

Dr. Wendy Widder, Daniel, Session 5, Daniel 2 – God’s Superior Knowledge and His Eternal Kingdom Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Widder, Daniel, Session 5, Daniel 2, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Wendy Widder's lecture on Daniel 2 explores Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's interpretation. The chapter reveals God's superior knowledge and eternal kingdom compared to earthly powers. **Widder highlights themes of God's sovereignty, human pride, and the tension between divine and earthly rule.** She examines the dream's structure, the identities of the kingdoms represented by the statue, and the significance of the stone. **The lecture also analyzes apocalyptic literature, contrasting it with prophecy, and underscores Daniel 7's pivotal role in connecting the book's narratives and visions.** Finally, the lecture concludes with an analysis of Nebuchadnezzar's response and an overview of the chapter's key messages.

**2. 34 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Widder, Daniel, Session 5 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →
Major Prophets → Daniel).**



**Widder_Daniel_Ses
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3. Briefing Document: Widder, Daniel, Session 5, Daniel 2

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Wendy Widder's lecture on Daniel chapter 2 and chapter 7:

Briefing Document: Dr. Wendy Widder on Daniel Chapters 2 & 7

Overall Theme: The overarching theme of these chapters is God's sovereignty, superior knowledge, and the establishment of His eternal kingdom in contrast to the pride and fleeting power of human rulers and empires.

I. Daniel Chapter 2: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and God's Superior Knowledge

- **Context:** Daniel 2 is the first Aramaic chapter in Daniel, and it is part of a chiasmic structure where it parallels with chapter 7. It's a court tale where Daniel, a foreign captive, demonstrates superior wisdom compared to the Babylonian wise men.
- **Key Themes: God's Sovereignty:** God is the ultimate authority, granting power to human rulers and ultimately establishing His own eternal kingdom. This is established early in the narrative: "The sovereignty of God... is with God giving his king and his vessels into Nebuchadnezzar's hand."
- **Pride of Human Rulers:** The arrogance and fallibility of human kings, particularly Nebuchadnezzar, is highlighted. This is clear when Nebuchadnezzar demands that the wise men tell him both the dream and its interpretation.
- **Tension for God's People:** The tension between living under a powerful, prideful human king and remaining faithful to God is a key aspect.
- **God's Superior Knowledge:** This is the central conflict in this chapter. God is presented as the true source of knowledge, capable of revealing mysteries that are impossible for human wisdom to grasp. "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."
- **Nebuchadnezzar's Dilemma:** Nebuchadnezzar has a troubling dream that he cannot remember, and demands that his wise men both reveal the dream and its interpretation.
- The wise men admit they cannot meet his demand, highlighting the limitations of human wisdom and the "difficulty" of what he asked. "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."

- Nebuchadnezzar's demand reveals his lack of trust and a potential power struggle.
- **Daniel's Intervention:** Daniel, a Jewish exile, steps forward, not to display his own knowledge, but to acknowledge and point to the "God in heaven who reveals mysteries." "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."
- Daniel insists that the knowledge was not revealed to him due to any superior wisdom of his own, but rather to reveal the meaning to the king.
- **The Dream:** The king dreams of a large, impressive statue made of different metals: gold (head), silver (breast and arms), bronze (belly and thighs), iron (legs), and iron mixed with clay (feet).
- The statue is destroyed by a stone "cut out without hands" that grows into a mountain that fills the whole earth.
- **Daniel's Interpretation:** The statue represents successive kingdoms, with Nebuchadnezzar himself being the head of gold.
- There would be a succession of four earthly kingdoms, each with varying degrees of power and weakness. "You, O king, 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..."
- The stone represents God's eternal kingdom that will ultimately destroy all human kingdoms and establish everlasting rule. "In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed."
- The interpretation emphasizes the rise and fall of earthly powers and the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom.
- **Nebuchadnezzar's Reaction:** Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges Daniel's God as "God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries." He pays homage to Daniel as a representative of his God, not as an act of converting to worship him as a god.

