

CHAPTER 2

It was said (1:17) that Daniel had understanding in dreams; and here we have an early and eminent instance of it, which soon made him famous in the court of Babylon, as Joseph by the same means came to be so in the court of Egypt. This chapter is a history, but it is the history of a prophecy, by a dream and the interpretation of it. Pharaoh's dream, and Joseph's interpretation of it, related only to the years of plenty and famine and the interest of God's Israel in them; but Nebuchadnezzar's dream here, and Daniel's interpretation of that, look much higher, to the four monarchies, and the concerns of Israel in them, and the kingdom of the Messiah, which should be set up in the world upon the ruins of them. In this chapter we have,

- I.** The great perplexity that Nebuchadnezzar was put into by a dream which he had forgotten, and his command to the magicians to tell him what it was, which they could not pretend to do (v. 1-11).
- II.** Orders given for the destroying of all the wise men of Babylon, and of Daniel among the rest, with his fellows (v. 12-15).
- III.** The discovery of this secret to him, in answer to prayer, and the thanksgiving he offered up to God thereupon (v. 16-23).
- IV.** His admission to the king, and the discovery he made to him both of his dream and of the interpretation of it (v. 24-45).
- V.** The great honour which Nebuchadnezzar put upon Daniel, in recompence for this service, and the preferment of his companions with him (v. 46-49).

DANIEL 2:1-13

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S FORGOTTEN DREAM

We meet with a great difficulty in the date of this story; it is said to be in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, v. 1. Now Daniel was carried to Babylon in his first year, and, it should seem, he was three years

under tutors and governors before he was presented to the king, ²⁰¹⁵Daniel 1:5. How then could this happen in *the second year*? Perhaps, though three years were appointed for the education of other children, yet Daniel was so forward that he was taken into business when he had been but one year at school, and so in the second year he became thus considerable. Some make it to be the second year after he began to reign alone, but the fifth or sixth year since he began to reign in partnership with his *father*. Some read it, *and in the second year*, (the second after Daniel and his fellows stood before the king), *in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, or in his reign*, this happened; as Joseph, in the second year after his skill in dreams, showed and expounded Pharaoh's, so Daniel, in the second year after he commenced master in that art, did this service. I would much rather take it some of these ways than suppose, as some do, that it was in the second year after he had conquered Egypt, which was the thirty-sixth year of his reign, because it appears by what we meet with in Ezekiel, that Daniel was famous both for wisdom and prevalence in prayer long before that; and therefore this passage, or story, which shows how he came to be so eminent for both these must be laid early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Now here we may observe,

I. The perplexity that Nebuchadnezzar was in by reason of a dream which he had dreamed but had forgotten (v. 1): *He dreamed dreams*, that is, a dream consisting of divers distinct parts, or which filled his head as much as if it had been many dreams. Solomon speaks of a *multitude of dreams*, strangely incoherent, in which *there are divers vanities*, ²⁰¹⁵Ecclesiastes 5:7. This dream of Nebuchadnezzar's had nothing in the thing itself but what might be paralleled in many a common dream, in which are often represented to men things as foreign as are here mentioned; but there was something in the impression it made upon him which carried with it an incontestable evidence of its divine original and its prophetic significancy. Note, The greatest of men are not exempt from, nay, they lie most open to, those cares and troubles of mind which disturb their repose in the night, while *the sleep of the labouring man is sweet* and sound, and the sleep of the sober temperate man free from confused dreams. The abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep at all for care, and the excesses of gluttons and drunkards will not suffer them to sleep quietly for dreaming. But this recorded here was not from natural causes. Nebuchadnezzar was a troubler of God's Israel, but God here troubled him; for he that made the soul can *make his sword to approach to it*. He had his guards about him,

but they could not keep trouble from his spirit. We know not the uneasiness of many that live in great pomp, and, one would think, in pleasure, too. We look into their houses, and are tempted to envy them; but, could we look into their hearts, we should pity them rather. All the treasures and all the delights of the children of men, which this mighty monarch had command of, could not procure him a little repose, when by reason of the trouble of his mind his *sleep broke from him*. But God gives *his beloved sleep*, who return to him as their rest.

II. The trial that he made of his magicians and astrologers whether they could tell him what his dream was, which he had forgotten. They were immediately sent for, to *show the king his dreams*, v. 2. There are many things which we retain the impressions of, and yet have lost the images of the things; though we cannot tell what the matter was, we know how we were affected with it; so it was with this king. His dream had slipped out of his mind, and he could not possibly recollect it, but he was confident he should know it if he heard it again. God ordered it so that Daniel might have the more honour, and, in him, the God of Daniel. Note, God sometimes serves his own purposes by putting things out of men's minds as well as by putting things into their minds. The magicians, it is likely, were proud of their being sent for into the king's bed-chamber, to give him a taste of their office, not doubting but it would be for their honour. He tells them that he had *dreamed a dream*, v. 3. They speak to him in the Syriac tongue, which was then the same with the Chaldee, but now they differ much. And henceforward Daniel uses that language, or dialect of the Hebrew, for the same reason that those words, ²⁴¹¹Jeremiah 10:11, are in that language because designed to convince the Chaldeans of the folly of their idolatry and to bring them to the knowledge and worship of the true and living God, which the stories of these chapters have a direct tendency to. But ch. 8 and forward, being intended for the comfort of the Jews, is written in their peculiar language. They, in their answer, complimented the king with their good wishes, desired him to tell his dream, and undertook with all possible assurance to interpret it, v. 4. But the king insisted upon it that they must tell him the dream itself, because he had forgotten it and could not tell it to them. And, if they could not do this, they should all be put to death as deceivers (v. 5), themselves *cut to pieces* and *their houses made a dunghill*. If they could, they should be rewarded and preferred, v. 6. And they knew, as Balaam did concerning Balak, that he was able to *promote them to great honour*, and give them that *wages of*

