

God's Way Out

"For Us and For Our Little Ones"

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance."
Ezra 8:21.

Lesson 12. The Way of Nations Revealed

If you are facing some great problem for which you have not sufficient wisdom, see in this chapter how swiftly guidance was granted to four young men who called on God. And if the future seems obscure, see how God can lift the curtain.

THE sun had long since gone, and the busy activity of Babylon's streets had subsided. Merodach Street was quiet, and darkness had driven the traffic from the Street of the Moon God. The city was becoming as still as those huge stone bulls which loomed up in the darkness by the river gates. King Nebuchadnezzar had retired to rest in his beautiful palace by the Euphrates. But his mind was still active and his thoughts went out over the prospects for his flourishing kingdom in the years to come. What would be its future? [1]

At the age of sixteen he had seen mighty Assyria fall from her age-long power. He had been with his father Nabopolassar at that time, and had seen the proud city of Nineveh brought down. Surely the city of Babylon could not perish like that! When Nineveh fell, Saracus, the last Assyrian king (so it was said) threw himself into the red crackling flames of his burning city in despair. [2] Surely no king of Babylon would ever come to like desperation!

No! he meditated. Babylon should ever increase. The city was built to endure for millenniums. In the ages to come the ends of the earth should still journey hither to admire his great capital. From the windy uplands of Ethiopia in the south and the freezing steppes of Muscovy in the north, they should come to wonder. The straw-colored men of Sinim (China) and the skin-clothed pagans of the Tin Islands of the far west should talk of the glory of Babylon for ever.

"Just a few months ago--what a battle we fought at Carchemish!" his thoughts ran. "That was a death-blow to Egypt. I must follow that up soon. I must besiege Tyre with its ships and sailors. I must invade Egypt--all this world shall feel my might. I will be ruler over the whole earth." But what of the future? Could I but peer into its dark recesses! What of the future? And Nebuchadnezzar fell asleep.

He Dreams a Mysterious Dream

But in his sleep he had a vivid dream. [3] Perhaps this was the answer to his questionings. Yes, yes! It must be! No wonder he awoke. But the dream which was so vivid had vanished completely from his memory. What was it? What was that dream? Just as when God gave the strange dream to Pharaoh in Joseph's days, so now a great anxiety fell upon Nebuchadnezzar. He must know what that dream meant at all costs! Urgently he speeded his messengers. "Call the magicians!" he exclaimed. "They have done strange marvels in the past."

"Send for the astrologers! They say they can foretell future events by the stars. They should know."

"Tell the sorcerers--the spiritualists--to come at once. They claim that the spirits of dead friends teach them. And fetch the Chaldeans! Fetch the scientists! They profess to have gathered the wisdom of the past. They are in touch with the god Bel and the god Nebo. I must--I must know the meaning of that dream!"

"I have dreamed a dream," said Nebuchadnezzar anxiously, when the servants were assembled round the throne. "I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled--strangely troubled to know the dream."

"O king, live for ever!" said the wise men reassuringly. "Tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation."

The king's wrath flamed up at once. Probably this was the answer he expected--and it was not good enough! If these men really could interpret a dream, then they must be in touch with whatever power it was that gave strange dreams--and they ought to have power to know a forgotten dream. If they were not in touch with that power--then--and the thought made him furious--they had solemnly fooled him in the past and intended to fool him again. "Fool me! Me! Nebuchadnezzar! Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar! Conqueror of armies! Mightiest monarch of the world! And perhaps they laughed at me when my back was turned."

The effrontery of it! Fooled by astrologers and spiritualists, conjurers and lying scientists! He flamed out: "The thing is gone from me! If you will not make known unto me the dream itself with the interpretation thereof, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill."

"Let the king tell his servants the dream," replied the frightened men, "and we will show the interpretation."

Dream or Death

"I know of certainty that you would gain the time," roared the angry king. "But if you will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you. You have prepared lying words--corrupt, lying words to speak before me. Tell me the dream--then shall I know you can show the interpretation."

"But," expostulated the wise men, "there is not a man on earth that can show the king's matter. There is none other that can show it before the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

"Out with you! Out with you! Arioch, captain of the guard. Take these men out and execute them. Kill all these 'wise' men The impostors!" Nebuchadnezzar's "Brains Trust" had failed. The wise men were led off to await execution. The guards tramped out to bring Daniel and his three companions to be executed with the others. To the four Hebrews it came as a complete surprise. Probably they knew nothing about the dream until the royal guards appeared at the door with the fearful announcement that they were to be executed.

