

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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God Interprets the Dreams He Gives

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, shew 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; As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart. 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. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. 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 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 for ever. 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 2:27-45)

Daniel wisely and correctly honors God for giving him knowledge of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Immediately Daniel focuses the king on the background and significance of the dream. *As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass.* The king was musing about the future, likely the future of his kingdom in particular. God gave him this dream to reveal what lay ahead, not only for Babylon, but for the next three major empires that would rule that region of the world over the next five hundred years. Why would God bother to reveal this information to a pagan king? His

people were held captive in that king's nation, and both Babylon and those three succeeding empires would have a direct bearing on His people through those successive centuries.

Civil government, regardless of its form or location, will always change. By its very nature, depending on frail and fickle humans, civil government never remains unchanged. The Bible describes only one government that does not—shall not—change; God's own government over His beloved people. This contrast, ever-changing human government and never-changing divine government, becomes the centerpiece of the king's dream as Daniel unfolds it for both the king and for us.

Let's examine the image the king saw in his dream.

1. The image was that of a man.
2. As you survey the image from head to feet, the image consists of different metals.
3. The head is gold.
4. The chest and arms are silver.
5. The torso is brass.
6. The legs are iron, degenerating in the feet to a mixture of iron and clay, not at all a stable foundation for this image.

Daniel immediately interprets the dream for the king and for us.

1. The image depicts major empires that shall rule the whole region of the eastern Mediterranean from Daniel's time till well after the coming of Jesus, the promised Messiah whom God revealed in prophecy to His people from the very beginning. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." (John 8:56) Thus, from Abraham, the first generation of people whom God called to become His separate, worshipping people, until the coming of Jesus, God revealed His ultimate mission for these people to them.
2. The first empire, the head of gold, Daniel reveals, is Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar and his beloved Babylon is the head of gold. Gold is a precious metal, soft, but highly valued. By depicting Babylon as gold Daniel indicates that there are apparently some intrinsic features of Babylon that are of greater worth than shall appear in any of the successive kingdoms that shall follow her.
3. Following Babylon another kingdom that Daniel describes only as "...inferior to thee..." appears, the image's chest and arms of silver. In fact we read Daniel's personal account (Daniel the fifth chapter) of Babylon's fall and the Medo-Persian conquest of Babylon without a battle.
4. Succeeding Medo-Persia, the kingdom depicted as the brass torso shall appear. History records that Alexander the Great, the Macedonian or Greek, rapidly conquered all the nations in his path, including the Medo-Persian Empire.
5. Finally Greece would fall, replaced by the legs of iron, Rome. The Roman Empire ruled the Fertile Crescent, the Mediterranean region, including the area formerly controlled by these three former

kingdoms, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and for some time thereafter.

6. Daniel observes that the legs degenerate into iron and clay in the feet. However, he does not indicate that the image's feet should be viewed as a subsequent or separate kingdom from Rome. They are part of the Roman section of the image.

We should observe that each of these empires directly and immediately succeeded the former kingdom. There are no time gaps or unexplained time lapses. The unfolding history of this region flows with unbroken continuity from one kingdom to the next.

Consider the metals that make up this dream image. The metals shift from soft, but highly prized and valuable, gold, to very strong, but of significantly lesser value, iron. If we contemplate the significance of these contrasting physical traits of the metals, we should expect the dominant traits of each kingdom to be less refined and less humanitarian, and more focused on brute force. That is in fact a verifiable characteristic of the four empires named in this image. For example, consider Nebuchadnezzar in contrast with Alexander the Great. Likely for one of his wives, Nebuchadnezzar constructed the elaborate "hanging gardens" of Babylon. Pagan as he clearly was, he entertained multiple interactions with Daniel and his three faithful friends. Eventually, Daniel the fourth chapter, Nebuchadnezzar openly confessed God and His sovereignty, possibly experiencing a gracious regenerating change at God's hand. Successive rulers of Babylon remembered the accounts of Nebuchadnezzar with Daniel. (Daniel 5:10-16) Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are depicted in the dream as the head of gold. In dramatic contrast Alexander lead one of the most effective military forces of the ancient world in rapid progress, conquering all in his path. However, just prior to his thirty-third birthday, Alexander died a dreadful death. The cause of his death has been conjectured, varying from venereal disease because of his depraved lifestyle to West Nile Virus. Alexander and Greece are depicted in the dream as the torso of brass.

There are no enduring success stories in the array of world empires, ancient or modern. We prize our own country's tradition, and rightly so, but we have seen a rapid transition that in all likelihood shall advance with still greater rapidity, not unlike Nebuchadnezzar's image, from gold and silver to brass and iron. Look to your God and His unchanging Hand and righteous government. The alternative is advancing disenchantment and disillusionment. God alone is trustworthy and reliable. Who/What will you trust?

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Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
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