



# CAPITOL COMMISSION®

## The Emperor's Demand: Do the Impossible or Die!

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**Daniel 2:1-6** *Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. 2) Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. 3) And the king said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream." 4) Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation." 5) The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "My decision is firm; if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap. 6) However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation."* (NKJV)

### FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- MARCH 10: SELECTED SCRIPTURES: GUEST PASTOR, DR. MARK BECTON
- APRIL 13-15: DANIEL 2:7-13 THE DEATH WARRANT FOR DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS

Nebuchadnezzar was a very gifted leader. In his youth he had taken his father's place on the battlefield and had not only defeated the army of the current world empire, but had completely annihilated their whole nation! Then he had strategically surrounded Jerusalem and demanded their surrender and immediately received it. He had also defeated the second strongest empire in the world and had chased them all the way back within their borders. He had captured the children of the nobility and trained them to administer his empire. His own Babylon had become a capital second to none and his empire the strongest the world had ever seen. Success followed in all he did and was ample proof of his rare leadership skills.

THE CHARACTER OF THE KING IS FURTHER DEVELOPED BY HIS SPEECHES, WHICH SHOW HIM TO BE SUSPICIOUS, UNREASONABLE, STUBBORN, SHORT-TEMPERED, ANGRY, AND CRUEL. SIDNEY GREIDANUS

TYRANTS...WHATEVER HE WISHES IS LAWFUL...ANY ONE ENTERING A TYRANT'S THRESHOLD MUST CAST AWAY HIS LIBERTY. JOHN CALVIN

Was Nebuchadnezzar terrorized by his dreams? Did he sense that this was a supernatural dream? Who were these four groups summoned so hastily? Would they have been the professors of the school of foreign captives? Why does he have dreams (plural), yet he speaks of it in the singular—"a dream"? Does the language of this book suddenly switch to Aramaic? Are these specialists overconfident in their ability to interpret the dream? Why such tyrannical demands?

### I. THE INITIAL DREAM

### DANIEL 2:1

Most of the commentators place the timing of this event in Nebuchadnezzar's second year as immediately after the graduation of Daniel and his friends in the first chapter. They reveal that the Babylonian reckoning of a royal year would consider the first year of the king, if shared with the previous ruler, to be an accession year and then the next year when the king alone has the throne to be his first year. The "three years" of their training can include partial years by Hebrew reckoning so that if two of the years of their training were partial, they would have already graduated. Nebuchadnezzar then "had dreams"

### BIBLE STUDIES

THURSDAY @ 6:30 AM –PRAYER MEETING – GAB 6<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR SPEAKER'S CONFERENCE ROOM

THURSDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – GAB 6<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR SPEAKER'S CONFERENCE ROOM

# Virginia

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(plural), yet later referred to as “a dream,” meaning that most likely this dream had been repeated over and over. Literally “his spirit was striking him and his sleep was upon him.” Andrew Steinmann says (p. 114) “the expression as it stands here in the Hebrew means that Nebuchadnezzar fell back asleep.” Each time, as he dreamed the same dream, it struck greater and greater terror in his heart.

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THE IMPORTANT EVENT WHICH TOOK PLACE IS SIMPLY EXPRESSED IN THE STATEMENT THAT “NEBUCHADNEZZAR DREAMED DREAMS.” AS *DREAMS* IS IN THE PLURAL, IT IMPLIES THAT HE HAD SEVERAL DREAMS WHICH WERE OF SUCH A CHARACTER THAT HE WAS TROUBLED BY THEIR SIGNIFICANCE. JOHN WALVOORD

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### II. THE IMMEDIATE DECISION DANIEL 2:2-4

Probably trembling with fear, Nebuchadnezzar promptly sent for his sages. They are described as four groups of counselors. The “*magicians*” were to repel demons with spells, incantations and magic while acting as scholars doing most of the writing as royal scribes or magi. “*Astrologers*” were considered wizards who studied the stars, predicted the future, proposed the will of heaven, cast horoscopes and supposedly communicated with the dead. Witchcraft was the primary work of the “*sorcerers*” as well as “cutting” pharmaceutical ingredients, from which we get our word “pharmacist.” Finally, the “*Chaldeans*” were the elite class who had conquered the Babylonians to which the king and his father belonged. They were considered the strategists and wise men of the empire. No doubt many of these had been the professors of the royal academy from which Daniel and his friends had just graduated. The one area of knowledge which Babylon prided itself the most was the dark, misty secrets of visions and dreams and the men that stood before the king were the professionals and experts in obtaining the meaning of such mysteries from the gods. The tormented and fearful Nebuchadnezzar begins the conversation: “I

*have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream.”* The elite Chaldeans confidently respond, representing the entire group: “*O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation.*” Little do they know, they are about to receive the ultimate test!

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IF THEY WERE, AS THEY PRETENDED TO BE, UNDER THE INSPIRATION OF THE GODS IN INTERPRETING A DREAM, IT WAS FAIR TO PRESUME THAT, UNDER THE SAME INSPIRATION, THEY COULD TELL WHAT IT WAS.

ALBERT BARNES

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### III. THE IMPOSSIBLE DEMAND DANIEL 2:5-6

Because Nebuchadnezzar senses something supernatural in the repetition of his dream and he is terrorized by the destruction within his dream, expecting that it points to his demise, he wants to know for sure that the interpretation he is given is absolute truth. Since these sages claimed to contact the supernatural to provide the true interpretation of dreams, then the king reasoned that they could prove their contact with the supernatural by first revealing the dream (which he could not forget), and that would qualify them to give an equally accurate interpretation. Additionally, if these experts were only a sham, then he not only considered them not worthy of his support, he now wanted them to pay for their many years of deceit with a horrific death. Thus he responded: “*My decision is firm; if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses made an ash heap.*” However, if they really were able to contact the supernatural and successfully provide him the dream and the interpretation, then, to be fair, he would generously bestow upon them “*gifts, rewards and great honor.*” Finally, this tormented tyrant issues his essential imperative: “*Therefore, tell me the dream and its interpretation.*” This group of shocked sages must have been astounded at their meager alternatives. Simply put: “Theirs was not to reason why, theirs was to do or die!”

#### Questions to Ponder:

- 1) How do you exercise the tremendous leadership that God has given to you?
- 2) Do you remember that tyranny is the opposite of liberty in what God's Word declares is right?
- 3) Is your greatest pursuit the truth, remembering that Jesus said: “*Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice*”?