- He elevates Daniel to a position of high authority, and also appoints his companions to positions of power. "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."
- **Interpretational Debate:** There are various interpretations of the four kingdoms represented by the statue. Dr. Widder highlights two main views: the "Roman view" (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome) and the "Greek view" (Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece). A less common third view, not as thoroughly explained, suggests that each represents a specific king listed in Daniel's narratives. Dr. Widder leans toward the "Greek view", noting it makes the most sense when cross referenced with other chapters of Daniel.
- She emphasizes that the precise identity of the kingdoms isn't the most important aspect; the central message is God's ultimate sovereignty and the establishment of His eternal kingdom.
- Dr. Widder notes that these are not inspired interpretations and it's a common mistake that some bibles will include the assumed names of the kingdoms in subheadings.

II. Daniel Chapter 7: Daniel's Vision and the Eternal Kingdom

- **Context:** Daniel 7 is the last chapter in the Aramaic section and acts as a counterpart to Chapter 2, a kind of hinge for the book. It is also a shift in genre from narrative to apocalyptic vision.
- **Key Themes:**
Cosmic View of God's Kingdom: Chapter 7 presents a panoramic vision of God's eternal reign in contrast to the chaotic rule of earthly kingdoms.
- **Encouragement for the Oppressed:** The vision offers hope and encouragement to those experiencing persecution, emphasizing that a glorious inheritance awaits the faithful.
- **Visionary Literature:** Chapter 7 is a prime example of apocalyptic literature, which is a sub-category of visionary literature.
- **Apocalyptic Literature: Symbolism:** Apocalyptic literature is marked by heavy symbolism, which can make it difficult to interpret.
- **Visions and Journeys:** Visionary experiences and otherworldly journeys are common.

- **Pseudonymous Authorship:** Authors often use the names of respected figures from the past to lend authority to their writing.
- **Persecution and Judgment:** Themes of persecution, cosmic destruction, and final judgment are central.
- **Distinguishing Prophecy from Apocalyptic: Prophecy:** Often includes the phrase "Thus saith the Lord," is associated with real people in real time, and addresses immediate situations.
- **Apocalyptic:** Uses revelations through visions, often draws on names from the past, and may present history as if it's prophecy ("ex-eventu prophecy"). Apocalyptic literature also tends to emphasize a complete cosmic destruction as opposed to a transformation.
- **Chapter 7's Significance:** Chapter 7 provides a pivotal moment in the book of Daniel, linking the first and second parts through language and themes.
- The chapter offers a view of the throne room of God, with "one like the Son of Man" receiving the kingdom. "we see one like the Son of Man receive the kingdom, and the saints will rule forever over this eternal kingdom."
- The hope and encouragement found in this chapter are meant to sustain believers through the more challenging content that comes later in the book.
- It is an important section because the way it ties together language and genre means it cannot be separated from either section of the book.

III. Connecting Chapters 2 and 7

- **Chiastic Structure:** Chapters 2 and 7 form an outer layer of a chiasmic structure, sharing similar themes of four human kingdoms and a final divine kingdom.
- **Thematic Link:** Both chapters emphasize God's sovereignty over all powers and the eventual triumph of His eternal kingdom. They use the symbolic imagery of the statue and beasts (in chapter 7), with the idea of successive kingdoms and their replacement by God's kingdom.
- **Dual Purpose:** Daniel 7 not only ties to the themes of chapter 2, but is also the first instance of the apocalyptic style, which dominates the second half of the book, and is meant to set up the encouragement for later readings.

Conclusion

Dr. Widder's analysis underscores the crucial message of Daniel: despite the rise and fall of human empires, God's sovereignty endures, and His eternal kingdom is the ultimate hope for believers. The contrast between the earthly kingdoms, characterized by pride and temporal power, and God's eternal, just, and powerful kingdom is the central point of the message. These chapters provide a framework for understanding God's plan for the world and offer encouragement in times of oppression and hardship. Chapter 7 provides the hope that can endure through the rest of the book, even when it is more difficult to find.