unrighteousness which, like him, *they loved* so dearly. No question therefore that they will do their utmost to gratify the king; if they do not, it is not for want of good-will, but for want of power, Providence so ordering it that the magicians of Babylon might now be as much confounded and put to shame as of old the magicians of Egypt had been, that, how much soever his people were both in Egypt and Babylon vilified and made contemptible, his oracles might in both be magnified and made honourable, by the silencing of those that set up in competition with them. The magicians, having reason on their side, insist upon it that the king must tell them the dream, and then, if they do not tell him the interpretation of it, it is their fault, v. 7. But arbitrary power is deaf to reason. The king falls into a passion, gives them hard words, and, without any colour of reason, suspects that they could tell him but would not; and instead of upbraiding them with impotency, and the deficiency of their art, as he might justly have done, he charges them with a combination to affront him: *You have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me*. How unreasonable and absurd is this imputation! If they had undertaken to tell him what his dream was, and had imposed upon him with a sham, he might have charged them with lying and corrupt words; but to say this of them when they honestly confessed their own weakness only shows what senseless things indulged passions are, and how apt great men are to think it is their prerogative to pursue their humour in defiance of reason and equity, and all the dictates of both. When the magicians begged of him to tell them the dream, though the request was highly rational and just, he tells them that they did but dally with him, to gain time (v. 8), *till the time be changed* (v. 9), either till the king's desire to know his dream be over, and he grown indifferent whether he be told it or no, though now he is so hot upon it, or till they may hope he has so perfectly forgotten his dream (the remaining shades of which are slipping from him apace as he catches at them) that they may tell him what they please and make him believe it was his dream, and, when the thing which is going, is quite *gone from him*, as it will be in a little time, he will not be able to disprove them. And therefore, without delay, they must tell him the dream. In vain do they plead,

1. That there is *no man on earth* that can retrieve the king's dream, v. 10. There are settled rules by which to discover what the meaning of the dream was; whether they will hold or no is the question. But never were any rules offered to be given by which to discover what the dream was;

they cannot work unless they have something to work upon. They acknowledge that the gods may indeed *declare unto man what is his thought* (^{30B}Amos 4:13), for God *understands our thoughts afar off* (^{40B}Psalm 139:2), what they will be before we think them, what they are when we do not regard them, what they have been when we have forgotten them. But those who can do this are gods, that *have not their dwelling with flesh* (v. 11), and it is they alone that can do this. As for men, their *dwelling is with flesh*; the wisest and greatest of men are clouded with a veil of flesh, which quite obstructs and confounds all their acquaintance with spirit, and their powers and operations; but the gods, that are themselves pure spirit, know what is in man. See here an instance of the ignorance of these magicians, that they speak of many gods, whereas there is but one and can be but one infinite; yet see their knowledge of that which even the light of nature teaches and the works of nature prove, that there is a God, who is a Spirit, and perfectly knows the spirits of men and all their thoughts, so as it is not possible that any man should. This confession of the divine omniscience is here extorted from these idolaters, to the honour of God and their own condemnation, who though they knew there is a God in heaven, *to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid*, yet offered up their prayers and praises to dumb idols, that have *eyes and see not, ears and hear not*.

2. That there is no king on earth that would expect or require such a thing, v. 10. This intimates that they were *kings, lords, and potentates*, not ordinary people, that the magicians had most dealings with, and at whose devotion they were, while the oracles of God and the gospel of Christ are dispensed *to the poor*. Kings and potentates have often required unreasonable things of their subjects, but they think that never any required so unreasonable a thing as this, and therefore hope his imperial majesty will not insist upon it. But it is all in vain; when passion is in the throne reason is under foot: He was *angry and very furious*, v. 12. Note, It is very common for those that will not be convinced by reason to be provoked and exasperated by it, and to push on with fury what they cannot support with equity.

III. The doom passed upon all the magicians of Babylon. There is but *one decree for them all* (v. 9); they all stand condemned without exception or distinction. The decree has gone forth, they must every man of them be slain (v. 13), Daniel and his fellows (though they knew nothing of the matter) not excepted. See here,

1. What are commonly the unjust proceedings of arbitrary power. Nebuchadnezzar is here a tyrant in true colours, speaking death when he cannot speak sense, and treating those as traitors whose only fault is that they would serve him, but cannot.

2. What is commonly the just punishment of pretenders. How unrighteous soever Nebuchadnezzar was in this sentence, as to the ringleaders in the imposture, God was righteous. Those that imposed upon men, in pretending to do what they could not do, are now sentenced to death for not being able to do what they did not pretend to.

☞ DANIEL 2:14-23

THE DREAM REVEALED TO DANIEL

When the king sent for his wise men to tell them his dream, and the interpretation of it (v. 2), Daniel, it seems, was not summoned to appear among them; the king, though he was highly pleased with him when he examined him, and thought him *ten times* wiser than the rest of his wise men, yet forgot him when he had most occasion for him; and no wonder, when all was done in a heat, and nothing with a cool and deliberate thought. But Providence so ordered it; that the magicians being nonplussed might be the more taken notice of, and so the more glory might redound to the God of Daniel. But, though Daniel had not the honour to be consulted with the rest of the wise men, contrary to all law and justice, by an undistinguishing sentence, he stands condemned with them, and till he has notice brought him to prepare for execution he knows nothing of the matter. How miserable is the case of those who live under arbitrary government, as this of Nebuchadnezzar's! How happy are we, whose lives are under the protection of the law and methods of justice, and lie not thus at the mercy of a peevish and capricious prince!