To be killed like this! When they had hoped to witness for the true God and turn others to Him in the years to come! "What Time I Am Afraid, I Will Trust in Thee" But Daniel was calm. The promise of God was fulfilled in him: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." [4]

"Why is the decree so hasty, Arioch?" he inquired of the captain of the guard. Arioch explained. "His majesty the king was furious because the wise men could not tell him his dream. He feels they have deceived him in the past."

Daniel asked for Arioch's permission, and went in to speak to the king: "If your majesty will give us a little time, I think we can show the king his dream." The king granted the petition. "Anything--if I can recall that strange dream and get to know the interpretation." Thankful to God for the respite, Daniel went to his house and told his three friends.

"Let us pray to God and ask Him to give us the secret of the forgotten dream, so that we shall not perish with the wise men." So the young men knelt in prayer. Does not God say: "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knows not?" [5] Yes, great and mighty things have come to pass as the result of some little prayer-meeting or national day of prayer.

God Delights to Help His Children

While Babylon was enfolded in darkness that night, God revealed the secret to Daniel in a vision. There it was as clear as if Daniel had dreamed it himself. "Thanks be to God; we are saved!"

Fervently and gratefully, Daniel thanked God. "He reveals the deep and secret things. He removes kings, and sets up kings. I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, for Thou has now made known unto us the king's matter." The chief of the executioners was gratified to receive an early call from Daniel. "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon," said the young Hebrew. "Bring me in before the king, and I will show the interpretation."

"Art thou able to make known unto me the dream?" asked Nebuchadnezzar searchingly, when Daniel was brought before him by the eager Arioch.

"The wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot show this secret to the king," said Daniel. "But there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, [6] and is making known to the king what shall be in the latter days." A thrill passes through Nebuchadnezzar. His dream is a message from God, telling him just what he wanted to know as he lay on his bed on that wakeful night!

"What shall come to pass in the latter days" a thrill passes through our own hearts, too--our hearts that beat and move in these "latter days." Is Nebuchadnezzar's dream a message from God to us as well? Confidently and solemnly Daniel continues: "O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and He that reveals secrets makes known to thee what shall come to pass!" How earnestly the king listens! How earnestly we listen! If Daniel gives a panorama of the great events which have happened from Nebuchadnezzar's time down to our own, then-then we shall know what we have often longed to know of the future.

A Dream Sent by God

Confidently Daniel goes on: "Thou, O king, saw, 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 saw 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 threshing floors. 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,” said Daniel, with calm confidence. The king’s memory awakened, quick and eager, and his heart assented: “Yes, this is the dream!”

How Simple the Explanation!

“We will tell the interpretation thereof before the king,” Daniel went on.

“Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

“And where so ever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into your hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.”

“I--my Babylon--is the head of gold,” thought the king. “Good! But what shall come to pass hereafter? If the God of heaven has given the world dominion to me so that I may be victorious wherever my armies march, will Babylon’s rule last for ever? What is Daniel saying now?”

“After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee.”

“What?” thinks the king. “Will my kingdom pass? Will an inferior defeat the stronger?”

“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 breaks in pieces and subdues all things: and as iron that breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.”

“But those strange feet--what can they signify?” thinks the ruler of the golden kingdom.

The voice of Daniel goes on: “And whereas thou saw 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 saw 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.”

"Strange feet--mystery of iron and clay--but now that stone?" Nebuchadnezzar thinks, amazed.

"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 and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou saw 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."

As Nebuchadnezzar thus saw unrolled before him the vivid procession of world kingdoms to the end of time--to the setting up of the Eden-kingdom again--his heart was deeply moved. He seemed to realize that he was in the very presence of the God of heaven. Forgetting his royal dignity, he fell upon his face and actually worshipped Daniel.

"Offer an oblation and sweet incense before Daniel!" he commanded.

"Of a truth," he acknowledged to Daniel when he had somewhat recovered from his emotion, "your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou could 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 the chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon."

The Detailed Interpretation of the Dream

How strangely that marvelous dream from God has been fulfilled! How easy it is to understand! "Thou art this head of gold," said God's interpreter. "Thou - Babylon" (pointed out and named in Daniel 2:37, 38). Nebuchadnezzar, hoped that his kingdom would stand for ever as nations hope in these days. What nation could vanquish his armies? And who could break down those mighty walls and take his great city? Why, Babylon was strong enough to defy a siege of a thousand years' duration!