4. Study Guide: Widder, Daniel, Session 5, Daniel 2

Daniel Chapter 2: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the significance of Daniel 2 being the first Aramaic chapter in the book of Daniel?
2. What are the three main themes that emerge in Daniel 2, according to Widder?
3. Why does Nebuchadnezzar demand that his wise men tell him both the dream and its interpretation?
4. How does Widder explain the chronological issue between Daniel 1 and the events in Daniel 2?
5. What role did dreams play in ancient Near Eastern religions, particularly in Mesopotamia?
6. According to Widder, how does Daniel emphasize God's superior knowledge when he interprets the king's dream?
7. What is the symbolic meaning of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, according to Daniel's interpretation?
8. What is the significance of the stone that crushes the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
9. What are the two main views regarding the identity of the kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and what is the key difference between them?
10. What is Nebuchadnezzar's response to Daniel's interpretation, and why does Widder suggest that it is not necessarily a conversion to monotheism?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Daniel 2 is the first Aramaic chapter, marking the beginning of a chiastic structure where chapters 2 and 7 (and others) mirror each other in themes and visions. These chapters focus on God's cosmic reign and the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms.

2. The three main themes are the sovereignty of God, the pride of human rulers, and the tension experienced by God's faithful people living under human kings. These themes recur throughout the book of Daniel.
3. Nebuchadnezzar demands both the dream and its interpretation to test the loyalty and trustworthiness of his wise men. He wants proof that their knowledge is genuine, and not based on fabricated interpretations of a known dream.
4. Widder proposes two ways to resolve the chronological difficulty. First, Daniel might have been in his third year of training during Nebuchadnezzar's second year using a Babylonian system of calculating reign years. Secondly, the story may highlight how even a trainee can outshine the best of Babylon.
5. Dreams in ancient Near Eastern religions were considered significant means of communication from the gods. They were seen as important sources of information and insight about the future, especially for kings and rulers.
6. Daniel emphasizes God's superior knowledge by first acknowledging that the wise men's inability to reveal the dream is justified, and then stating that the dream was revealed not through human wisdom, but through a divine being. He repeatedly highlights God as the true source of knowledge and understanding, not himself.
7. The statue is made of four metals (gold, silver, bronze, and iron/clay) that represent successive earthly kingdoms. Each kingdom has its own unique characteristics, and none can compare to the eternal kingdom of God.
8. The stone is a supernatural entity from God, representing his eternal kingdom. The stone destroys all the earthly kingdoms and becomes a mountain that fills the earth, signifying God's ultimate and everlasting reign.
9. The two main views are the Roman view, which identifies the fourth kingdom as Rome, and the Greek view, which identifies it as Greece. The difference is their interpretation of the fourth kingdom which subsequently influences the identity of the earlier kingdoms.
10. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges Daniel's God as the God of gods and a revealer of mysteries but this is not viewed as a conversion. He is polytheistic and has likely just added another powerful god to his pantheon, understanding that Daniel's God has superior knowledge, a fact that confirms his superior status.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer the following questions in an essay format.

1. Discuss the significance of the chiastic structure in the book of Daniel, particularly in relation to Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. How does understanding this structure enhance our interpretation of the book?
2. Analyze the themes of sovereignty, pride, and tension as they are presented in Daniel 2. How do these themes contribute to the overall message of the book?
3. Compare and contrast the roles of dreams in ancient Near Eastern religions with the role of dreams in the book of Daniel. How does Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream challenge or affirm these ancient beliefs?
4. Evaluate the two primary interpretations of the kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (the Roman view and the Greek view). Which view do you find more persuasive, and why?
5. Explore the nature of apocalyptic literature as described by Widder and its importance to understanding Daniel 7. How does the genre of apocalyptic contribute to the message of the book of Daniel as a whole?

Glossary of Key Terms

Apocalyptic Literature: A genre of visionary literature characterized by symbolism, otherworldly journeys, pseudonymous authors, persecution of the righteous, cosmic destruction, final judgment, and a new creation.

Aramaic: A Semitic language that was the lingua franca of the ancient Near East, used in portions of the book of Daniel.

Chiasm: A literary structure where elements are presented in a pattern (e.g., A, B, C, B', A') creating a mirroring effect that focuses attention on the center of the structure.

Divination: The practice of seeking knowledge of the future or the will of the gods through various methods, such as interpreting dreams, reading stars, or examining animal entrails.

Ex-eventu Prophecy: "After the event." A form of prophecy where the author describes past events as if they were predictions, often done to encourage the audience that God is at work behind the scenes.

Pseudonymous: When an author writes under a false name, often using the name of a famous figure from the past.

Visionary Literature: A broader category of literature in which the author sees or imagines things that are not yet an empirical reality at the time of writing. This includes both prophecy and apocalyptic literature.