We have found already, in Ezekiel, that Daniel was famous both for prudence and prayer; as a prince he had power with God and by man; by prayer he had power with God, by prudence he had power with man, and in both he prevailed. Thus did he *find favour and good understanding* in the sight of both, and in these verses we have a remarkable instance of both.

I. Daniel by prudence knew how to deal with men, and he prevailed with them. When *Arioch, the captain of the guard*, that was appointed to slay all the wise men of Babylon, the whole college of them, seized Daniel (for the sword of tyranny, like the sword of war, *devours one as well as another*), he *answered with counsel and wisdom* (v. 14); he did not fall into a passion, and reproach the king as unjust and barbarous, much less did he contrive how to make resistance, but mildly asked, *Why is the decree so hasty?* v. 15. And whereas the rest of the wise men had insisted upon it that it was utterly impossible for him ever to have his demand gratified, which did but make him more outrageous, Daniel undertakes, if he may but have a little time allowed him, to give the king all the satisfaction he desired, v. 16. The king, being now sensible of his error in not sending for Daniel sooner, whose character he began to recollect, was soon prevailed upon to respite the judgment, and make trial of Daniel. Note, The likeliest method to turn away wrath, even the wrath of a king, which is as the messenger of death, is by a *soft answer*, by that yielding which *pacifies great offences*; thus, though *where the word of a king is there is power*, yet even that word may be repelled, and that so as to be repealed; and so some read it here (v. 14): *Then Daniel returned, and stayed the counsel and edict, through Arioch, the king's provost-marshal.*

II. Daniel knew how by prayer to converse with God, and he found favour with him, both in petition and in thanksgiving, which are the two principal parts of prayer. Observe,

1. His humble petition for this mercy, that God would discover to him what was the king's dream, and the interpretation of it. When he had gained time he did not go to consult with the rest of the wise men whether there was anything in their art, in their books, that might be of use in this matter, but *went to his house*, there to be alone with God, for from him alone, who is the Father of lights, he expected this great gift. Observe,

(1.) He did not only pray for this discovery himself, but he engaged his companions to pray for it too. He *made the thing known* to those who had been all along his bosom-friends and associates, requesting *that they would desire mercy of God concerning this secret*, v. 17, 18. Though Daniel was probably their senior, and every way excelled them, yet he engaged them as partners with him in this matter, *Vis unita fortior* — *The union of forces produces greater force*. See ^{<7746>}Esther 4:16. Note, Praying friends are valuable friends; it is good to have an intimacy with and an

interest in those that have fellowship with God and an interest at the throne of grace; and it well becomes the greatest and best of men to desire the assistance of the prayers of others for them. St. Paul often entreats his friends to pray for him. Thus we must show that we put a value upon our friends, upon prayer, upon their prayers.

(2.) He was particular in this prayer, but had an eye to, and a dependence upon, the general mercy of God: *That they would desire the mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret*, v. 18. We ought in prayer to look up to God as the *God of heaven*, a God above us, and who has dominion over us, to whom we owe adoration and allegiance, a God of power, who can do everything. Our savior has taught us to pray to God as *our Father in heaven*. And, whatever good we pray for, our dependence must be upon the *mercies of God* for it, and an interest in those mercies we must desire; we can expect nothing by way of recompence for our merits, but all as the gift of God's mercies. They desired mercy *concerning this secret*. Note, Whatever is the matter of our care must be the matter of our prayer; we must desire mercy of God concerning this thing and the other thing that occasions us trouble and fear. God gives us leave to be humbly free with him, and in prayer to enter into the detail of our wants and burdens. *Secret things belong to the Lord our God*, and therefore, if there be any mercy we stand in need of that concerns a secret, to him we must apply; and, though we cannot in faith pray for miracles, yet we may in faith pray to him who has all hearts in his hand, and who in his providence does wonders without miracles, for the discovery of that which is out of our view and the obtaining of that which is out of our reach, as far as is for his glory and our good, believing that to him nothing is hidden, nothing is hard.

(3.) Their plea with God was the imminent peril they were in; they desired mercy of God in this matter, that so Daniel and his *fellows might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon*, that the righteous might not be destroyed with the wicked. Note, When the lives of good and useful men are in danger it is time to be earnest with God for mercy for them, as for Peter in prison, ⁴⁰⁵Acts 12:5.

(4.) The mercy which Daniel and his fellows prayed for was bestowed. The *secret was revealed unto Daniel in a night-vision*, v. 19. Some think he dreamed the same dream, when he was asleep, that Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed; it should rather seem that when he was awake, and continuing *instant in prayer*, and *watching in the same*, the dream itself,

and the interpretation of it, were communicated to him by the ministry of an angel, abundantly to his satisfaction. Note, *The effectual fervent prayer of righteous men avails much*. There are mysteries and secrets which by prayer we are let into; with that key the cabinets of heaven are unlocked, for Christ has said, *Thus knock, and it shall be opened unto you*.

2. His grateful thanksgiving for this mercy when he had received it: *Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven*, v. 19. He did not stay till he had told it to the king, and seen whether he would own it to be his dream or no, but was confident that it was so, and that he had gained his point, and therefore he immediately turned his prayers into praises. As he had prayed in a full assurance that God would do this for him, so he gave thanks in a full assurance that he had done it; and in both he had an eye to God as the *God of heaven*. His prayer was not recorded, but his thanksgiving is. Observe,

(1.) The honour he gives to God in this thanksgiving, which he studies to do in a great variety and copiousness of expression: *Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever*. There is that *for ever* in God which is to be blessed and praised; it is unchangeably and eternally in him. And it is to be blessed *for ever and ever*; as the matter of praise is God's eternal perfection, so the work of praise shall be everlastingly in the doing.

