

clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure” (Daniel 2:37-45).

The King’s Response

At this point, Nebuchadnezzar, proud ruler of great Babylon, mighty conqueror of nations, practically falls off his throne. The relief coming to his troubled mind, the amazing accuracy with which Daniel rehearses his dream, followed by the interpretation, all seem to overwhelm him with thanksgiving. He worships at the feet of this lowly Hebrew captive.

“Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshiped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret. Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king” (Daniel 2:46-49).

What Does It All Mean?

Daniel was shown four world kingdoms, each one following in succession, beginning with the kingdom of Babylon. “Thou,” said Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, “art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron” (Daniel 2:38-40). History records it just as Daniel was shown, four world kingdoms, Babylon followed by Media-Persia, Greece and Rome.

Then Daniel was shown that there would be a division of the fourth empire into ten parts, represented by the ten toes of the great image. This describes in prophetic language the break-up of the Roman Empire. Out of it came ten tribes, the basis of the nations of Europe to this day.

There are two points here we should pause to consider. First: according to the dream given to Nebuchadnezzar by God, there would be four successive powers, no more and no less. Second: as the last of these four powers ceased to exist, the nations of Europe would be established and continue in a state of division, “partly strong and partly broken,” until the kingdom of God is set up, which breaks and consumes all earthly kingdoms.

Actually, Daniel 2 is simply an introduction to more stupendous life-changing prophecies still to come. In future chapters we are going to discover many other interesting and important details about this history. The most significant thought to realize is that this first prophetic revelation is stated succinctly by Daniel in verse 28: “There is a God in heaven.” We know this because of the accuracy and trustworthiness of God’s Word.

We mentioned earlier the names of military leaders who were familiar with this chapter and would have liked to rip it from the record. This is because they tested the seven words of God, “They shall not cleave one to another,” and found them to be true, much to their dismay.

Napoleon desired to establish a united Europe. He wanted “a European system, a European code of law, a European court of appeals.” In short, he wanted Europe to be “one nation.” Napoleon’s efforts were unsuccessful. After meeting with defeat at Waterloo, he was quoted as saying, “God Almighty has been too much for me.”

Then there was Hitler. It is said that he once scoffed at Napoleon’s tomb after conquering France, boasting that he would succeed where Napoleon failed. In March of

1941, Hitler boldly declared, “See, my people. We do not need anything from God. We do not ask anything from Him except that He may let us alone. We want to fight our own war, with our own guns, without God. We want to gain our victory without the help of God.”

A woman who had nursed Hitler in a time of illness says that he would read the second chapter of Daniel, and when he came to the words, “they shall not cleave one to another,” he would leap from his bed ranting and raving, shouting at the top of his lungs, “I will win, I will win!” He never did.

And there were others like Louis the XIV, Charles the V, and Kaiser Wilhelm. All failed to unite Europe. What God recorded in Daniel 2 has withstood the test of time and the most cruel assaults of tyranny. And there have been other efforts to unite Europe, not through military conquest, but by mingling the seeds of men, or the intermarriage of the various ruling royalty of these nations. To this day God’s seven words, “they shall not cleave one to another” have prevailed. And we can be assured they will continue to prevail until God sets up His everlasting kingdom.

The Mysterious Stone

What about that mysterious stone, “cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces”? The one that “became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth”? This symbolic stone represents none other than Jesus Christ and His second coming.

Speaking of Himself and using symbolic language identical to this, Christ spoke to the religious leaders of His own day. “And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder” (Matthew 21:44). The apostle Peter, speaking with boldness after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, picks up this same symbolism when he states, “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:10-12).

There are some who teach that the stone represents Peter, the first of a long succession of men upon which Christ founded His church. The record of Scripture, however, is contrary. This stone was one made “without hands,” which describes no human being. It describes a rock against which the gates of hell would not prevail. Jesus alone can rightly claim such a victory. Peter himself sets the record straight when he says, “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed” (1 Peter 2:3-8).

