

2. Back to the future

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I think that it is a kind of fun to watch animal sleeping, especially when they have dreams. Some growl and twitch. When people have dreams, they can be down right scary, or completely silly, or one of those dreams "I-have-no-idea".

We are in one of the great sections of the Word of God as far as prophecy is concerned. The multimetallic image in chapter 2, the four beasts in chapter 7 and the seventy weeks of Daniel in chapter 9 form the backbone of biblical prophecy. The teaching the Lord Jesus did in the Olivet Discourse was based on the Book of Daniel.

In this case, king Nebuchadnezzar had a dream from God of heaven. It was about what to happen in the future, to show and to warn to king Nebuchadnezzar. In the Bible, there are many dreams and their interpretations.

So what is the difference between "dream" and "vision?" Dream from God happens in the state of a person's sleeping, the person have a dream and God reveals Himself or His plan to the person. For the vision case, God uses the person's awoken state to show His ways.

In one night, the King of all kings who never slumbers visited a sleeping king in his dream.

A. THE DREAM AND INTERPRETATION, PLEASE

Daniel 2:1-13 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." 7 They answered again and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation." 8 The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm: 9 if you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation." 10 The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. 11 It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." 12 For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave a command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 13 So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.

King Nebuchadnezzar reigned over the Babylonian Empire from 605 to 562 B.C. It is hard to say if Nebuchadnezzar really remembered the dream or not. So Nebuchadnezzar called all these losers of his kingdom: Deon, Eric Estrada, Janet Jackson, Shirley MacLaine and the rest of psychic mumbo jumbos from 1-900-PSY-CHICS.

The magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans comprised the brain of Babylon. The magicians were diviners who used charts or magical designs to answer people's questions. The sorcerers practiced the black magic art of contacting the dead to discover the future. And the Chaldeans were "a special class of astrologer-soothsayers" who apparently acted as spokesmen for these groups of Babylonian.

These fakers and con-men were really on the spot, because the king wanted not only an interpretation of the dream, but also a description of it. Any man could "invent" an interpretation, but it was impossible for them to describe a dream they had never seen. They tried to stall for time, hoping the king would change his mind. But he was not buying their story, only making him mad. I guess that it is one way to down-sizing King Nebuchadnezzar's payroll expenditure.

Last year people in America spent 2 billion dollars on psychics industry: horoscope, psychic hotline, fortune telling and palm reading. Those people have to be flat out dumb. Because if these psychics are real and they really know the future, why don't they buy the stocks that are going to hit big and become filthy rich or buy the exact lottery ticket to be a millionaire. They are nothing more than bogus, fake and agents from the pit of hell.

They cannot discern the depths of His counsel, communicate with His heart, or reveal His way. Sovereignty and sorcery are as far apart as heaven and hell. No one knows about future except God Himself.

From Daniel 2:4 to 7:28, the text is in Aramaic – not Hebrew. This is the only section of the Bible written in Aramaic. This was the language of the Babylonian Empire. It was the language of the Gentiles, the language of the world at that time.

B. DANIEL – A MAN OF GOD AND A MAN OF THE WORD

Daniel 2:14-23 Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon; 15 he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel. 16 So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. 17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, 18 that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven. 20 Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His. 21 And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. 22 He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him. 23 "I thank You and praise You, O God

of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, And have now made known to me what we asked of You, For You have made known to us the king's demand."

We have to admire the courage of Daniel, because he faced the chief executioner boldly and wisely.

Proverbs 28:1 The wicked flee when no one pursues, But the righteous are bold as a lion.

Daniel's calmness in the crisis showed what kind of man he really was. Crises do not make the man, they reveal the man.

Note that the king gave Daniel time, even though he had refused to give the other wise men time. Daniel and his three friends knew what to do. They spent the next hours in fervent prayer to God.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Psalms 25:14 The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, And He will show them His covenant.

The smartest thing we can do when in trouble is to pray. God answers the prayers of His people. We don't need to panic and worry. Actually, they don't do us any good other than giving us ulcer.

If I was Daniel, I would leap out of bed, dive into a robe and bolt for the king's palace right after I received the answer from God. But Daniel pauses to acknowledge the Giver of the interpretation. In other words, Daniel did what we often forget to do, "Praise and Thanksgiving."