[1.] He gives to God the glory of what he is in himself: *Wisdom and might are his, wisdom and courage* (so some); whatever is fit to be done he will do; whatever he will do he can do, he dares do, and he will be sure to do it in the best manner, for he has infinite wisdom to design and contrive and infinite power to execute and accomplish. *With him are strength and wisdom*, which in men are often parted.

[2.] He gives him the glory of what he is to the world of mankind. He has a universal influence and agency upon all the children of men, and all their actions and affairs. Are the times changed? Is the posture of affairs altered? Does every thing lie open to mutability? It is God that *changes the times and the seasons*, and the face of them. No change comes to pass by chance, but according to the will and counsel of God. Are those that were kings removed and deposed? Do they abdicate? Are they laid aside? It is God that *removes kings*. Are the *poor raised out of the dust*, to be *set among princes*? It is God that *sets up kings*; and the making and unmaking of kings is a flower of his crown who is the fountain of all power, *King of kings and Lord of lords*. Are there men that excel others in wisdom,

philosophers and statesmen, that think above the common rate, contemplative penetrating men? It is *God that gives wisdom to the wise*, whether they be so wise as to acknowledge it or no; they have it not of themselves, but it is he that *gives knowledge to those that know understanding*, which is a good reason why we should not be proud of our knowledge, and why we should serve and honour God with it and make it our business to know him.

[3.] He gives him the glory of this particular discovery. He praises him, *First*, For that he could make such a discovery (v. 22): *He reveals the deep and secret things* which are hidden from the eyes of all living. It was he that revealed to man what is true wisdom when none else could (~~870~~ Job 27:27, 28); it is he that reveals things to come to his servants and prophets. He does himself perfectly discern and distinguish that which is most closely and most industriously concealed, for he will *bring into judgment every secret thing*; the truth will be evident in the great day. He *knows what is in the darkness*, and what is done in the darkness, for that *hides not from him*, ~~881~~ Psalm 139:11, 12. *The light dwells with him*, and he *dwells in the light* (~~5416~~ 1 Timothy 6:16), and yet, as to us, he *makes darkness his pavilion*. Some understand it of the light of prophecy and divine revelation, which dwells with God and is derived from him; for he is the *Father of lights*, of all lights; they are all at home in him. *Secondly*, For that he had made this discovery to him. Here he has an eye to God as the *God of his fathers*; for, though the Jews were now captives in Babylon, yet they were *beloved for their father's sake*. He praises God, who is the fountain of wisdom and might, for the wisdom and might he had given him, wisdom to know this great secret and might to bear the discovery. Note, What wisdom and might we have we must acknowledge to be God's gift. *Thou hast made this known to me*, v. 23. What was hidden from the celebrated Chaldeans, who made the interpreting of dreams their profession, is revealed to Daniel, a captive-Jew, a babe, much their junior. God would hereby put honour upon the *Spirit of prophecy* just when he was putting contempt upon the *spirit of divination*. Was Daniel thus thankful to God for making known that to him which was the saving of the lives of him and his fellows? Much more reason have we to be thankful to him for making known to us the great salvation of the soul, to us and *not to the world*, to us and *not to the wise and prudent*.

(2.) The respect he puts upon his companions in this thanksgiving. Though it was by his prayers principally that this discovery was obtained, and to

him that it was made, yet he owns their partnership with him, both in praying for it (it is what *we desired of thee*) and in enjoying it — Thou hast *made known unto us the king's matter*. Either they were present with Daniel when the discovery was made to him, or as soon as he knew it he told it them (*heureka, heureka* — *I have found it, I have found it*), that those who had assisted him with their prayers might assist him in their praises; his joining them with him is an instance of his humility and modesty, which well become those that are taken into communion with God. Thus St. Paul sometimes joins Sylvanus, Timotheus, or some other minister, with himself in the inscriptions to many of his epistles. Note, What honour God puts upon us we should be willing that our brethren may share with us in.

~~212~~ DANIEL 2:24-30

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

We have here the introduction to Daniel's declaring the dream, and the interpretation of it.

I. He immediately bespoke the reversing of the sentence against the wise men of Babylon, v. 24. He went with all speed to Arioch, to tell him that his commission was now superseded: *Destroy not the wise men of Babylon*. Though there were those of them perhaps that deserved to die, as magicians, by the law of God, yet here that which they stood condemned for was not a crime worth of death or of bonds, and therefore let them not die, and be *unjustly destroyed*, but let them live, and be justly shamed, as having been nonplussed and unable to do that which a prophet of the Lord could do. Note, Since God shows common kindness to the evil and good, we should do so too, and be ready to save the lives of even bad men, ~~4155~~ Matthew 5:45. A good man is a common good. To Paul in the ship God gave the souls of all that sailed with him; they were saved for his sake. To Daniel was owing the preservation of all the wise men, who yet rendered not according to the benefit done to them, ~~2118~~ Daniel 3:8.

II. He offered his service, with great assurance, to go to the king, and tell him his dream and the interpretation of it, and was admitted accordingly, v. 24, 25. Arioch brought him in haste to the king, hoping to ingratiate

himself by introducing Daniel; he pretends he had sought him to interpret the king's dream, whereas really it was to execute upon him the king's sentence that he sought him. But courtiers' business is every way to humour the prince and make their own services acceptable.

