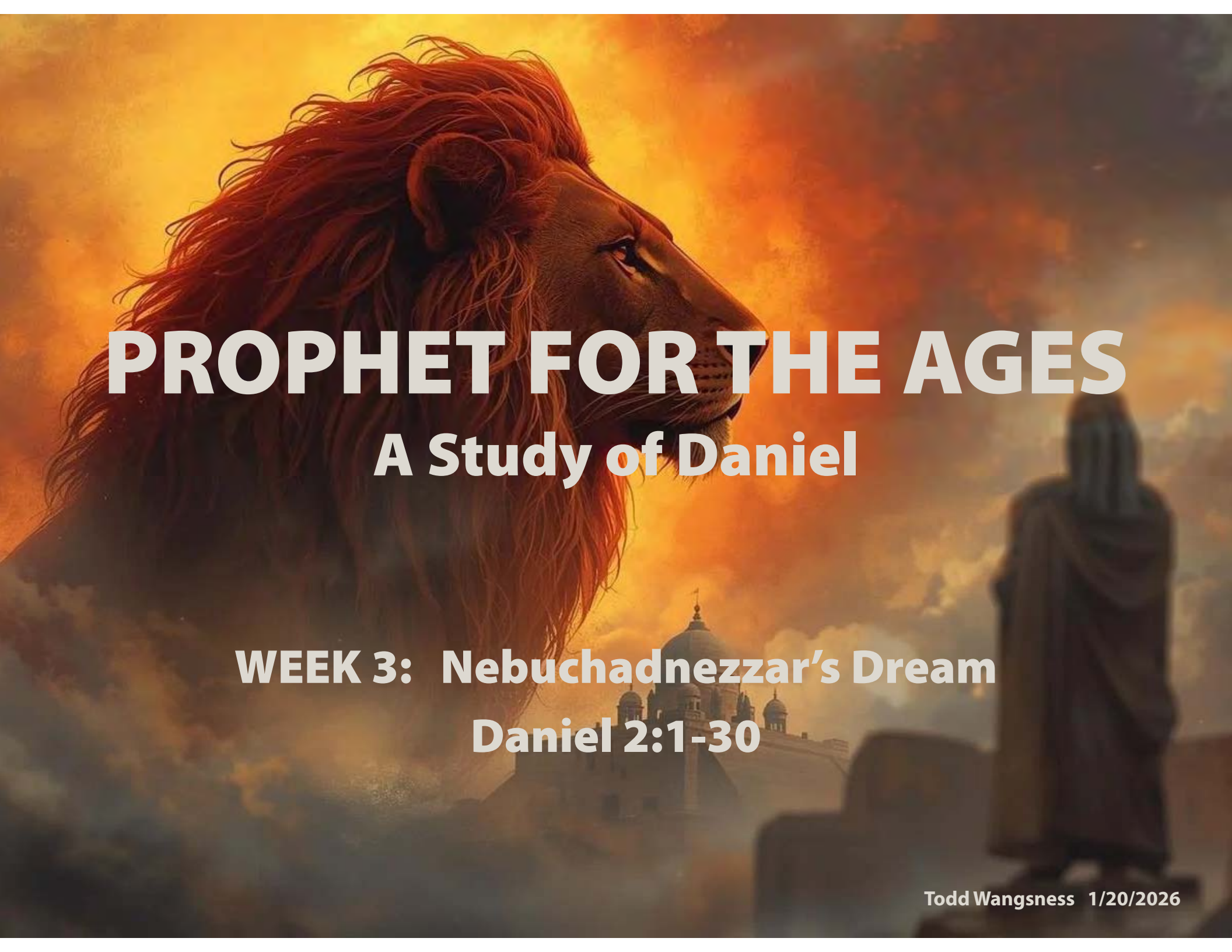




PROPHET FOR THE AGES

A Study of Daniel

WEEK 3: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream
Daniel 2:1-30

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Notable Quotes About Daniel 2:1-30

"If people were willing to seriously read the Bible, in subjection to its holy Author, they would find that in it the whole course of human events, right up to the great white throne, has been clearly revealed. Anyone who earnestly desires it, may know the truth of God's ways right on to the end."

- H. A. Ironside

"Daniel didn't say, 'I can tell you your dream.' He said, 'Only the Lord can give you the information and understanding you seek.' I believe this was why Daniel was used from the time he was a young man all the way until he was eighty-five. He didn't take credit. The fastest way to see the work of God through your life stopped is to begin to think it's because you're special."