Yes, says Peter, we are all stones, part of the building of God, but Jesus is the chief corner stone, the One who will some day grind all the kingdoms of this world to powder and set up His everlasting kingdom.

Would you like to be a part of His kingdom? Nebuchadnezzar desired it more than all the riches, fame and power this earth could offer him. He will be in eternity with the redeemed. If God can save a cruel monarch, He is abundantly able to save anyone. Through the revelation of His goodness God is drawing you to Himself even now (see Romans 2:4). There is only one obstacle that stands between you and His gift of eternal life, and that is your own resistance. Don’t reject His love. Won’t you give Him your heart now and allow His grace to change your life forever?

The Unsealing of Daniel

Study Number 3



We are now about to embark on a study of one of the most fascinating and powerful chapters in all of Scripture. Military leaders like Napoleon and Hitler knew all about this Bible prophecy. In fact, they would have torn it from the sacred record, if only they could.

In Daniel 1, God seemed hidden from His people when Babylon attacked Judah. But in Daniel 2, God is far from hidden. Actually, He shows up in Nebuchadnezzar’s bedchamber, that is, through the revelation of a dream. Now God is about to counterattack the religion, culture, and wisdom of Babylon’s power—with a dream! Not just any old dream, but one that is so incredibly gripping and so overwhelmingly accurate, that though the king cannot remember it, he must understand it at all cost, even if it means the death of the most renowned spiritual guardians of his great kingdom. You might feel pretty intense, too, if you had dreamed a dream like this one.

The Power of a Dream

Dreams are not uncommon in the Bible, especially dreams from God. Beginning clear back in the book of Genesis and then going all the way down through the New Testament, God has communicated warnings, counsel, encouragement and His will through dreams. And, by the way, these types of disclosures were never restricted to His chosen people. There are occasions when God communicated through dreams to those who did not know Him (see Genesis 20:3; 31:24). Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was not the first time God had used this method to reach the heathen with the message of His reconciling love. There was another occasion, prior to Babylon’s rule, when God spoke to a ruling monarch through a dream that he could not understand (see Genesis 41:15). The impact of that dream took a Hebrew boy named Joseph from his prison cell to a position in the kingdom of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself (see Genesis 41:39-43).

This brings us to Daniel 2 and another dream that not only could not be understood, but could not even be remembered (see Daniel 2:5). Let’s look at the record:

“And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. The king an-

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swered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof. The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain" (Daniel 2:1-13).

This simple dream from God accomplished what no earthly power could do. It turned the kingdom of Babylon upside down. Notice these four conditions brought about by the dream that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar:

1. The king was "so troubled" about the dream that he couldn't sleep.
2. This brought all of the wise men of Babylon to the test.
3. The wisdom of these wise men was insufficient to meet the king's need.
4. The lives of these men and their families were on the line.

The stage is set. Through a dream God has brought the greatest monarch of the world to a place of utter frustration with the wisest of his counselors, in whom he has learned to trust. Through the prophet Isaiah, God had foretold this very position Nebuchadnezzar now finds himself in: "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves" (Isaiah 47:13-14).

The wisdom, knowledge, learning and supposed superiority of the world's wisdom has been overthrown in a single night by a dream from God. That's the power of a dream—the power of God to make the wisdom of the world seem foolish, not by might or power, but through a simple dream (see 1 Corinthians 1:20).

Faith and Presumption

There was, however, one immediate problem needing attention. Daniel and his three friends were also to be executed along with Babylon's wisest. Quickly Daniel spoke to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon, to find out why the king had commanded they be slain (see Daniel 2:14). Learning of the king's frustration, Daniel bravely ventured in before this enraged monarch. He asked for time that he might tell the king the interpretation (see Daniel 2:16). Was this a presumptuous offer? Not at all. It was by "faith" that Daniel made such a statement. And what, you might wonder, is faith as opposed to presumption? How did Daniel know God would reveal this dream to him?

