazzar = "Marduk [i.e., "Bel"] protect his life"
ℵ Hananiah = "Yahweh shows grace"	✂ Shadrach = "Command of Aku (Sumerian moon-god)"
ℵ Mishael = "Who is what God is?"	✂ Meshach = "Who is what Aku is?"
ℵ Azariah = "Yahweh helps"	✂ Abednego = "servant of Nebo"

- Q Why did Nebuchadnezzar's armies come to Jerusalem? Why were they able to conquer Judah?
- Q Did the residents of Judah deserve to be punished (i.e., imprisoned) for Jehoiakim's sins?
- Q Why were the innocent (e.g., Daniel) deported to Babylonia?
- Q What special characteristics did this select group of exiles have in common? Why?
- Q Why were the four in this text being fed from the King's pantry?
- Q What can you learn about their heritage, and their new exiled status from their names?

³See Jeremiah 22:18-30; especially verse 30: "Record this man as childless... none of his offspring will prosper... or rule anymore in Judah."

Daniel 1:8-21. *It's more than food*. Daniel, however, was troubled about eating food which had been offered to idols. This was defiling his faith and himself. So, he asked respectfully to avoid such food to the chief dude.

Of course, the Lord God was involved and caused the official to sympathize with Daniel and relented. He was concerned, however, and told Daniel—

I'm freaked my King who has assigned you all food and drink will be angry if you start looking frail, and worse than other young men your age. The King would cure me of any headache, ever. Separation at the neck will do that.

Daniel suggested a test to the guard who'd been appointed to supervise them—*Test your servants, si vous plait; give us 10 days of vegetables & water. Then compare our appearance with other young men who eat from the King's pantry.*

The guard agreed. After ten days, the four looked healthier & better nourished than any of the other men who'd eaten the royal food. From then on, the guard removed their choice food and wine and gave them vegetables instead.

The Lord God gave the four knowledge and understanding, across many areas of learning and literature. And, Daniel was given the special gift of understanding visions, and dreams of all kinds.

After the time of education and preparation had passed, the head dude presented them to King Nebuchadnezzar. He was impressed after talking with them, and found no equals to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were drafted into the King's service. In fact, regardless of the area of wisdom or knowledge about which the King questioned them, he found them ten times better than his magicians, enchanters, advisors in the whole of Babylonia. Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus, 539BC.⁴

Q Why was Daniel concerned about “defiling himself?” What are sources of defilement for us in our exile from the Promised Land?

Q Who was responsible for the success of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah? So?

⁴Since Daniel was still living in 537BC (see Daniel 10:1), he saw the exiles return to Judah from Babylonian captivity.

DANIEL 1:8-21

But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. ⁹Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, ¹⁰but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your [plural] food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

¹¹Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹²"Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." ¹⁴So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

¹⁵At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.

¹⁶So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

¹⁷To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

¹⁸At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. ²⁰In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

²¹And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

- Q Why was it important for Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to be successful in secular terms?
- Q Who gave them wisdom and learning, and Daniel's gift to interpret visions & dreams? What wisdom and learning has the Lord God given you? And gifts? And for what purpose(s)?

TEXTUAL ISSUES DANIEL 2

Daniel 2:1-13. A king bothered; a prophet indicted. In 604BC, Nebuchadnezzar dreamt some weird stuff, so weird he couldn't sleep. Turning to the smart dudes in the kingdom—magicians, sorcerers, and astrologers, the Chaldeans, he told them he was having a weird dream and he wanted to know what it means.

They began their answer with politically correct salutations...

"O King, live forever. Tell us your dream, and we will interpret for you."

Not so fast, boys. You've got to tell me my dream. If you aren't able to, you're not the smarties you purport to be. In fact, if you don't describe my dream, I'll have you put in a blender, along with your house—and your little dog Toto.

But, if you do tell me my dream... gifts, rewards, and honors will fly like gnats on the Shinar plain.

Apparently, they were hard of hearing for they again asked, tell us your dream, and we will interpret for you.

You're stalling boys! If you don't tell me the dream, there's just one penalty—your conspiracy to mislead has not gone unnoticed. Tell me the dream.

No man on earth can do what the King asks, they kvetched. No king, regardless of how great, has ever asked such a thing. No one can reveal your dream to the King except the gods—and they do not live among men.

Nebuchadnezzar was far from his happy place. He ordered all the wise men of Babylon to be executed. As the decree went out, men went to find all the wise men, including Daniel and the boys.

DANIEL 2:1-13

In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. ²So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers [or "Chaldeans"] to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, ³he said to them, "I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means."

⁴Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, [starting here, the text is no longer in Hebrew but Aramaic through chapter 7]

"O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it."

⁵The king replied to the astrologers, "This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. ⁶But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me."

⁷Once more they replied, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it."

⁸Then the king answered, "I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: ⁹If you do not tell me the dream, there is just one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me."

¹⁰The astrologers answered the king, "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. ¹¹What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men."

¹²This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. ¹³So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death.

Q Who gave Nebuchadnezzar the wisdom to require his astrologers/magicians/sorcerers to tell him the nature and content of his dream? [Hint: verse 2:47 — *Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.*]

Q What dreams have you had which were difficult to understand, assuming you remembered them?