- Jon Courson

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Daniel 2 Overview

- Daniel 2 has been called the backbone of prophecy because it unlocks the rest of the book of Daniel, which, in turn, unlocks the Book of Revelation
- Dreams in the ancient Near Eastern context were often seen as divine messages or omens
- Nebuchadnezzar's dreams were significant as they set the stage for the unfolding of God's revelation through Daniel
- In the Bible, dreams are frequently used by God to communicate with individuals, as seen with Joseph in Genesis and Pharaoh's dreams
- These dreams are prophetic, revealing future events and God's sovereign plan over nations

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Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Dan 2:1-3 *Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. 2 Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. 3 And the king said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream."*

- Nebuchadnezzar's dream occurred shortly after Daniel and friends completed their three-year training
 - The difference between the "2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign" vs Daniel's three years of training is explained because of differing Babylonian and Jewish dating methods
 - Babylonians did not count the year of coronation as being part of a king's rule
- Nebuchadnezzar's dream likely occurred in 601/602 BC

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- Nebuchadnezzar had several “dreams” that night, but one in particular greatly alarmed him
- He was so disturbed and apprehensive that he could not go back to sleep
- It appears that God had impressed upon him that the dream was of serious portent to his reign
- According to Rabbinic Judaism, he saw the same dream multiple times and he perceived the dream foresaw the rise of kingdoms that would shape human history
- He was so alarmed that he immediately summoned the “*astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans*” to “*tell the king his dreams*”

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Class	Description
Wise Men	Hebrew/Aramaic <i>ḥakkîmîn</i> : This is the overarching category. It includes all the specialized groups below. They were the educated elite, scholars, and diviners of Babylon who claimed access to hidden knowledge through supernatural or occult means.
Magicians	Hebrew <i>ḥartummîm</i> : Often linked to scribes or engravers who recorded and interpreted omens, dreams, and rituals. They practiced ritual magic, studied signs (e.g., animal livers for divination). They focused on written records and ceremonial magic.
Astrologers	Hebrew <i>ʾashshāpîm</i> : These were whisperers or incantation priests who muttered spells and used verbal enchantments. They observed stars, planets, and celestial signs to predict events (judiciary astrology).
Sorcerers	Hebrew <i>mekashshəpîm</i> : Those who practiced sorcery, witchcraft, or spells—often involving potions, charms, or manipulations of supernatural forces. This group is condemned in the Torah (Deuteronomy 18:10) and linked to necromancy or harmful magic.
Chaldeans	Hebrew/Aramaic <i>kaśdîm</i> : Chaldea was a small country in late 9 th century BC and was assimilated into Babylon in the 6 th century BC. Daniel and companions learned the language of the Chaldeans (Aramaic). Professionally, it denoted a specific class of astrologer-priests or master diviners. They were experts in astrology, often seen as the highest or most prominent group among the wise men. In some translations, "Chaldeans" replaces "astrologers," and they frequently speak for the whole group (e.g., Daniel 2:4–11).

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The King's Challenge to the Wise Men

Dan 2:4-7 *Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation." 5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap. 6 However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation." 7 They answered again and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation."*

- At this point, the book of Daniel switches from Hebrew to Aramaic
 - It remains in Aramaic all the way until the end of Chapter 7
 - According to Jewish historian, Yehudah Halevi (1075-1141 AD), Abraham's native tongue was Aramaic
 - He used Hebrew as a special "holy" language and Aramaic for everyday use
- Aramaic was considered "the language of learned men, like Latin of the middle ages"

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

- The Chaldeans politely asked the king to tell them the dream so they could interpret it
 - This was not an unusual request in ancient times
- However, the dream had the king so agitated that he was not going to abide by the traditional "rules"
 - :5 "My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap."*
- Yikes!
- They petitioned the king a second time to tell them the dream
- Their request did not go over well with Nebuchadnezzar

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Dan 2:8-9 *The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm: 9 if you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore, tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation."*

- At this point, Nebuchadnezzar grew very suspicious of the wise men and accused them of attempting to gain time
- He now became persuaded they were going to conjure up lies and told them they were doomed unless they gave him the dream and its interpretation

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Dan 2:10-11 The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. 11 It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

- Their reply was a polite way of telling the king his request was unreasonable
- Their claim was that they communed with the gods ... they were privy to all things supernatural
- In essence, they admitted they were frauds – they were incapable of doing the exact thing that was supposedly their “art”

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Dan 2:12-13 *For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave the command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 13 So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.*

- When the king realized his wise men were not wise at all – that they were not in private communication with the supernatural – he became incensed
- A single word could not adequately describe his rage
 - He became angry ('*benas*': to be enraged) and furious ('*ketzaph*': furious, full of wrath)
 - The only occurrence of these words in the OT
- Consequently, he decreed the entire body of wise men be executed (*astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans*)
- Unfortunately, this decree also included our young Jewish companions

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Dan 2:14-15 *Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon; 15 he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel.*

