

Dr. Wendy L. Widder, Daniel, Session 5, Daniel 2

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This is Dr. Wendy Widder in her teaching on the book of Daniel. This is session 5, Daniel 2.

We're ready for Daniel chapter two. Daniel chapter two is our first Aramaic chapter. So, if you remember, we have this chiastic structure in these Aramaic chapters. So, chapters two and seven are both going to be dreams or visions that involve four earthly kingdoms and God's fifth eternal kingdom.

And then these other chapters we'll talk about when we get to them. So, in terms of structure, we're at the outside of this chiasm. We're getting this cosmic scope, this cosmic look at God's reign.

This chapter is really about God's superior knowledge and his eternal kingdom. So he is going to show himself to be the true source of knowledge over against all those Babylonian wisdom that there is. God is going to be the one who has true knowledge.

He's the source of knowledge and his eternal kingdom is the one that will last forever. So, the themes in this book, three themes that come through pretty clearly as we go through it. Again, the sovereignty of God, which we picked up in chapter one, is with God giving his king and his vessels into Nebuchadnezzar's hand.

Another theme that we'll see emerge in this chapter is the pride of human kings and human rulers, their arrogance that characterizes what they do. And then a third theme that we'll see in this chapter is the challenge of this tension. God is sovereign.

I'm living under a human king, a proud human king, the tension that that creates for God's faithful people. So, we'll see those three themes in this book, and then we'll actually continue to see them throughout the rest of the book. This chapter is classified as a court tale.

It's one of those tales or stories that looks at a foreign captive serving in a royal court and really outshining the regular staff there. So, Daniel is going to be standing before the king to interpret a dream that the king's experts couldn't interpret and he's going to do it far better than they could have. But really, the point of the story is, what is Daniel's God like? It's not about how great Daniel is; it's about his God.

This is a longer chapter. I'm going to read it section by section as we go so we can keep track of where we are. We will start with verses 1 through 11, and this section really highlights Nebuchadnezzar's inferior knowledge.

So, his inferior knowledge and the inferior knowledge of his experts. In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams. His spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him.

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. And the king said to them, I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream.

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,^a "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."

Alright, so that's the first section. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that happens in his second year. This is early in the king's reign. So it's possible that he's still trying to establish loyalties.

You can tell he doesn't trust the wise men. The text doesn't really tell us why, but he wants them to tell him, not just the interpretation. He's not going to tell him the dream.

Tell me the dream and the interpretation, and then I'll know that I can trust you. So it might be that as a young king, he's testing loyalties. The text doesn't tell us exactly the significance of it being in his second year, but that's one possibility.

This is in the king's second year. If you're keeping track of dates and timing of things, you might realize that that creates a chronological difficulty between the events in his second year and chapter one. So, in chapter one he brings these captives to Babylon for three years of training.

After those three years of training, then they can stand before the king. So, the question here is, how is Daniel among one of the wise men in Nebuchadnezzar's second year when he needs to go through three years of training? After he trains for three years, he stands before the king. But we're only in Nebuchadnezzar's second year.

See the problem? It's a little difficult. There are a couple of ways we can resolve this. I'll just take you through how we can resolve this.

And it has to do, again, with how we're going to calculate years, how we're going to calculate Daniel's apprenticeship with the king's reign. So, we have the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. And we have, according to the Babylonian system, the year of his accession.

And we have year one. And we have year two. Okay? Daniel's training.

Well, this would be the first year. And this is 605 BC, according to Daniel 1:1. This is the second year of training. This is the third year of training.

So, Daniel could have been in his third year of training during Nebuchadnezzar's second year, according to the Babylonian system of dating years. That's a possibility. Another possibility is that the story's really wanting to highlight that even a trainee, a foreign trainee, is going to outshine the best of Babylon.

That's a possibility, too. Nebuchadnezzar has this dream. His spirit is troubled.

And his sleep leaves him. This is not something that... If you have a bad dream, you might wake up and go, oh, I shouldn't have had that midnight snack. You don't probably wake up and go, oh my word, what does that mean for my future? But in the ancient Near East, dreams were significant sources of information and insight about the future.

According to the Babylonian religion and Mesopotamian religion, the gods communicated through dreams--often, but not always.

But often, they would communicate through dreams. And especially if you're a king, the god is going to communicate with you typically, or very often through dreams. It's common.