Do we give thanks to God for each day? Do we give thanks to God in everything?
1Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Daniel's short praise and adoration for God answering their prayer gives us some insight into why God could use him in such a mighty way and why this young man had so much wisdom. In his short psalm, Daniel quoted at least fifteen passages of scripture: Genesis, Exodus, 2 Chronicles, Job, Psalms and Isaiah. If we want wisdom, we need to dig into the Word of God. It will teach us, lead us, strengthen us, heal us, encourage us, cleanse us and guide us.

C. THE WISDOM FROM GOD, NOT FROM THE WORLD

Daniel 2:24-30 Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation." 25 Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation." 26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?" 27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. 28 But there is a God in heaven who

reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: 29 As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. 30 But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

Arioch was trying to exalt himself in the sight of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel chose to ignore Arioch's attempt to get some recognition and instead, directly addressed the king, giving God all the glory.

D. THE KING'S DREAM

Daniel 2:31-36a "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. 32 This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. 36 "This is the dream.

By listening this first sentence, king Nebuchadnezzar dropped his jaw in awe and surprise. Because he just realized that this Danny Boy knew what he dreamed.

The head of this magnificent statue was composed of the finest material, but from the figure's breast and arms down to its feet, the value of its materials decreased.

E. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE KING'S DREAM

Daniel 2:36b-45 Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. 37 You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; 38 and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all--you are this head of gold. 39 But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. 40 And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. 41 Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. 43 As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. 44 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. 45 Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and

the gold--the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."

Just like a little smooth stone that was powered by the Holy Spirit left the sling of David and killed Goliath, a stone was cut out without men's hands destroyed the whole statue. It just didn't take the statue down, it completely demolished it and left nothing. On top of it, it became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

I am sure that by now king Nebuchadnezzar cannot even breathe, because he is reliving through the dream and the interpretation is unfolding right before his eyes.

Thanks to God, our God didn't leave the interpretation of the dreams to anyone to grab. God Himself clearly explained it through the mouth of Daniel.

Each metal represented a different kingdom:

1) Babylon was the head of gold.

2) It would be followed by the Medo-Persian kingdom in 538 B.C., the breast and arms of silver.

In overnight, the great Babylon was conquered by the Medo-Persian empire. King Darius the Mede required conquered nations to pay tribute in silver, which, interestingly, corresponds to the silver chest and arms.

3) It would come Greece in 330 B.C., the belly and thigh of bronze.

Alexander the Great had extended his rule as far as India and destroying the Persian empire. The Greek soldiers used shields made of bronze hence the bronze image.

4) Rome would follow as the two legs of iron in 146 B.C.

Roman military with their iron weapons conquered the Europe and surrounding nations. The Romans perfected the usage of iron. Later the Roman Empire did divide into Eastern and Western parts as the two legs show.

5) The feet of iron and clay represented the kingdoms at the end times.

A continuation of the Roman Empire divided into ten kingdoms that being signified by the ten toes. Of course, the final "human kingdom" on earth will be that of the antichrist during the last part of the Tribulation.

How will it all end? Christ, the Stone will suddenly appear and destroy the nations of the world, setting up His own worldwide kingdom of power and glory.

This image, then, is a picture of world history. You can see that the materials in it decrease in weight – from gold to clay – so that the statue is top-heavy and easily pushed over.

The Roman Empire outwardly would disappear, but its laws, philosophies and institutions would continue until this very day, taking us down to the "feet of clay." The only hope for this world is the return of Christ. When He comes to the earth, it will be to conquer the nations and to establish His own glorious kingdom.

F. DANIEL'S PROMOTION

Daniel 2:46-49 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. 47 The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the God of

gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret." 48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

Daniel was honored and promoted because he was faithful to God.

We shall meet these same kingdoms again in chapter 7.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) God works best in humanly impossible predicaments.

Sometimes God allows us to be pushed to the edge of disaster, where there's no way out. Then He says, "Jump! I'll catch you." And He does. And we realize afresh that He can BE TRUSTED.

2) Our most effective source of stability is prayer.

Somehow we think that there is power in the prayer itself. Unless our prayers are designated to our one true God, they are nothing more than hot breaths with a few desperate words. Our prayers become powerful and effective, because the One who listens is ALL POWERFUL and ALL KNOWING and EVERYWHERE.

3) When God works, there's no room for pride, only praise.

Praise means recognizing who God is and what He has done. Let's be careful not to cheapen our praises to God to nothing more than a religious mantra or ritual we go through before Bible teaching in the service. Be specific. Give God the credit and glory for His specific blessings. And let's remember we are nothing without Him.

4) All investments and dreams in earthly kingdoms are temporary at best. Put your hearts in God and His kingdom. You will never regret it.