- It is evident from the context that Daniel and friends had no insight to this exchange with the king and the wise men
- Daniel approached the captain of the king's guard, Arioch, with tact and discernment
 - This Arioch was apparently the same as Nebuzaradan in 2 Kings 25:20
 - *2 Kings 25:21 And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the second priest, and the three doorkeepers. 19 He also took out of the city an officer who had charge of the men of war, five men of the king's close associates who were found in the city, the chief recruiting officer of the army, who mustered the people of the land, and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city. 20 So Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, took these and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. 21 Then the king of Babylon struck them and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive from its own land.*
 - According to the Talmud, Arioch/Nebuzaradan became a Jewish proselyte
- The passage in 2 Kings shows the brutality of the Jewish captivity by Nebuchadnezzar

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

- Nebuzaradan in Jeremiah 40 did not strictly enforce the king's rules and showed mercy and compassion to Jeremiah
 - *Jer 40:2-5 2 And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him: "The Lord your God has pronounced this doom on this place. 3 Now the Lord has brought it, and has done just as He said. Because you people have sinned against the Lord, and not obeyed His voice, therefore this thing has come upon you. 4 And now look, I free you this day from the chains that were on your hand. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you. But if it seems wrong for you to come with me to Babylon, remain here. See, all the land is before you; wherever it seems good and convenient for you to go, go there." 5 Now while Jeremiah had not yet gone back, Nebuzaradan said, "Go back to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people. Or go wherever it seems convenient for you to go." So the captain of the guard gave him rations and a gift and let him go.*
- In Aramaic, the passage in :15 begins with the phrase "*bedayin Daniyel*" used here and in :17 and :19, implying that God had prepared Daniel for "*such a time as this*"
 - The same admonition was given to Esther by Mordecai
 - *Est 4:14 "For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"*

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel's Plea to the King

Dan 2:16-19 *So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. 17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, 18 that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.*

- Daniel approached the king not with the intent to *buy time*, but to schedule an audience with him to fulfill his demand for the recount of the dream and its interpretation
- Daniel was convinced that God would reveal everything to him by the time he met with the king
- He commissioned Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to entreat God along with him so they would not perish with the other wise men
- God honored their humble (and urgent!) prayer and the secret was subsequently revealed to Daniel in a *night vision*, not a dream and not during their prayers
- Rabbinic tradition states that Gabriel was the 'revealer' of the dream

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel's Prayer

Dan 2:20-23 *Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His. 21 And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. 22 He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him. 23 "I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; 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 demand."*

- Verse 20 of Daniel's prayer of thanksgiving emphasizes God's Omniscience and Omnipotence (*wisdom and might*)
- Verse 21 emphasizes God's sovereignty (*changes times and seasons; removes and establishes kings; gives wisdom and knowledge*)
- God is sovereign, although he may use human instruments or methods, such as the electoral process
- Verse 22 describes YHWH as a God of revelation (*reveals deep and secret things*)
- In Verse 23, we see that – while all four entreated the Lord – only Daniel received the vision

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Dan 2:24-26 *Therefore Daniel went 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; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation." 25 Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation." 26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?"*

- Daniel entreated Arioch to not kill the wise men – which indicated the executions had not yet begun
- Arioch *quickly* brought Daniel before the king – which shows Arioch did not relish the prospect of killing a large group of men and their families and destroying the school of astrology/astronomy for which Babylon was famous
- The king asked Daniel whether he was really able to recount the dream and its interpretation

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel's Witness to the King

Dan 2:27-28 *Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. 28 But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these:*

- Daniel begins his witness to the king of the most powerful nation on earth
- He starts with the fact that the wise men were correct – the request the king made of the wise men was an impossibility
 - No mere man could ever fulfill the king's request
- But, he continued to tell the king that there is a God in heaven who knows all things and reveals secrets
- God Almighty would reveal to Nebuchadnezzar his dream and its interpretation (through his servant Daniel)
- Daniel disclosed to the king that the dream pertained to future events and what would transpire in the *latter days*

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Dan 2:29-30 As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. 30 But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

- The king had been lying in bed obsessing about the future and wondering what lay ahead for him and his kingdom
- Daniel qualified that the mystery was not revealed to Daniel because Daniel was the wisest person alive
- The dream was revealed so that Nebuchadnezzar could understand its meaning
- The goal was for Nebuchadnezzar to comprehend who the God of Israel was
- That it was the LORD who reveals secrets and is sovereign over all things

Prophet for the Ages: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Questions to Ponder

- Does God continue to use dreams and visions in His church today?
 - Can you cite examples?
- Do you believe He will use dreams and visions in the future to communicate with His people? (*Ref Act 2:17*)
- Describe how God used the king's decree of death to elevate the prominence of Daniel?
- What are the characteristics Daniel demonstrated before God and the king that we should emulate in our own lives?
- How has God used seemingly intractable situations in your life for good?