So, if you're the king in charge of a kingdom and you have a troubling dream, you really need to know what it means. It could be very important for your future as a king, for your empire. You've got to find a way to know what it means.

In ancient Near Eastern religion, dreams are part of a larger category of divination. So, in divination, the Mesopotamians believed that the gods had a plan for the world. They had a plan for people.

They had a plan for the king. And they encoded those plans in messages in the natural world. So, whether that meant stars, reading the stars, or patterns of the stars.

Whether that meant dreams, or whether that meant something that sounds really bizarre to us, like reading animal entrails, reading a liver, or reading oil in a glass of wine, you drink oil. That means nothing to us.

But in this religion, this religious system, those could have been messages from the gods. And it was very important that you had an expert who was trained to know what it meant. You say, how could you be an expert trained to know what it meant? Well, strangely enough, this was a kind of science for them.

So, if we think of science, science is based on human observation. And so they have lots of ancient records of what signs mean. What it meant if an animal's liver was shaped a certain way or had an extra lobe there.

If they saw that unique thing, and then an event happened, they wrote that down. Well, then they see that same kind of liver again, and oh, look, it happened again. Oh, we've got evidence here.

We're collecting data. And so, over a long period of time, all this information is saved in textbooks, for lack of a better word, that the experts were trained in. They would study these so they would know what would happen if your animal had a liver with an extra lobe on it.

Oh, no, that's not good. Or if your calf was born malformed, oh, what kind of deformity is it? Oh, well, that's a good one. That's a bad one.

This is science. Weird to us, but it was science. And so there were experts trained in how to do this.

Dreams were part of this, but dreams were a little bit different because dreams could actually be the result of a bad midnight snack. It's a little more subjective, and it also can't be observed by anybody. So, if you have a malformed liver, or you have animal entrails, you can have a couple of people look at it and go, oh, yeah, uh-huh, we all see it.

That's what it means. If you have a dream, nobody else knows what it is. We're just, OK, you tell us what it was.

Was it pizza, or was it? OK, this is a significant message. So, they're a little bit tricky. So often, dreams require another source of confirmation.

So there had to be some other kind of divination, some other kind of message. For this lecture, we are in Daniel 7. And I've titled Daniel 7, God's Superior King and His Eternal Kingdom. In terms of where we are in the book of Daniel, we have reached the end, the last chapter, in our Aramaic chiastic structure.

So, you remember, we started with Chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of this statue. Chapter 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced the fiery furnace. Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of a magnificent tree, and he's ultimately judged for his pride.

Chapter 5, Belshazzar sees the handwriting on the wall, and the message to him is that he's going to be judged by God, which he is immediately. His kingdom goes to Darius, who shows up in Chapter 6, where Daniel faces the lions on account of his faithfulness to God. Chapter 7, Daniel has a vision in which he sees beasts rising out of this tumultuous, chaotic sea.

And then he has a vision of this eternal kingdom that God has. So, in terms of our structure, chapter 2 and chapter 4 are similar. They both are talking about four human kingdoms, four earthly kingdoms, and then the fifth eternal kingdom of God, which will surpass them all, even destroy them all, and then endure forever.

In the chronology of this chapter, we're backing up. According to our timeline, we started in the third year of Jehoiakim, which was early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Then, we were in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar.

He built a statue in Chapter 3. We don't know when. Chapter 4 is near the end of Nebuchadnezzar's career. Chapter 5 takes us to Belshazzar in the fall of Babylon in 539.

Chapter 6 is 539-ish, as Darius the Mede is king, probably early in his career. Chapter 7, we're going back. We're now in the first year of Belshazzar.

Chapter 7 is really pivotal, actually almost literally pivotal, in the book of Daniel. So, you're familiar with this chiasmic structure and how Daniel 7 is part of it. So, it is Aramaic, and it is tied to Chapter 2 thematically, sort of holds this whole thing together.

But Daniel 7 is also a change in genre. So, we shift here from the narrative, from the stories that we've been looking at for six chapters, and now, starting with chapter 7, we're going to be looking at apocalyptic visions. So, Daniel 7 holds the first part of the book together, but it's really linked to the second part in its genre.

And it actually casts a vision that the other visions will fill out and fill in some details. So, it's actually also what I consider to be the heart and the hinge of the book. So, in Daniel 7, we will see this cosmic view of God's kingdom.

