

# Daniel 2:1-2:23

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## **Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

[1] In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. [2] Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. [3] And the king said to them, "I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream." [4] Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation." [5] The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. [6] But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation." [7] They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation." [8] The king answered and said, "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm—[9] if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation." [10] The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician

or enchanter or Chaldean. [11] The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.”

[12] Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. [13] So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them. [14] Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. [15] He declared to Arioch, the king's captain, “Why is the decree of the king so urgent?” Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. [16] And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king.

### **God Reveals Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

[17] Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, [18] and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. [19] Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. [20] Daniel answered and said:

“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,

to whom belong wisdom and might.

[21] He changes times and seasons;

he removes kings and sets up kings;

he gives wisdom to the wise

and knowledge to those who have understanding;

[22] he reveals deep and hidden things;

he knows what is in the darkness,

and the light dwells with him.

[23] To you, O God of my fathers,

I give thanks and praise,

for 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 matter.”

## NASB

1 Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. 2 Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. 3 The king said to them, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream."

4 Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation." 5 The king replied to the Chaldeans, "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap. 6 But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation." 7 They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation." 8 The king replied, "I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm, 9 that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation." 10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. 11 Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh."

12 Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 13 So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them.

14 Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon; 15 he said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter. 16 So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.

17 Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, 18 so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

### **The Secret Is Revealed to Daniel**

19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; 20 Daniel said,

"Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,

For wisdom and power belong to Him.

21 "It is He who changes the times and the epochs;

He removes kings and establishes kings;

He gives wisdom to wise men

And knowledge to men of understanding.

22 "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things;

He knows what is in the darkness,

And the light dwells with Him.

23 "To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise,

For You have given me wisdom and power;

Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You,

For You have made known to us the king's matter."

## NIV

### **Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

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

4 Then the astrologers answered the king, "May the king live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it."

5 The 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. 6 But 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."

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

8 Then the king answered, "I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: 9 If you do not tell me the dream, there is only 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."

10 The astrologers answered the king, "There is no one 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. 11 What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among humans."

12 This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. 13 So 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.

14 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. 15 He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. 16 At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him.

17 Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 18 He 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. 19 During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven 20 and said:

"Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever;

wisdom and power are his.

21 He changes times and seasons;

he deposes kings and raises up others.

He gives wisdom to the wise

and knowledge to the discerning.

22 He reveals deep and hidden things;

he knows what lies in darkness,

and light dwells with him.

23 I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors:

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.”

## NKJV

### **Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

1 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."

4 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."

8 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."

10 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."

12 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.

### **God Reveals Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

14 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.

16 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.



20 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.”

## NLT

### **Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

1 One night during the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had such disturbing dreams that he couldn't sleep. 2 He called in his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers, and he demanded that they tell him what he had dreamed. As they stood before the king, 3 he said, "I have had a dream that deeply troubles me, and I must know what it means."

4 Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "Long live the king! Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means."

5 But the king said to the astrologers, "I am serious about this. If you don't tell me what my dream was and what it means, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be turned into heaps of rubble! 6 But if you tell me what I dreamed and what the dream means, I will give you many wonderful gifts and honors. Just tell me the dream and what it means!"

7 They said again, "Please, Your Majesty. Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means."

8 The king replied, "I know what you are doing! You're stalling for time because you know I am serious when I say, 9 'If you don't tell me the dream, you are doomed.' So you have conspired to tell me lies, hoping I will change my mind. But tell me the dream, and then I'll know that you can tell me what it means."

10 The astrologers replied to the king, "No one on earth can tell the king his dream! And no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer! 11 The king's demand is impossible. No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people."

12 The king was furious when he heard this, and he ordered that all the wise men of Babylon be executed. 13 And because of the king's decree, men were sent to find and kill Daniel and his friends.

14 When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, came to kill them, Daniel handled the situation with wisdom and discretion. 15 He asked Arioch, "Why has the king issued such a harsh decree?" So Arioch told him all that had happened. 16 Daniel went at once to see the king and requested more time to tell the king what the dream meant.

17 Then Daniel went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened. 18 He urged them to ask the God of heaven to show them his mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not be executed along with the other wise men of Babylon. 19 That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven. 20 He said,

"Praise the name of God forever and ever,

for he has all wisdom and power.

21 He controls the course of world events;  
he removes kings and sets up other kings.

He gives wisdom to the wise  
and knowledge to the scholars.

22 He reveals deep and mysterious things  
and knows what lies hidden in darkness,  
though he is surrounded by light.

23 I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors,  
for you have given me wisdom and strength.  
You have told me what we asked of you  
and revealed to us what the king demanded.”