III. He contrived as much as might be to reflect shame upon the magicians, and to give honour to God, upon this occasion. The king owned that it was a bold undertaking, and questioned whether he could make it good (v. 26): *Art thou able to make known unto me the dream?* What! Such a babe in this knowledge, such a stripling as thou are, wilt thou undertake that which thy seniors despair of doing? The less likely it appeared to the king that Daniel should do this the more God was glorified in enabling him to do it. Note, In transmitting divine revelation to the children of men it has been God's usual way to make use of the *weak and foolish things* and persons *of the world*, and such as were *despised* and *despised of*, *to confound the wise and mighty*, that the excellency of the power might be of him, ¹⁷1 Corinthians 1:27, 28. Daniel from this takes occasion,

1. To put the king out of conceit with his magicians and soothsayers, whom he had such great expectations from (v. 27): *"This secret they cannot show to the king;* it is out of their power; the rules of their art will not reach to it. Therefore let not the king be angry with them for not doing that which they cannot do; but rather despise them, and cast them off, because they cannot do it." Broughton reads it generally: *"This secret no sages, astrologers, enchanters, or entrail-cookers, can show unto the king;* let not the king therefore consult them any more." Note, The experience we have of the inability of all creatures to give us satisfaction should lessen our esteem of them, and lower our expectations from them. They are baffled in their pretensions; we are baffled in our hopes from them. Hitherto they come, and no further; let us therefore say to them, as Job to his friends, *Now you are nothing; miserable comforters are you all.*

2. To bring him to the knowledge of the one only living and true God, the God whom Daniel worshipped: "Though they cannot find out the secret, let not the king despair of having it found out, for *there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets,*" v. 28. Note, The insufficiency of creatures should drive us to the all-sufficiency of the Creator. *There is a God in heaven* (and it is well for us there is) who can do that for us, and make known that to us, which none on earth can, particularly the secret history of the work

of redemption and the secret designs of God's love to us therein, the mystery which was *hidden from ages and generations*; divine revelation helps us out where human reason leaves us quite at a loss, and makes known that, not only to kings, but to the poor of this world, which none of the philosophers or politicians of the heathens, with all their oracles and arts of divination to help them, could ever pretend to give us any light into, ^{<516>}Romans 16:25, 26.

IV. He confirmed the king in his opinion that the dream he was thus solicitous to recover the idea of was really well worth enquiring after, that it was of great value and of vast consequence, not a common dream, the idle disport of a ludicrous and luxuriant fancy, which was not worth remembering or telling again, but that it was a divine discovery, a ray of light darted into his mind from the upper world, relating to the great affairs and revolutions of this lower world. God in it *made known to the king what should be in the latter days* (v. 28), that is, in the times that were to come, reaching as far as the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, which was to be *in the latter days*, ^{<500>}Hebrews 1:1. And again (v. 29): “*The thoughts which came into thy mind* were not the repetitions of what had been before, as our dreams usually are” —

*Omnia quae sensu voluntur vota diurno
Tempore sopito reddit amica quies —*

*The sentiments which we indulge throughout the day
often mingle with the grateful slumbers of the night.
— Claudian*

“But they were predictions of *what should come to pass hereafter*, which he that *reveals secrets makes known unto thee*; and therefore thou art in the right in taking the hint and pursuing it thus.” Note, Things that are to come to pass hereafter are secret things, which God only can reveal; and what he has revealed of those things, especially with reference to the last days of all, to the end of time, ought to be very seriously and diligently enquired into and considered by every one of us. Some think that the *thoughts* which are said to have come into the king's mind upon his bed, what should come to pass hereafter, were his own thoughts when he was awake. Just before he fell asleep, and dreamed this dream, he was musing in his own mind what would be the issue of his growing greatness, what his kingdom would hereafter come to; and so the dream was an answer to

those thoughts. What discoveries God intends to make he thus prepares men for.

V. He solemnly professes that he could not pretend to have merited from God the favour of this discovery, or to have obtained it by any sagacity of his own (v. 30): “*But, as for me, this secret is not found out by me, but is revealed to me, and that not for any wisdom that I have more than any living, to qualify me for the receiving of such a discovery.*” Note, It well becomes those whom God has highly favoured and honoured to be very humble and low in their own eyes, to lay aside all opinion of their own wisdom and worthiness, that God alone may have all the praise of the good they are, and have, and do, and that all may be attributed to the freeness of his good-will towards them and the fulness of his good work in them. The secret was made known to him not for his own sake, but,

1. For the sake of his people, for *their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king*, that is, for the sake of his brethren and companions in tribulation, who had by their prayers helped him to obtain this discovery, and so might be said to make known the interpretation — that their lives might be spared, that they might come into favour and be preferred, and all the people of the Jews might fare the better, in their captivity, for their sakes. Note, Humble men will be always ready to think that what God does for them and by them is more for the sake of others than for their own.

2. For the sake of *his prince*; and some read the former clause in this sense, “Not for any wisdom of mine, *but that the king may know the interpretation, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart*, that thou mightest have satisfaction given thee as to what thou wast before considering, and thereby instruction given thee how to behave towards the church of God.” God revealed this thing to Daniel that he might make it known to the king. Prophets receive that they may give, that the discoveries made to them may not be lodged with themselves, but communicated to the persons that are concerned.

DANIEL 2:31-45

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM INTERPRETED

Daniel here gives full satisfaction to Nebuchadnezzar concerning his dream and the interpretation of it. That great prince had been kind to this poor prophet in his maintenance and education; he had been brought up at the king's cost, preferred at court, and the land of his captivity had hereby been made much easier to him than to others of his brethren. And now the king is abundantly repaid for all the expense he had been at upon him; and for receiving this prophet, though not in the name of a prophet, he had a prophet's reward, such a reward as a prophet only could give, and for which that wealthy mighty prince was now glad to be beholden to him. Here is,