And in the middle of this view that we get, we have this astounding view of the throne room. Along with seeing this throne room, we see one like the Son of Man receive the kingdom, and the saints will rule forever over this eternal kingdom. It's this glorious picture, this encouragement for people who had been oppressed, that there was a reward ahead, that this glorious inheritance was going to be theirs.

Once we get out of chapter 7, the encouragement is much more scant. It's not nearly as glorious as chapter 7. Chapter 7 is fabulous in terms of the vision of encouragement that it casts. And if you take that encouragement, it can get you through the rest of the book.

You keep that long vision of this eternal reward, this inheritance of the saints, this glorious kingdom of God. So chapter 7 is pretty spectacular and pretty important in the book. It's actually the chapter that keeps people from neatly dividing the book.

You could try to divide it by genre, but chapter 7 connects you to language. If you try to divide it by language, chapter 7 is going to connect you back to the apocalyptic. So, you cannot take the book apart.

Chapter 7 holds it together. And I think that's appropriate given the vision that it portrays and the hope and encouragement that it casts. So, let's talk a little bit about the kind of literature that it is.

Chapter 7 is apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic literature is actually part of a larger group or a larger kind of literature called visionary literature. In visionary literature, you have a kind of writing in which the author or the writer sees things and pictures things at the time of the writing that exist in their imagination or what they're seeing but are not yet an empirical reality.

That definition largely comes from Leland Ryken. He's got a great book on how to read the Bible as literature and get more out of it. So, a lot of my thoughts here about this visionary literature and how to approach it come from his resource.

So, the visions themselves might depict things that will literally happen, but they do it symbolically. So even though they're portraying things that might actually happen, you have to sort through the symbolism to figure out what those things are. So, they might depict literal events, but the symbolic descriptions don't necessarily represent those events literally.

So, under this umbrella of visionary literature, if you want to think of it that way, we have prophetic literature, or just prophecy I'll say, and we have apocalyptic. They share things in common, but they're not the same. They're not simply interchangeable.

We'll come back to some of these differences in a second. Visionary literature offers several different kinds of messages depending on the particular purpose of the author. It often gives encouragement to oppressed people, or it might warn an oppressor that punishment is coming.

So, it can either be speaking to the oppressed, it might be warning the oppressor, and in the middle of all that, it calls to faith those who might be wavering between God's truth and human wisdom. When we talk about apocalyptic literature, it is easy for me to say that there are some common characteristics that help us identify it when we see it. These things that I'm going to talk about don't have to all be present in any one piece of literature.

What scholars tend to look for is a cluster of symbols, a cluster of characteristics, so several of these traits are evident in a piece of literature. So, first thing, easiest one, is a lot of symbolism. It's probably the hardest thing about apocalyptic literature is trying to deal with the symbolism.

Also, very common in this kind of literature are visions and otherworldly journeys. So, your seer, your person who's seeing the vision, might be on a journey in some other world, and they'll often have a supernatural or an angelic interpreter helping them understand the things that they're seeing. Often, the visionary, the seer, is a famous, respected person from a distant past, like Abraham or Enoch or one of the patriarchs, and that name will be taken by the person seen, and they will use that as the name under which they write.

So, it's pseudonymous. Did I say that right? I think so. It's an anonymous author.

They take a different name, a fake name, so to speak, and apply it to the vision that they're seeing. The reason they do that is because they might be a nobody, but

they're drawing on this name that people respect and a tradition that's respected with that name to communicate the vision that they've had. The accounts will often involve persecution of the righteous, cosmic destruction, final judgment, the destruction of the world, and then often a recreation.

How can we tell the difference between these two kinds of literature? There are several things that are characteristic of one and not the other. So, in prophecy, something we very often see is the statement thus saith the Lord, or thus says the Lord, and then the prophet says what the Lord has told him to say. You don't really see that so much in apocalyptic literature.

What you see or hear is a revelation that's given through visions. So, you just get the vision. You don't have it prefaced by thus, says the Lord.

It's a vision report. In prophecy, they will often be associated with real time, with real people in their real time. So, Isaiah was prophesying to people when Isaiah, the real person, lived.

In apocalyptic literature, as I just said, sometimes they will draw on names of respected people from the past. So, it's not a real person in their present time. That's common in apocalyptic literature.

In prophecy, prophets are generally speaking to their own immediate situation. They're speaking to things that their people are encountering at that time. They're speaking God's encouragement for the future.