5. FAQs on Widder, Daniel, Session 5, Daniel 2, Biblicalelearning.

FAQ on Daniel Chapter 2

- **What is the main focus of Daniel Chapter 2?** Daniel Chapter 2 centers on God's superior knowledge and the establishment of His eternal kingdom, contrasting with the inferior knowledge of earthly rulers and their kingdoms. The chapter highlights the sovereignty of God, the pride of human rulers, and the tension faced by God's faithful people living under these rulers. It uses the story of Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream to demonstrate that God is the source of true knowledge and that His kingdom is the one that will last forever.
- **Why was Nebuchadnezzar troubled by his dream, and why did he demand that his wise men tell him the dream itself, not just the interpretation?** In the ancient Near East, dreams were considered significant sources of information and insight about the future, especially for kings. Nebuchadnezzar's troubled spirit indicated that his dream was important. He demanded that the wise men tell him the dream itself, in addition to the interpretation, because he doubted their trustworthiness and their claim to knowledge. By asking for the dream, he was essentially testing their ability to access divine wisdom. If they could accurately tell him the dream, then he would trust that they could provide an accurate interpretation.
- **How does Daniel resolve the chronological difficulty of his presence among the wise men in Nebuchadnezzar's second year?** The timeline in Daniel presents a difficulty since Daniel was meant to undergo three years of training before appearing before the king, yet he is present in the king's second year. One way to resolve this is by understanding that the Babylonian system of dating years included an accession year. This means Daniel could have been in his third year of training according to the normal calendar during Nebuchadnezzar's second year. Another possibility is that the story emphasizes that even a trainee like Daniel outshines the wise men of Babylon.

- How was divination practiced in ancient Mesopotamia, and how did dreams fit into this practice?** Divination in Mesopotamia was a system by which they believed the gods revealed their plans through messages in the natural world. This included reading the stars, animal entrails, and dreams. These messages were seen as part of a larger system, and there were experts trained to interpret them. Dreams, however, were considered tricky because they could not be observed by others and were more subjective, requiring confirmation through other means of divination. Experts recorded and studied observations over time, using these as a basis to interpret signs.
- What is the significance of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and what do the different materials symbolize?** The statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, composed of a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay, represents successive kingdoms that would rise and fall. The metals, starting with gold (Babylon), indicate a decline in value and stability as time progresses. This symbolizes the temporary nature of human empires. The statue is eventually destroyed by a stone, which becomes a mountain, symbolizing God's eternal kingdom.
- According to Daniel's interpretation, what will happen to the kingdoms represented by the statue, and what kingdom will ultimately prevail?** Daniel interprets the statue as representing a series of earthly kingdoms with Babylon as the first, which would eventually be replaced by others of diminishing power. These kingdoms are followed by an inferior one (silver), then a third worldwide empire (bronze), and finally a strong but divided kingdom (iron, and iron mixed with clay). Ultimately, these kingdoms will be destroyed by a stone not cut by human hands, representing God's eternal kingdom, which will crush all other kingdoms and fill the earth, which means that God's Kingdom will be everlasting.

- **What are the main interpretations of the identity of the kingdoms after Babylon, and what are the differences between them?** There are several interpretations of the kingdoms represented by the statue after Babylon, primarily focused on the fourth kingdom. The **Roman view**, traditionally the most common, identifies the four kingdoms as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The **Greek view**, supported by some critical scholars, interprets the kingdoms as Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. Another less common view is the **four kings view**, which suggests the four kingdoms are the specific kings of Daniel: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. The disagreement primarily centers on whether the fourth kingdom is Greece or Rome, which then impacts the identification of the preceding kingdoms.
- **How does Nebuchadnezzar respond to Daniel's interpretation, and does it indicate a conversion to Daniel's God?** Nebuchadnezzar responds to Daniel's interpretation by falling on his face and paying homage to Daniel and acknowledging that Daniel's God is the true God and revealer of mysteries. Nebuchadnezzar doesn't fully convert to Daniel's God, instead he incorporates Him into his polytheistic pantheon. His actions and words reflect recognition of God's superior power and knowledge rather than a genuine conversion. Nebuchadnezzar then elevates Daniel to a high position in his court, further demonstrating respect for Daniel's God.