Daniel 2:14-23. *Arioch finds out Daniel has a thick neck.* The head of Nebuchadnezzar's secret service unit, Arioch, was dispatched to dispatch the wise men of Babylon. Daniel, responded to Arioch wisely, and tactfully, asking *Why did the King issue such harsh orders?*

So, Daniel went to see King Nebuchadnezzar and asked for an audience so he might interpret the King's dream.

Afterwards, Daniel returned home and debriefed Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, urging them to pray specifically for mercy from the Lord God Yahweh concerning this dream mystery, and so that Daniel and his friends wouldn't be beheaded, like the rest of the "wise men" of Babylon. Sure enough, the Lord God revealed the dream to Daniel. He then decided to praise God...

Praise for the authority of the God of Forever. All wisdom and power are His. He:

- (1) Changes times and seasons.
- (2) Sets up kings and brings them down.
- (3) Gives knowledge and wisdom to the discerning.
- (4) Reveals deep and hidden things. [See Ephesians 1:9-10; "...with all wisdom and understanding, He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."]
- (5) Knows what lies in darkness and light dwells with Him.

I thank and praise you O God of My Fathers. You have given me wisdom, and power. You have made known to me what we asked of You. You have made know to us the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar.

Q Why was it important for Daniel to be tactfully and wisely forthright?

Q For what did Daniel entreat his friends to pray? [Hint: "mercy regarding the mystery."]

Q Why did the Lord God reveal the dream to Daniel?

Q Which of the five above attributes do you find most praiseworthy?

DANIEL 2:14-23

When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. ¹⁵He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. ¹⁶At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him.

¹⁷Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ¹⁸He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven ²⁰and said:

"Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever;
wisdom and power are his.

²¹He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.

²²He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.

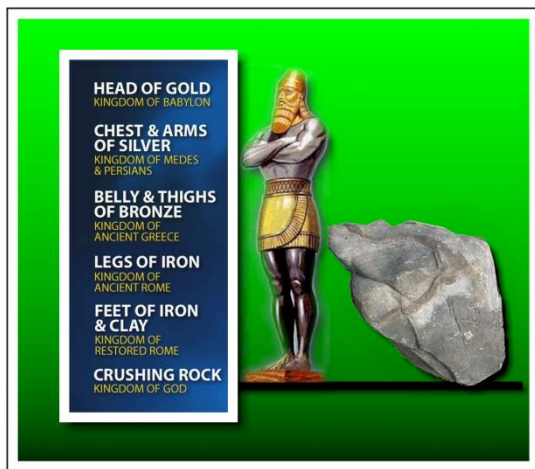
²³I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king."

Daniel 2:24-35. A dream unfolds. Daniel reports to Arioch and tells him not to execute all the wise men of Babylon for he, Daniel, will interpret the dream for the King. Arioch takes him to the King and reports, "I've found a man from the captives of Judah who can tell the King what his dream means."

Belteshazzar is asked by the King—"So, are you indeed able to tell me what I saw in my dreams?"

Daniel (Belteshazzar) gives credit where credit is due: "No person, even wise men of Babylonia, can explain to the king this mystery, but the God Heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future. Here is your dream:"

As you were lying there, the Revealer of Mysteries showed you what is going to happen. I was not privy to this dream because of my wisdom, but so that you, O King, may know & understand by your mind. Here's what you saw:



DANIEL 2:24-35

Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him."

²⁵Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and said, "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means."

²⁶The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?"

²⁷Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, ²⁸but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these:

²⁹"As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. ³⁰As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.

³¹"You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue--an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. ³²The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. ³⁴While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. ³⁵Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

A dazzling statue made of pure gold, chest of silver, belly & thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of party iron and part baked clay. As you watched a rock cut out not by human hands struck the statute on its feet, smashing them, and the entire statute came apart, like chaff in the summer wind. No trace was left, but the rock? It became a huge mountain and filled the entire earth.

Q Why did Arioch bring Daniel to the king? Why particularly Daniel? [Hint: see 1:7]

Q Why was Belteshazzar's dream report accurate?

Q How did Nebuchadnezzar know Belteshazzar's dream report was accurate? [Reliability & validity.]

Daniel 2:36-49. *A dream interpreted.*

Daniel then proceeds to tell the mean-
ing of the King's dream:

You are indeed king of kings, O King. The God of Heaven has give you power, dominion, might and glory. In your hands has He, the God of Heaven, placed all of humanity and beasts of the field and birds of the air. Wherever they are, you rule. You are that "head of gold."

After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to you, then a third made of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.

Finally, a fourth kingdom will arise, strong as iron. Iron breaks everything to pieces; it crushes all it encounters. But, the feet and toes were partly baked clay —this divided kingdom will be partly strong, and partly brittle. The people in this fourth kingdom will not be united, they will be of mixed iron and baked clay.

In those times, the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom never to be destroyed. It will crush all competing kingdoms, bringing them to an end, but it shall endure forever. That's what the Rock is all about, cut from a mountain, not by human sculptors. It will crush to pieces iron, bronze, clay, silver and gold.