There could also be future fulfillment to what they're saying, but they're addressing an issue that their people are facing at that time. With apocalyptic literature, you sometimes will have this after-the-fact prophecy, where the ex-eventu prophecy. So, the prophet, this name from the past, is telling history as if it's a prophecy.

It's things the audience probably already knows, and then it projects a bit into the future with the intention of encouraging people by seeing God's hand in the past. With that encouragement, they can hope and rest on the fact that he will continue to work in the future. Symbolism again is very extensive in apocalyptic.

Prophecy does use symbolism, but not nearly to the same extent. Another fairly significant difference is that in prophecy, there is the awareness that the world does not meet God's ideal at this point. It's flawed.

It's broken. It's sinful, but he's ultimately going to transform it. He's going to make things new.

He's going to fix it. For apocalyptic literature, things are so bad that only wiping the slate clean and totally starting over. Cosmic catastrophe that's the only way to fix it.

The last thing about apocalyptic literature and prophecy that I want to highlight is one of the primary... This is the God with power. This is the God with wisdom. I'm going to skip past a few things here.

Then, we get to the longest section of the chapter. This is verses 24 through 45. This is where Daniel actually reveals the king's dream and the interpretation.

It showcases God's superior knowledge and the meaning of the dream. I think I'm going to break this one up. I'm not going to read it all at once.

This section is the climax of the chapter. It resolves the conflicts. The conflict about Daniel and his friends being killed is taken care of because Daniel has the answer for the king.

The death sentence is done. It also resolves the king's problem of not knowing what his dream meant. It's the climax and the resolution.

Therefore, Daniel went into Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and spoke to him as follows: Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king's presence.

I will declare the interpretation to the king. Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king. Well, now, wait a minute.

Did Arioch find him? It seems to me Daniel volunteered. I don't know. Maybe he means to take credit. Maybe he's trying to look good. Or maybe he's just really relieved that he can stop slaughtering wise men. I'm not sure.

This sets up the contrast between Daniel and the other experts. So, Daniel, according to Arioch, is among the exiles from Judah. From chapter one, we should remember, oh, those exiles from Judah; they're superior in all these ways.

They're the ones that God gave into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. This Daniel has a different God than all the Babylonian experts. In verse 26, the king 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 answered before the king and said, as for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians, nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.

However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions of them in your mind on your bed. Alright, so first of all Daniel acknowledges, those wise men were right.

You asked something that was not possible. But lucky for you, king, there's a God in heaven who does reveal mysteries. This God revealed the mystery to Nebuchadnezzar through this dream, and then he also revealed the mystery of the dream and its meaning to Daniel.

This God is superior to all of the magicians and all the gods of Babylon. Daniel said that these events were going to take place in the latter days or the days to come. That's a vague reference in the Old Testament.

It doesn't necessarily mean the end of the world, but rather something that's going to happen someday down the line at a future point. Verse 29: as for you, O king, while on your bed, your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future, and he who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place. As for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

Daniel is in no hurry here. So, remember he's just stopped an execution. Ariok has hustled in before Nebuchadnezzar.

What you might expect Daniel to say is, I've got the answer. Let me tell you. Instead, we are several verses in, and he's still talking about the dreams that you had on your bed. You got it from God, and he's the one who reveals mysteries.

Clearly, what's most important to Daniel here is not the actual dream, but the fact that God is the one who reveals mysteries. God is the one who has superior knowledge and wisdom to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel says he's not any smarter than anybody else.

Only God knows, and he's chosen to reveal it. All right, finally, we get to the dream. Verse 31: You, O king, were looking, and behold, there was a single great statue.

That statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.

Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors, and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. So, the king saw this huge statue that was magnificent because it was so brilliant and huge.

It's made of four different metals. It's got a gold head, silver torso and arms, bronze belly and thighs, iron legs, and then iron clay feet. Then, this rock comes and smashes the statue, smashes the feet, and the whole statue is pulverized with that.

It falls to pieces as one. Then, this extraordinary rock becomes a mountain that fills the whole earth. So, in ancient Near Eastern literature, this idea of gold, silver, bronze, iron, clay, and even the statue and this vision that's going to turn out to mean kings and kingdoms, is a familiar scheme.

It's not just in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. What we don't know, we'll talk about that more in a minute. What we don't have anywhere else in ancient Near Eastern stories is this stone. There's nothing else like this supernatural stone that strikes the statue and fills the earth.