Hebrews 11:1 tells us that faith "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Daniel definitely must have *hoped* he could solve the king's dilemma, though he could *not see* the solution at the moment, for his life depended on it. But beyond this, Daniel had confidence in God, for faith comes "by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Daniel was familiar with God's Word. He had developed a habit of relying upon God. Only in such faith could Daniel have told the king he would deliver to him the interpretation of the dream.

Presumption, on the other hand, comes in when we disobey the Lord's commands while still expecting His blessing (see Numbers 14:41-44). Daniel's faith was based on

the promises of God's Word. One such promise found in Isaiah says, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24). In other words, Daniel believed God would hear Him before He had even called upon Him for help. Perhaps Daniel clung to this very text while speaking to the king. Like Daniel, we, too "must believe that He is," that God is a real, personal Being working for our best interest, "and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

The Importance of Prayer

"Then," immediately upon leaving the king's presence, "Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon" (Daniel 2:17-18). We know Daniel relied by faith upon God because these verses tell us he did. While the rest of the wise men consulted horoscopes, crystal balls, magic and sorcery, Daniel and his companions were praying.

"And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God?" (Isaiah 8:19). The world looks for help from spiritualism and spirit medium communication, while God's people look to an all-powerful, ever-living Creator.



the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, Who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of Thee: for Thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter" (Daniel 2:19-23).

Daniel Gives Glory to God

Now Arioch, who seems eager to claim some degree of credit for Daniel, as if he had been searching endlessly throughout Babylon and "found" him, brings him in before the king. "Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation" (Daniel 2:25).

There are two points to ponder about the circumstances now facing Daniel:

1. Arioch was in a hurry to have Daniel solve the king's dilemma and no doubt the king was anxious to be relieved of his troubled mind.
2. Daniel was in the court of a heathen king who had no respect for his God.

Putting these two perspectives together we could easily conclude that Daniel needed to get right to the point. This was not the time to give the royal court a Bible study on God's omnipotence or give credit to a religion Nebuchadnezzar had recently conquered. "Don't witness about God now, Daniel," might have been our advice. "Just tell the king what he wants to hear and you can talk to him about your God later."

But this is not the way of a servant of God. Daniel is not afraid to take the time to

acknowledge the power of His God in a public way. So what if his life is at stake? So what if the king is impatient to know the dream? The first statement from Daniel's lips gives honor to God. "Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these" (Daniel 2:27-28).

Then Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar why the dream has been revealed to him, bringing to the forefront that God cares about the thoughts of this pagan king. "But as for me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living has this mystery been revealed to me, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind" (Daniel 2:30, RSV).

God knows that Nebuchadnezzar is troubled and anxious about the dream. Like a loving Father, He longs to relieve the stress of his mind. God loves those, like Nebuchadnezzar, who neither know or love Him. Consider the record: "God saved not only Daniel's life but the lives of all the wise men. When He miraculously released the apostle Paul from prison one midnight, He generously released all the other prisoners as well (see Acts 16:25-26). When He saved Paul in a shipwreck, He saved all the sailors (see Acts 27:21-25). God loves sinners as well as saints!" (*God Cares*, vol. 1, C. Mervyn Maxwell, p. 39).

Daniel Reveals the Dream

In 15 verses of Bible prophecy, God lays out the history of over 2500 years. And the accuracy of God's Word is confirmed over 2500 years later, by the record of earth's history.

"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:31-35).

At this point, Nebuchadnezzar must be sitting on the edge of his royal seat. He is speechless, but in his mind he says, "That is exactly what I dreamed: how did you know?" The words of his own wise men are ringing in his ears, "It is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Daniel 2:11).

"This is the dream," Daniel says, "and we will tell the interpretation thereof" (Daniel 2:36). And then, before Nebuchadnezzar can utter a word, Daniel continues with the interpretation.

The Interpretation

"Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with