## NET

[1] In the second year of his{1} reign Nebuchadnezzar had many dreams.{2} His mind{3} was disturbed and he suffered from insomnia.{4} [2] The king issued an order{5} to summon the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and wise men{6} in order to explain his dreams to him.{7} So they came and awaited the king's instructions.{8}

[3] The king told them, "I have had a dream,{9} and I{10} am anxious to understand the dream." [4] The wise men replied to the king: [What follows is in Aramaic{11} ] "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will disclose its{12} interpretation." [5] The king replied{13} to the wise men, "My decision is firm.{14} If you do not inform me of both the dream and its interpretation, you will be dismembered{15} and your homes reduced to rubble! [6] 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!" [7] They again replied, "Let the king inform us{16} of the dream; then we will disclose its{17} interpretation." [8] The king replied, "I know for sure that you are attempting to gain time, because you see that my decision is firm. [9] If you don't inform me of the dream, there is only one thing that is going to happen to you.{18} For you have agreed among yourselves to report to me something false and deceitful{19} until such time as things might change. So tell me the dream, and I will have confidence{20} that you can disclose its interpretation."

[10] The wise men replied to the king, "There is no man on earth who is able to disclose the king's secret,{21} for no king, regardless of his position and power, has ever requested such a thing from any magician, astrologer, or wise man. [11] 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!"{22}

[12] Because of this the king got furiously angry{23} and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. [13] So a decree went out, and the wise men were about{24} to be executed. They also sought{25} Daniel and his friends so that they could be executed.

[14] Then Daniel spoke with prudent counsel{26} to Arioch, who was in charge of the king's executioners and who had gone out to execute the wise men of Babylon. [15] He inquired of Arioch the king's deputy, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?"{27} Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter. [16] So Daniel went in and{28} requested the king to grant him time, that he might disclose the interpretation to the king. [17] Then Daniel went to his home and informed his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the matter. [18] He asked them to pray for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery so that he{29} and his friends would not be destroyed along with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. [19] Then in a night vision the mystery was revealed to Daniel. So Daniel praised{30} the God of heaven, [20] saying,{31}

"Let the name of God{32} be praised{33} forever and ever,

for wisdom and power belong to him.

[21] He changes times and seasons,  
deposing some kings  
and establishing others.{34}  
He gives wisdom to the wise;  
he imparts knowledge to those with understanding;{35}  
[22] he reveals deep and hidden things.

He knows what is in the darkness,  
and light resides with him.

[23] 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 I{36} requested from you.  
For you have enabled me to understand the king's dilemma."{37}

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{1} 2:1 tn Heb "Nebuchadnezzar's." The possessive pronoun is substituted in the translation for stylistic reasons.

{2} 2:1 tn Heb "dreamed dreams." The plural is used here and in v. 2, but the singular in v. 3. The plural "dreams" has been variously explained. Some interpreters take the plural as denoting an indefinite singular (so GKC 400 §124.o). But it may be that it is describing a stream of related dreams, or a dream state. In the latter case, one might translate: "Nebuchadnezzar was in a trance." See further, J. A. Montgomery, *Daniel* (ICC), 142.

{3} 2:1 tn Heb "his spirit."

{4} 2:1 tn Heb "his sleep left (?) him." The use of the verb הָיָה (hayah, "to be") here is unusual. The context suggests a meaning such as "to be finished" or "gone." Cf. Dan 8:27. Some scholars emend the verb to read נָדָדָה (nadédah, "fled"); cf. Dan 6:19. See further, DCH 2:540 s.v. הָיָה I Ni.3; HALOT 244 s.v. הָיָה nif; BDB 227-28 s.v. הָיָה Niph.2.

{5} 2:2 tn Heb "said." So also in v. 12.

{6} 2:2 tn Heb "Chaldeans." The term Chaldeans (Hebrew כַּשְׁדִּיִּים, kasdim) is used in the book of Daniel both in an ethnic sense and, as here, to refer to a caste of Babylonian wise men and astrologers.

{7} 2:2 tn Heb “to explain to the king his dreams.”

{8} 2:2 tn Heb “stood before the king.”

{9} 2:3 tn Heb “I have dreamed a dream” (so KJV, ASV).

{10} 2:3 tn Heb “my spirit.”

{11} 2:4 sn Contrary to common belief, the point here is not that the wise men (Chaldeans) replied to the king in the Aramaic language, or that this language was uniquely the language of the Chaldeans. It was this view that led in the past to Aramaic being referred to as “Chaldee.” Aramaic was used as a lingua franca during this period; its origins and usage were not restricted to the Babylonians. Rather, this phrase is better understood as an editorial note (cf. NAB) marking the fact that from 2:4b through 7:28 the language of the book shifts from Hebrew to Aramaic. In 8:1, and for the remainder of the book, the language returns to Hebrew. Various views have been advanced to account for this change of language, most of which are unconvincing. Most likely the change in language is a reflection of stages in the transmission history of the book of Daniel.

{12} 2:4 tn Or “the.”

{13} 2:5 tn Aram “answered and said,” a common idiom to indicate a reply, but redundant in contemporary English.