We hear about it elsewhere in the Bible, though. Isaiah talks about the mountain of the house of the Lord established as the highest of the mountains. He talks about filling the earth with the glory of the Lord, filling the earth with the knowledge of the Lord, and throughout Psalms we have rocks representing God.

So, that might be part of why the stone is part of the imagery here. At the very least, we have this really ominous ending to the dream. This rock has smashed this magnificent statue to smithereens and it fills the whole earth.

Now we're in suspense. Then Daniel goes on, verse 36, that was the dream. Now, we will tell its interpretation before the king.

You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory. And wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, he has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them. You are the head of gold.

After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron, and as much as iron crushes and shatters all things, so like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. In that, you saw the feet and the toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron.

It will be a divided kingdom, but it will have the toughness of iron in it, as much as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, some of the kingdom would be strong, and part of it would be brittle. In that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seat of men, but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.

In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. That kingdom will not be left to other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will endure forever.

In as much as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future. So, the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy. So that's the king's dream and the king's interpretation.

We have this rise and fall of successive empires, successive kings, and there's a whole lot of attention that's been given to identifying these kingdoms. We've got four kingdoms in the dream, but honestly, exactly identifying them isn't essential to understanding the dream, the message of the dream. The message is loud and clear.

God is sovereign. His eternal kingdom supersedes, will destroy, and will outlast all of these other kingdoms. And this dream is illustrating the themes that came out in Daniel's doxology.

God raises kings up, and he takes them down. He is the one who gives power and strength. What we are told is that Nebuchadnezzar is the head of gold.

You, O king, are the head of gold. Then there's a second kingdom that's inferior. Then there's a third kingdom that's distinct because it's worldwide rule.

And then we've got this fourth kingdom that is powerful and crushing, so it's ruthless and destructive. And yet it has this divided, this combination of strength and weakness. So, who are these kingdoms? We'll come back to this a lot more when we get to chapter seven, but I do want to spend just a couple of minutes talking you through some of them, sketching out how these views of the kingdoms go.

So, I'll just say that there's no consensus about the identity of the kingdoms after Babylon. So, Daniel said the first one's Babylon. We're all good with that one. Then, after that, there are two primary views, and they are based on who they identify as the fourth kingdom.

So, we've got Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In the dream, he sees a gold head. He sees a silver torso.

He sees a bronze belly, iron legs, clay iron feet, and a rock. So those are the different components.

What Daniel says about this dream, so Daniel's interpretation of it is, oh so simple. I love Daniel's interpretation because it's so simple. The interpretation.

Alright, the head of gold, Nebuchadnezzar, you are it. The silver chest is a second kingdom, an inferior kingdom that arises after Nebuchadnezzar. The third one is a third kingdom that rules the whole earth.

The fourth one is a fourth kingdom. It crushes and breaks all the others. It's divided, the feet and the toes partly strong, partly brittle, etc.

The rock is God's kingdom, which Daniel says will endure forever and destroy all human kingdoms. So that part you can believe fully. Then we have two main views and one smaller view that you will see in a few places.

Okay, so the first view is the Roman view. This is really the traditional view, and in fact, it's kind of enshrined in some versions of the Bible.

If you have a Bible that gives you subheadings along the way, they may actually identify what the kingdoms are as Daniel interprets them. Give them names that Daniel doesn't give them. So, for what that's worth, those are not inspired.

Alright, so in the Roman view, remember, these are named for their identification of the fourth kingdom. So, we can fill that one in right away. They say the fourth kingdom is Rome.

We'll come back to that. The first kingdom is Babylon. The second kingdom is Medo-Persia. The third kingdom is Greece. Rome and the iron clay feet are usually explained as being some kind of revived Roman Empire or an extension of the old Roman Empire. And then, of course, the rock is God's kingdom, which is established both at the first and second comings of Christ.

That's the traditional view. Then we have the Greek view. Oops, well, I'll put it up here.

The Greek view, again, for its identification of the fourth kingdom is Greece. The gold head is Nebuchadnezzar and or the whole kingdom of Babylon. There are a couple of variations on this view.

So, Daniel simply said that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. He didn't say all of Babylon. So, you could tease that out a little bit.

It could just be Nebuchadnezzar. It could be Babylon. The silver is Media.

The bronze is Persia. And the fourth kingdom is Greece, which begins with Alexander the Great. And it ends in this sordid history of intermarriage between Alexander's successors.