I. The dream itself, v. 31, 45. Nebuchadnezzar perhaps was an admirer of statues, and had his palace and gardens adorned with them; however, he was a worshipper of images, and now behold a *great image* is set before him in a dream, which might intimate to him what the images were which he bestowed so much cost upon, and paid such respect to; they were mere dreams. The creatures of fancy might do as well to please the fancy. By the power of imagination he might shut his eyes, and represent to himself what forms he thought fit, and beautify them at his pleasure, without the expense and trouble of sculpture. This was the image of a man erect: *It stood before him*, as a living man; and, because those monarchies which were designed to be represented by it were admirable in the eyes of their friends, the *brightness* of this image *was excellent*; and because they were formidable to their enemies, and dreaded by all about them, the *form* of this image is said to be *terrible*; both the features of the face and the postures of the body made it so. But that which was most remarkable in this image was the different metals of which it was composed — the *head of gold* (the richest and most durable metal), the *breast and arms of silver* (the next to it in worth), the *belly and sides (or thighs) of brass*, the *legs of iron* (still baser metals), and lastly the feet *part of iron and part of clay*. See what the things of this world are; the further we go in them the less valuable they appear. In the life of a man youth is a head of gold, but it grows less and less worthy of our esteem; and old age is half clay; a man is then *as good as dead*. It is so with the world; later ages degenerate. The first age of the Christian church, of the reformation, was a head of gold;

but we live in an age that is iron and clay. Some allude to this in the description of a hypocrite, whose practice is not agreeable to his knowledge. He has a head of gold, but feet of iron and clay: he knows his duty, but does it not. Some observe that in Daniel's visions the monarchies were represented by four beasts (Daniel 7), for he looked upon that wisdom from beneath, by which they were turned to be earthly and sensual, and a tyrannical power, to have more in it of the beast than of the man, and so the vision agreed with his notions of the thing. But to Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen prince, they were represented by a gay and pompous image of a man, for he was an admirer of the *kingdoms of this world and the glory of them*. To him the sight was so charming that he was impatient to see it again. But what became of this image? The next part of the dream shows it to us calcined, and brought to nothing. He saw a stone cut out of the quarry by an unseen power, without hands, and this stone fell upon the *feet of the image*, that were of *iron and clay*, and *broke them to pieces*; and then the image must fall of course, and so the gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, were all broken to pieces together, and beaten so small that they became like the *chaff of the summer threshing-floors*, and there were not to be found any the least remains of them; but the stone *cut out of the mountain* became itself a *great mountain, and filled the earth*. See how God can bring about great effects by weak and unlikely causes; when he pleases a *little one shall become a thousand*. Perhaps the destruction of this image of gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, might be intended to signify the abolishing of idolatry out of the world in due time. The *idols of the heathen are silver and gold*, as this image was, and *they shall perish from off the earth and from under these heavens*, ^{<2011>}Jeremiah 10:11.; ^{<2013>}Isaiah 2:18. And whatever power destroys idolatry is in the ready way to magnify and exalt itself, as this stone, when it had broken the image to pieces, became a great mountain.

II. The interpretation of this dream. Let us now see what is the meaning of this. It was from God, and therefore from him it is fit that we take the explication of it. It should seem, Daniel had his fellows with him, and speaks for them as well as for himself, when he says, *We will tell the interpretation*, v. 36. Now,

1. This image represented the kingdoms of the earth that should successively bear rule among the nations and have influence on the affairs of the Jewish church. The four monarchies were not represented by four distinct statues, but by one image, because they were all of one and the

same spirit and genius, and all more or less against the church. It was the same power, only lodged in four different nations, the two former lying eastward of Judea, the two latter westward.

(1.) The *head of gold* signified the Chaldean monarchy, which was now in being (v. 37, 38): *Thou, O king! art* (or rather, *shalt be*) *a king of kings*, a universal monarch, to whom many kings and kingdoms shall be tributaries; or, Thou art the *highest of kings* on earth at this time (as a *servant of servants* is the meanest servant); thou dost outshine all other kings. But let him not attribute his elevation to his own politics or fortitude. No; it is *the God of heaven* that has *given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory*, a kingdom that exercises great authority, stands firmly, and shines brightly, acts by a puissant army with an arbitrary power. Note, The greatest of princes have no power but what is given them from above. The extent of his dominion is set forth (v. 38), that *wheresoever the children of men dwell*, in all the nations of that part of the world, he was *ruler over them all*, over them and all that belonged to them, all their cattle, not only those which they had a property in, but those that were *ferae naturae* — *wild*, the *beasts of the field* and the *fowls of the heaven*. He was lord of all the woods, forests, and chases, and none were allowed to hunt or fowl without his leave. Thus “*thou art the head of gold; thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, for seventy years.*” Compare this with ^{<243>}Jeremiah 25:9, 11, especially ^{<247>}Jeremiah 27:5-7. There were other powerful kingdoms in the world at this time, as that of the Scythians; but it was the kingdom of Babylon that reigned over the Jews, and that began the government which continued in the succession here described till Christ's time. It is called a *head*, for its wisdom, eminency, and absolute power, a *head of gold* for its wealth (^{<244>}Isaiah 14:4); it was a golden city. Some make this monarchy to begin in Nimrod, and so bring into it all the Assyrian kings, about fifty monarchs in all, and compute that it lasted above 1600 years. But it had not been so long a monarchy of such vast extent and power as is here described, nor any thing like it; therefore others make only Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, and Belshazzar, to belong to this *head of gold*; and a glorious high throne they had, and perhaps exercised a more despotic power than any of the kings that went before them. Nebuchadnezzar reigned forty-five years current, Evil-merodach twenty-three years current, and Belshazzar three. Babylon was their metropolis, and Daniel was with them upon the spot during the seventy years.

(2.) The *breast and arms of silver* signified the monarchy of the Medes and Persians, of which the king is told no more than this, *There shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee* (v. 39), not so rich, powerful, or victorious. This kingdom was founded by Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian, in alliance with each other, and therefore represented by two arms, meeting in the breast. Cyrus was himself a Persian by his father, a Mede by his mother. Some reckon that this second monarchy lasted 130 years, others 204 years. The former computation agrees best with the scripture chronology.

