

Sent: Wednesday, March 02, 2016 10:26 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Daniel 2

Daniel 2 draws attention to the character and "destinies" of two of the most intriguing and consequential, and yet contrasting, individuals in all of human history--Daniel and Nebuchnezzar! But even more than that--to a sovereign God who, as Wiersbe says, "rules and overrules" in the affairs of nations and individuals--and, in our text last nite, reveals "profound and hidden things."

In Daniel 2, we catch a glimpse into the early reign of Nebuchadnezzar, generally considered as the greatest king of the Babylonian empire. God actually referred to him as His "servant" (in Jeremiah 27:6; 25:8; and 43:10)--sent to bring "desolation and horror" to the people of Judah as a consequence for their idolatry, unfaithfulness, and disobedience to God (though not without the promise for eventual restoration)!

Nebuchadnezzar would be remembered down through the ages for his mighty victories against Egypt and Assyria, among others; for the great "walls" he constructed to protect the city of Babylon--56 miles in length, triple-lined in places, encircling an area of 200 square miles, and wide enough to accommodate chariot races across the top. Bricks on the outer edge of the walls bore the inscription: "I am Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon"! He (like someone else we hear so much about these days!) was really into "building walls," which supposedly rendered the city "impregnable"! But only for a time!

He also built the famous "Hanging Gardens of Babylon" (for his wife to remind her of the beauties of her homeland in Persia), which later would be designated as one of the Seven Wonders of the World! And he spared no expense in building a magnificent palace for himself which was covered with gold and precious jewels, dedicated to the pagan god, Marduk!

And yet, despite his material success, he was greatly troubled by dreams, and worried about the future of his kingdom! And he took out his anger and frustrations on all the "wise men of Babylon" whom he ordered to be executed, after they were unable to respond to his "unreasonable demand" for them to both "made known to him his dream, as well as its interpretation!" Such was the character and temperament of Nebuchadnezzar when things didn't go his way!

The dreams, as it turned out, contained a message sent from the "God of heaven" to reveal the "mystery" of things to come! This included the rise and fall of four successive empires, including Babylon--followed by Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. But it also calls for reconstruction of the Roman Empire at the end of time--involving a 10-nation coalition--and pictures the great tribulation, Armageddon, and the second coming of Jesus Christ, to conquer Anti-Christ and set up His kingdom and reign over all the earth! And, as Daniel notes, His kingdom will reign forever! But more on that in the lessons to come!

By contrast, in Daniel 2, we saw the faith and godly character of a growing teenage boy named Daniel! We saw the calmness and steadiness he displayed when notified of the death sentence for all the wise men of Babylon--which included him; the "discretion and discernment" shown to Arioch, the designated executioner; the courage he exhibited in standing before Nebuchadnezzar and requesting time to confer with the God of heaven; the priority he gave to meeting with his "Hebrew brothers" for prayer and guidance; the praise he offered to God upon having the "mystery" revealed to him in a night vision; his concern for saving the lives of the other "wise men of Babylon;" the way he assured Nebuchadnezzar that it was the "God in heaven," and not he, who

"reveal mysteries;" his clarity in revealing the details of the dream and its interpretation to Nebuchadnezzar; his loyalty to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; and the way he handled all the "homage" from Nebuchadnezzar after the crisis was over!

We were particularly impressed with how Daniel praised God (in Dan. 2:20-23) after the mystery was revealed to him: "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him! It is He who changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the Light dwells with Him..."

David Jeremiah, in his book, "Agents of Babylon," writes that Daniel was "a man on earth who was in touch with heaven and therefore able to bring heaven to bear on the things of earth! And that's actually a pretty good definition of a Christian today!"

In retrospect, the question is raised: Why would God speak directly through dreams to a pagan king like Nebuchadnezzar? The answer, again according to Jeremiah, is that it's because Nebuchadnezzar was the first ruler during "the times of the Gentiles," a term Jesus used in Luke 21:24 to describe the "period of history when Israel's national life is dominated by Gentile nations--that will all come to an end when Jesus Christ returns!"

We're reminded (in Prov. 21:1) that "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it whithersoever He wishes!"

And as someone has said: "We don't know what the future holds; but we know who holds the future!"

Seems appropriate to end our study again with the song and the challenge for all of us: "Dare to be a Daniel; dare to stand alone; dare to have a purpose firm; and dare to stand alone!"

Have a great week, men!

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