But Babylon's armies were beaten, and the city of Babylon was taken. Taken practically "without fighting," as Cyrus himself boasts in an inscription. The armies of the Medes and Persians surrounded the city, and secretly made plans to turn the Euphrates into another channel. This they did on the night of Belshazzar's feast. Slowly the waters sank, and then the Persian soldiers entered at the river

gate at the corner of the city. They rushed along the river bed, and, finding the gates to the streets open, as they had hoped, they took possession of the city. The king was killed, and the proud empire of Babylon went down for ever.

The Medo-Persian empire then became the world's greatest power. Its territory stretched from India to Greece, and from Russia to Libya and Ethiopia. But Medo-Persia passed away, vanquished by Greece. Both these world kingdoms are pointed out by name in the Scriptures See Daniel 8:20, 21. While Alexander lived it seemed as though Greece were invincible. There seemed every prospect that the great empire would endure for ever. Just as it seems with some nations of today. But when Alexander died his kingdom was divided into four parts. And, behold! a new power arose in the west, and Greece was crushed by Rome.

That Rome was the fourth world power is shown in the Scriptures also. See Luke 2:1. Rome had the power to tax "all the world." How long the power of Rome endured! Symbolized by the legs of tough, durable iron, it seemed as though its power would never be broken. Even now we have many Roman laws and customs. Its language is still used in the medical and scientific world.

But Rome fell, as Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece had fallen before. Angles and Saxons took Britain, Franks took Northern France. The Suevi took Portugal. The Visigoths took Spain and south-west France. The Burgundians took south-east France. The Alemanni, Lombards, and Ostrogoths took part of Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. The Heruli took Italy. The Vandals took North Africa. [7]

Thus imperial Rome's territory was divided among these ten tribes, who were in large degree founders of the present nations of Western Europe. Some weak; some strong. What an astonishing vision is this! It stretches from Babylon's time to the time of the crash of world empires in the setting up of God's kingdom. Gold, silver, brass, iron! The vision portrays four mighty world empires, then the fourth divided into a number of kingdoms.

Babylon, the golden kingdom, was followed by Medo-Persia in 538 BC. Medo-Persia ruled two centuries and then was overcome by Greece in 331 BC. Greece took the power in her turn, but came under the rule of Rome in 168 BC. Rome endured three times as long as any of the three preceding empires. But by AD 476 her kingdom had broken into fragments. The "Ten Kingdoms of Western Europe" ruled in her place. Will they ever be united as one great "world-power" again? Never!

Charlemagne tried to weld Europe into one. Napoleon wished to do so. Kaiser Willhelm followed suit, hoping for world dominion; Adolf Hitler had far-reaching plans for the same. But never again will this take place. No, the feet have the weakness of clay as well as the strength of iron. "They shall not cleave together, even as iron is not mixed with clay," declares the voice of God.

Good News for Our Day

But "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." This is the best news the world has ever heard! This prophecy is sure as the rising of the sun. It will come to pass at the time appointed. When God announced that the Flood would come after one hundred and twenty years--the Flood came. When God declared seven years of plenty in Egypt, and then seven years of famine--the plenty and the famine came to pass.

When God declared that Israel should be freed from Egypt after four centuries--they marched out at the time appointed. Not all the armies or dictators in the world could prevent it. So when God declares that in the days of these kings--our own time--earthly kingdoms will crash and crumble and be seen no more, while He will set up His glorious Eden-kingdom of everlasting health and peace, then, thank God, it will come to pass as He has appointed.

In our own time - "in the days of these kings" Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is coming to reign over the world. And His kingdom shall stand for ever. He who welcomed the mothers and blessed their boys and girls, is calling us now. His kind and tender voice invites us, at this moment, to become His dear children. And to as many as open the heart's door to Him now, to them gives He "the right [margin] to become the sons of God. [8] Then, "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him. [9]

"And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." [10]

What a blessed time of peace and progress His coming will usher in for those who trust in His name! What a sad, sad disillusionment to those who reject Him! But "yet there is room." Our heavenly Father will not refuse even the weakest or the most sinful who turn to Him in confidence. If you come to Him just now, turning your back on sin, He will in no wise cast you out. His arms of love will welcome you. Though your feet may have slipped over and over again, He will receive you and call you His own. Do not fear to trust Him.

REFERENCES:

1. Daniel 2:29.
2. Myers' General History, Page 5.
3. Daniel 2:1.
4. Psalm 56:3; Psalm 112:7.
5. Jeremiah 33:3.
6. Deuteronomy 29:29.
7. Great Empires of Prophecy, Pages 677, 678.
8. John 1:12, 13.
9. 1 John 3:2.
- 10.1 John 2:28.

The Great Image of Daniel 2