(3.) The *belly and thighs of brass* signified the monarchy of the Grecians, founded by Alexander, who conquered Darius Codomannus, the last of the Persian emperors. This is the *third kingdom, of brass*, inferior in wealth and extent of dominion to the Persian monarchy, but in Alexander himself it shall be by the power of the sword *bear rule over all the earth*; for Alexander boasted that he had conquered the world, and then sat down and wept because he had not another world to conquer.

(4.) The *legs and feet of iron* signified the Roman monarchy. Some make this to signify the latter part of the Grecian monarchy, the two empires of Syria and Egypt, the former governed by the family of the Seleucidae, from Seleucus, the latter by that of the Lagidae, from Ptolemaeus Lagus; these they make the two legs and feet of this image: Grotius, and Junius, and Broughton, go this way. But it has been the more received opinion that it is the Roman monarchy that is here intended, because it was in the time of that monarchy, and when it was at its height, that the kingdom of Christ was set up in the world by the preaching of the everlasting gospel. The Roman kingdom was strong as iron (v. 40), witness the prevalency of that kingdom against all that contended with it for many ages. That kingdom *broke in pieces* the Grecian empire and afterwards quite destroyed the nation of the Jews. Towards the latter end of the Roman monarchy it grew very weak, and branched into ten kingdoms, which were as the toes of these feet. Some of these were weak as clay, others strong as iron, v. 42. Endeavours were used to unite and cement them for the strengthening of the empire, but in vain: *They shall not cleave one to another*, v. 43. This empire divided the government for a long time between the senate and the people, the nobles and the commons, but they did not entirely coalesce. There were civil wars between Marius and Sylla, Caesar and Pompey, whose parties were as iron and clay. Some refer this to the declining times of that empire, when, for the strengthening of the empire against the

irruptions of the barbarous nations, the branches of the royal family intermarried; but the politics had not the desired effect, when the day of the fall of that empire came.

2. The stone *cut out without hands* represented the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which should be set up in the world in the time of the Roman empire, and upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom in the *kingdoms of the world*. This is *the stone cut out of the mountain without hands*, for it should be neither raised nor supported by human power or policy; no visible hand should act in the setting of it up, but it should be done invisibly the *Spirit of the Lord of hosts*. This was *the stone which the builders refused*, because it was not cut out by their hands, but it has now become the *head-stone of the corner*.

(1.) The gospel-church is a kingdom, which Christ is the sole and sovereign monarch of, in which he rules by his word and Spirit, to which he gives protection and law, and from which he receives homage and tribute. It is a kingdom *not of this world*, and yet set up in it; it is the kingdom of God among men.

(2.) The *God of heaven* was to set up this kingdom, to give authority to Christ to execute judgment, to set him as *King upon his holy hill of Zion*, and to bring into obedience to him a willing people. Being set up by the God of heaven, it is often in the *New Testament* called the *kingdom of heaven*, for its original is from above and its tendency is upwards.

(3.) It was to be set up *in the days of these kings*, the kings of the fourth monarchy, of which particular notice is taken (~~and~~ Luke 2:1), That Christ was born when, by the decree of the emperor of Rome, *all the world was taxed*, which was a plain indication that that empire had become as universal as any earthly empire ever was. When these kings are contesting with each other, and in all the struggles each of the contending parties hopes to find its own account, God will do his own work and fulfil his own counsels. *These kings* are all enemies to Christ's kingdom, and yet it shall be set up in defiance of them.

(4.) It is a kingdom that knows no decay, is in no danger of destruction, and will not admit any succession or revolution. It shall *never be destroyed* by any foreign force invading it, as many other kingdoms are; fire and sword cannot waste it; the combined powers of earth and hell cannot deprive either the subjects of their prince or the prince of his subjects; nor

shall this *kingdom be left to other people*, as the kingdoms of the earth are. As Christ is a monarch that has no successor (for he himself shall reign for ever), so his kingdom is a monarchy that has no revolution. The kingdom of God was indeed taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles (⁴²⁴⁸Matthew 21:43), but still it was Christianity that ruled, the kingdom of the Messiah. The Christian church is still the same; it is fixed on a rock, much fought against, but never to be prevailed against, by the gates of hell.

(5.) It is a kingdom that shall be victorious over all opposition. It shall *break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms*, as the *stone cut out of the mountain without hands* broke in pieces the image, v. 44, 45. The kingdom of Christ shall *wear out* all other kingdoms, shall outlive them, and flourish when they are sunk with their own weight, and so wasted that their place *knows them no more*. All the kingdoms that appear against the kingdom of Christ shall be broken with a *rod of iron*, as a *potter's vessel*, ⁴¹⁸⁹Psalms 2:9. And in the kingdoms that submit to the kingdom of Christ tyranny, and idolatry, and every thing that is their reproach, shall, as far as the gospel of Christ gets ground, be broken. The day is coming when Jesus Christ shall have *put down all rule, principality, and power*, and have made *all his enemies his footstool*; and then this prophecy will have its full accomplishment, and not till then, ⁴⁴⁵²1 Corinthians 15:24, 25. Our savior seems to refer to this (⁴²⁴⁴Matthew 21:44), when, speaking of himself as the stone set at nought by the Jewish builders, he says, *On whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind him to powder*.

(6.) It shall be an everlasting kingdom. Those kingdoms of the earth that had *broken in pieces* all about them at length came, in their turn, to be in like manner broken; but the kingdom of Christ shall break other kingdoms in pieces and shall itself *stand for ever*. His throne shall be as the days of heaven, his seed, his subjects, as the stars of heaven, not only so innumerable, but so immutable. Of the *increase* of Christ's *government and peace* there shall be *no end*. *The Lord shall reign for ever*, not only to the end of time, but when time and days shall be no more, and God *shall be all in all* to eternity.