{14} 2:5 tn It seems clear from what follows that Nebuchadnezzar clearly recalls the content of the dream, although obviously he does not know what to make of it. By not divulging the dream itself to the would-be interpreters, he intends to find out whether they are simply leading him on. If they can tell him the dream’s content, which he is able to verify, he then can have confidence in their interpretation, which is what eludes him. The translation “the matter is gone from me” (cf. KJV, ASV), suggesting that the king had simply forgotten the dream, is incorrect. The Aramaic word used here (ܐܘܕܐ, ‘azda’) is probably of Persian origin; it occurs in the OT only here and in v. 8. There are two main possibilities for the meaning of the word: “the matter is promulgated by me” (see KBL 1048 s.v.) and therefore “publicly known” (cf. NRSV; F. Rosenthal, *Grammar*, 62-63, §189), or “the matter is irrevocable” (cf. NAB, NIV, TEV, CEV, NLT; HALOT 1808 s.v. אָזַד; cf. also BDB 1079 s.v.). The present translation reflects this latter option. See further E. Vogt, *Lexicon linguae aramaicae*, 3.

{15} 2:5 tn Aram “made limbs.” Cf. 3:29.

{16} 2:7 tn Aram “his servants.”

{17} 2:7 tn Or “the.”

{18} 2:9 tn Aram “one is your law,” i.e., only one thing is applicable to you.

{19} 2:9 tn Aram “a lying and corrupt word.”

{20} 2:9 tn Aram “I will know.”

{21} 2:10 tn Aram “matter, thing.”

{22} 2:11 tn Aram “whose dwelling is not with flesh.”

{23} 2:12 tn Aram “was angry and very furious.” The expression is a hendiadys (two words or phrases expressing a single idea).

{24} 2:13 tn The Aramaic participle is used here to express the imminent future.

{25} 2:13 tn The impersonal active plural (“they sought”) of the Aramaic verb could also be translated as an English passive: “Daniel and his friends were sought” (cf. NAB).

{26} 2:14 tn Aram “returned prudence and counsel.” The expression is a hendiadys.

{27} 2:15 tn The Aramaic word מְהַכְתְּסָפָה (méhakhtséfah) may refer to the severity of the king’s decree (i.e., “harsh”; so HALOT 1879 s.v. רָצַח; BDB 1093 s.v. רָצַח), although it would seem that in a delicate situation such as this Daniel would avoid this kind of criticism of the king’s actions. The translation above understands the word to refer to the immediacy, not harshness, of the decree. See further, F. Rosenthal, *Grammar*, 50, §116; E. Vogt, *Lexicon linguae aramaicae*, 67.

{28} 2:16 tc Theodotion and the Syriac lack the words “went in and.”

{29} 2:18 tn Aram “Daniel.” The proper name is redundant here in English, and has not been included in the translation.

{30} 2:19 tn Or “blessed.”

{31} 2:20 tn Aram “Daniel answered and said.”

{32} 2:20 sn As is often the case in the Bible, here the name represents the person.

{33} 2:20 tn Or “blessed.”

{34} 2:21 tn Aram “kings.”

{35} 2:21 tn Aram “the knowers of understanding.”

{36} 2:23 tn Aram “we.” Various explanations have been offered for the plural, but it is probably best understood as the editorial plural; so also with “me” later in this verse.

{37} 2:23 tn Aram “the word of the king.”

## Questions

1. 2:1 – When did this event occur? How long after Daniel was taken captive?
2. 2:2 – Who did King Nebuchadnezzar summons to tell him of his dream? Why these people?
3. 2:4 – “...in Aramaic...” (ESV). What does this part of the verse tell us?
4. 2:4 – So the king summoned a set of people. They came to him and told him what they will do for him. What was that?
5. 2:5 – The king does not agree. He demands something much harder for them. What is it and why would he ask this of them?
6. 2:10 – The Chaldeans finally answered the king, saying that they cannot do what he requests. What was their explanation? Who did they say could actually provide this?

Note: Where was Daniel at this time (i.e. was he present at this point)?



7. 2:13 – 2:18 – A decree goes out to have all of the wise men destroyed. Daniel hears about it and comes forward to Arioch (the captain of the king's guard). He inquires about what the matter is about and Arioch tells him. What does Daniel then do (prior to receiving the vision from God)?

8. What do these actions tell us about Daniel and his view of God? Do you do this yourself?

9. 2:19-2:23 – What is God's response? And how does Daniel then immediately respond?

10. 2:20-2:23 – What does Daniel's blessing show us about God?

11. How have some of these attributes of God already been shown in the prior chapters/verses up to this point?

12. In your walk, do you actively recognize and think about God in these ways (the attributes mentioned in Daniel's blessing)?

In what ways do your thoughts and actions align with these?

In what ways do they not align?

How might you go about bringing these into alignment? And keeping them there (or at least attempting to)?