So, the Seleucids, the Ptolemies, which we'll get to later. So that's the fourth kingdom. And, of course, this is God's kingdom.

Then there's one other view that Goldingay holds, and a couple of other commentators that I don't have with me have a four kings view. That's supposed to be Greece. That's the Greek view.

Four kings. So this is kind of based on the fact that Daniel says to Nebuchadnezzar, you are the head of gold. So, Nebuchadnezzar is obviously the first one.

Well, then the rest of them—maybe they're also kings. The suggestion is that they are the four kings named in the Book of Daniel. So, Nebuchadnezzar would be the gold.

Belshazzar would be the silver. And remember, he's definitely portrayed as inferior to Nebuchadnezzar. The third one would be Darius.

But nobody really knows who he is exactly. So, it's hard to say how he ruled the whole earth. Cyrus is the fourth king named Cyrus.

And this, of course, is God's kingdom. Now, these views, whatever view people have of the empires in chapter 2, is typically the view they will carry of the empires in chapter 7, with the exception of this one. This one only applies to chapter 2. Specifically, these four kings.

When we get to 7, we can talk about that more. So, this is a very simple rendering of a very complex issue that we will spend a fair bit more time looking at later. I want to say that similar to some of the things we talked about with the late date and early date, where sometimes those views are considered litmus tests for orthodoxy, the same kind of applies here, too.

So, traditionally speaking, this Greek view has been that of critical scholars, people who hold the late date for Daniel, while this has been the view that most conservative scholars have held. And so, there's a tendency to, if you hold this view,

to say, oh, you can't hold this view. You must have a late date, a bad view of Daniel, you don't believe the Bible's true, whatever.

That happens. I've read the literature, and it's out there. But that's really not fair.

When we come to this puzzle in chapter 2, we really have to look at chapter 7 and chapter 8, because those three chapters all use this imagery in different ways. And if you're going to look at Daniel as a piece of literature, I think you have to respect the fact that maybe there's something literary going on with these three different chapters. Again, that's more than I can give you in just chapter 2. You have to stick around for chapter 7 or chapter 8. My personal view, putting my cards on the table, is this one because I think it makes the best sense of the text.

Historical issues aside, I think this one makes the best sense of the text when we keep going to the book of Daniel. Again, I will explain that more later, but that's probably quite enough for this right now. Let's finish up this chapter, verses 46 through 49.

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. **47** The king answered and said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."

48 Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. **49** Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king's court.

These last three verses, Nebuchadnezzar responds to the superior knowledge of Daniel's God, brings the chapter's events to a close, and then he fell on his face and did homage to Daniel.

This is really actually an act of worship that he's doing. What's probably happening is he recognizes Daniel as a representative of his God. So by falling down to Daniel, he's honoring Daniel's God.

That's probably what's going on. Some people have asked why Daniel doesn't refuse that. He shouldn't let the king worship him. Well, for the author of Daniel, maybe what's more important is to show this powerful Gentile king bowing before the servant of a defeated God.

That might be what the narrator is a little more interested in. Why isn't the king? Why does the king give no reaction to this interpretation? Why isn't he bothered by

it? Well, I don't know, would you be bothered by it? You're the head of gold. By the time all this stuff happens, you're long gone from the scene.

So, there's really no reason that I can think of why Nebuchadnezzar would be bothered by this dream. He comes out looking pretty good. There's another character in the Old Testament who sort of has a similar reaction.

In 2 Kings, Hezekiah, Isaiah prophesies to Hezekiah that Jerusalem's going to be destroyed at some point, but Hezekiah's not on my watch, I'm good, which maybe isn't quite the right reaction for God's chosen king. Nonetheless, Nebuchadnezzar has it made in this dream. Some people have wondered about Nebuchadnezzar's response to God.

Is this some kind of conversion? He's acknowledging who God is. No, it's not, at least not at this point. Nebuchadnezzar is polytheistic.

He has all kinds of gods. And what he's doing here is acknowledging that Daniel's God is the God with the most wisdom and knowledge. Daniel's God is superior in those categories, at least.

So, he's added another God to his pantheon, perhaps. He's acknowledging that he's the subject of a king who's greater than he is. Or at least he's acknowledging, at least at this point, that his kingship has been given to him by someone greater.

That brings us to the end of chapter 2, where we are headed into the fiery furnace in chapter 3.

This is Dr. Wendy Widder in her teaching on the book of Daniel. This is session 5, Daniel 2.