III. Daniel having thus interpreted the dream, to the satisfaction of Nebuchadnezzar, who gave him no interruption, so full was the interpretation that he had no question to ask, and so plain that he had no objection to make, he closes all with a solemn assertion,

1. Of the divine original of this dream: *The great God* (so he calls him, to express his own high thoughts of him, and to beget the like in the mind of this great king) has *made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter*, which the gods of the magicians could not do. And thus a full confirmation was given to that great argument which Isaiah had long before urged against idolaters, and particularly the idolaters of Babylon, when he challenged the gods they worshipped to *show things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods* (²³⁴²³ Isaiah 41:23), and by *this* proved the God of Israel to be the true God, that he *declares the end from the beginning*, ²³⁴¹⁰ Isaiah 46:10.

2. Of the undoubted certainty of the things foretold by this dream. He who makes known these things is the same that has himself designed and determined them, and will by his providence effect them; and we are sure that *his counsel shall stand*, and cannot be altered, and therefore *the dream is certain and the interpretation thereof sure*. Note, Whatever God has made known we may depend upon.

²⁷⁰¹⁶ DANIEL 2:46-49

NEBUCHADNEZZAR HONOURS DANIEL

One might have expected that when Nebuchadnezzar was contriving to make his own kingdom everlasting he would be enraged at Daniel, who foretold the fall of it and that another kingdom of another nature should be the everlasting kingdom; but, instead of resenting it as an affront, he received it as an oracle, and here we are told what the expressions were of the impressions it made upon him.

1. He was ready to look upon Daniel as a little god. Though he saw him to be a man, yet from this wonderful discovery which he had made both of his secret thoughts, in telling him the dream, and of things to come, in telling him the interpretation of it, he concluded that he had certainly a divinity lodged in him, worthy his adoration; and therefore he *fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel*, v. 46. It was the custom of the country by prostration to give honour to kings, because they have something of a divine power in them (*I have said, You are gods*); and therefore this king, who had often received such veneration from others, now paid the like to Daniel, whom he supposed to have in him a divine knowledge, which he

was so struck with an admiration of that he could not contain himself, but forgot both that Daniel was a man and that himself was a king. Thus did God magnify divine revelation *and make it honourable*, extorting from a proud potentate such a veneration but for one glimpse of it. He *worshipped Daniel*, and *commanded that they should offer an oblation to him*, and burn incense. Herein he cannot be justified, but may in some measure be excused, when Cornelius was thus ready to worship Peter, and John the angel, who both knew better. But, though it is not here mentioned, yet we have reason to think that Daniel refused these honours that he paid him, and said, as Peter to Cornelius, *Stand up, I myself also am a man*, or, as the angel to St. John, *See thou do it not*; for it is not said that the oblation was offered unto him, though the king commanded it, or rather *said it*, for so the word is. He said, in his haste, *Let an oblation be offered to him*. And that Daniel did say something to him which turned his eyes and thoughts another way is intimated in what follows (v. 47), *The king answered Daniel*. Note, It is possible for those to express a great honour for the ministers of God's word who yet have no true love for the word. *Herod feared John*, and *heard him gladly*, and yet went on in his sins, ^{<46>}Mark 6:20.

2. He readily acknowledged the God of Daniel to be the great God, the true God, the only living and true God. If Daniel will not suffer himself to be worshipped, he will (as Daniel, it is likely, directed him) *worship God*, by confessing (v. 47), *Of a truth your God is a God of gods*, such a God as there is no other, above all gods in dignity, over all gods in dominion. He is a *Lord of kings*, from whom they derive their power and to whom they are accountable; and he is both a discoverer and a *revealer of secrets*; what is most secret he sees and can reveal, and what he has revealed is what was secret and which none but himself could reveal, ^{<40>}1 Corinthians 2:10.

3. He preferred Daniel, made him a great man, v. 48. God made him a great man indeed when he took him into communion with himself, a greater man than Nebuchadnezzar could make him; but, because God had magnified him, therefore the king magnified him. Does wealth make men great? The king *gave him many great gifts*; and he had no reason to refuse them, when they all put him into so much the greater capacity of doing good to his brethren in captivity. These gifts were grateful returns for the good services he had done, and not aimed at, nor bargained for, by him, as the rewards of divination were by Balaam. Does power make a man great?

He made him *ruler over the whole province of Babylon*, which no doubt had great influence upon the other provinces; he made him likewise chancellor of the university, *chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon*, to instruct those whom he had thus outdone; and, since they could not do what the king would have them do, they shall be obliged to do what Daniel would have them do. Thus it is fit that the *fool should be servant to the wise in heart*. Seeing Daniel *could reveal this secret* (v. 47), the king thus advanced him. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to advance and employ those who receive divine revelation, and are much conversant with it, who, as Daniel here, show themselves to be well acquainted with the kingdom of heaven. Joseph, like Daniel here, was advanced in the court of the king of Egypt for his interpreting his dreams; and he called him *Zaphnath-paaneah* — *a revealer of secrets*, as the king of Babylon here calls Daniel; so that the preambles to their patents of honour are the same — for, and in consideration of, their good services done to the crown in *revealing secrets*.

4. He preferred his companions for his sake, and upon his special instance and request, v. 49. Daniel himself *sat in the gate of the king*, as president of the council, chief-justice, or prime-minister of state, or perhaps chamberlain of the household; but he used his interest for his friends as became a good man, and procured places in the government for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Those that helped him with their prayers shall share with him in his honours, such a grateful sense had he even of that service. The preferring of them would be a great stay and help to Daniel in his place and business. And these pious Jews, being thus preferred in Babylon, had great opportunity of serving their brethren in captivity, and of doing them many good offices, which no doubt they were ready to do. Thus, sometimes, before God brings his people into trouble, he prepares it, that it may be easy to them.