The Great God of Heaven has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what's going to happen. This dream is indeed a vision to be trusted, a dream that is true.

King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished. Falling prostrate before Daniel, he paid him honor and ordered an offering and incense be presented to Daniel. Then King Nebuchadnezzar confessed the reality of the Lord God Jehovah: "Your god is the God of gods and the Lord of kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

DANIEL 2:25-49

"This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king.

37You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; 38in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

39"After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. 40Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.

41Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. 42As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.

43And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

44"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. 45This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands--a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

"The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

46Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. 47The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

48Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men.

49Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

Daniel was given many kudos, including lavish gifts, status as ruler over the entire province of Babylon, and he was placed in charge of all the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers [or “Chaldeans”] of Babylon! At Daniel’s request, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were appointed administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained at the royal court.

- Q Why was it important for King Nebuchadnezzar to have his dream interpreted accurately?
- Q What is the iron and baked clay of the earthly kingdoms with which we’re familiar? Better to be solely baked clay or iron?
- Q What kingdom(s) will the Rock overcome?
- Q How would you compare the praise of King Nebuchadnezzar to what you heard last Sunday in worship?
- Q What mysteries has the Lord God revealed? See notes on 2:18 below.

ADVANCED BIBLE COMMENTARY FOR DANIEL 1 & 2⁵

1:1 *third year.* According to the Babylonian system of computing the years of a king's reign, the third year of Jehoiakim would have been 605 B.C., since his first full year of kingship began on New Year's Day after his accession in 608. But according to the Judahite system, which counted the year of accession as the first year of reign, this was the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jer 25:1; 46:2).

1:4 *language and literature of the Babylonians.* Including the classical literature in Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform, a complicated syllabic writing system. *But the language of normal communication in multiracial Babylon was Aramaic,* written in an easily learned alphabetic script (see Daniel 2:4); note the bullets in the table on page 3. The Hebrew alef is on the left list of names; the Aramaic/Babylonian alef is on the right list of names.

1:8 *royal food and wine.* Israelites considered food from Nebuchadnezzar's table to be contaminated because the first portion of it was offered to idols. Likewise a portion of the wine was poured out on a pagan altar. Ceremonially unclean animals were used and were neither slaughtered nor prepared according to the regulations of the law.

1:17 With God's help, Daniel and his friends mastered the Babylonian literature on astrology and divination by dreams. But in the crucial tests of interpretation and prediction (see 2:3-11; 4:7), all the pagan literature proved worthless. Only by God's special revelation (2:17-28) was Daniel able to interpret correctly.

2:4 *Aramaic.* Since the astrologers were of various racial backgrounds, they communicated in Aramaic, the language everyone understood. From here to the end of chapter 7 the entire narrative is in Aramaic. These six chapters deal with matters of importance to the Gentile nations of the Near East and were written in a language understandable to all. But the last five chapters (8-12) revert to Hebrew, since they deal with special concerns of believers.

2:14 *Arioch.* Meaning uncertain. It is also the name of a Mesopotamian king who lived centuries earlier (Genesis 14:1,9).

⁵Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton’s Interactive NIV © 1996.

2:18 *God of Heaven.* Of the 22 occurrences of the phrase in the Hebrew Scriptures, 17 occur in Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel.

mystery. A key word in Daniel (2:19,27-30,47; 4:9). It also appears often in the writings (Dead Sea Scrolls) of the Qumran sect. The Greek equivalent is used in the NT to refer to the secret purposes of God that He reveals only to His chosen prophets and apostles. The so-called mystery religions of Paul's day used the Greek word (*mysterion* μυστήριον) in the sense of something that was to *be revealed only to the initiated*.

Paul himself, however, used it to refer to something *formerly* hidden or obscure but now revealed by God for all to know and understand (see Romans 11:25, 16:25; 1Co 2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3-4,9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3; 2Th 2:7; 1Ti 3:9,16). The word is used of...

- 1) the incarnation (1Titus 3:16),
- 2) the death of Christ (1Corinthians 2:1, 2:7, "secret wisdom"),
- 3) God's purpose to sum up all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:9) and especially to include both former Jews and former Gentiles in the NT church (Ephesians 3:3-6),
- 4) the change that will take place at the resurrection (1Corinthians 15:51), and
- 5) the plan of God by which both former Jew and former Gentile, after a period of disobedience by both, will by His mercy be included in His kingdom (v. 25).

2:22 *light dwells with him.* See Psalm 36:9.

2:32-43 The gold head represents the Neo-Babylonian empire (v. 38; see Jeremiah 51:7); the silver chest and arms, the Medo-Persian empire established by Cyrus in 539 B.C. (the date of the fall of Babylon); the bronze belly and thighs, the Greek empire established by Alexander the Great around 330BC; the iron legs and feet, the Roman empire. The toes (v. 41) are understood by some to represent a later confederation of states occupying the territory formerly controlled by the Roman empire. The metals could symbolize a growing degree of toughness and endurance, with each successive empire lasting longer than the preceding one.

2:35 *broken to pieces.* See Matthew 21:44 in some manuscripts which reads, "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."