

Daniel 05-10-23b

Let's pick up our study now in Daniel chapter 2. We have arrived down in verse 29 where Daniel is about to reveal to Nebuchadnezzar what God has revealed to him. This is another great principle and there are so many you could probably spend months and months going through the book of Daniel and drawing out the interpretations and applications that are pertinent to our lives day by day as believers. When Daniel is faced with this great crisis, he is focused on God.

He says, I'm going to go to the people of God. I'm going to pray to God. God gives me the answer and I praise God and now as I go to implement that answer and that solution, I acknowledge that it is of God and from God and that the entire situation has been created by God.

We sometimes want to embellish or to, you find this a lot, I don't remember it ever happening with anybody I know here, but if you look at people on television, you move in circles and you find that people want to do what I call the Jesse Jackson, to do the Jesse Jackson. There's something important happening somewhere. Well, Jesse Jackson wants to get on a plane and go there and wrap himself in it.

If a hostage is taken, Jesse wants to go get him loose and then be seen on camera leading them out. You remember he did that a few years ago. And the devastation in New Orleans, well, Jesse wants to fly down there and get himself on camera doing something.

And this is what Ariok does. Great crisis. The only thing Ariok can do is hack up a bunch of wise men.

But when he finds out that Daniel is going to reveal the answer, he wants to be the guy to take Daniel in. He was involved in the earlier part of the chapter in letting Daniel know that the axe was about to fall. And Daniel asks him, why is the decree so urgent, so hasty? Ariok explains it to him.

So then it says in verse 16, Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time. But it appears that Ariok didn't know that Daniel had gone to the king. Maybe Daniel went through the master of the eunuchs.

Maybe he was favored and well thought of by those in the palace who had the oversight. And so it appears that he used some means other than Ariok, because when Daniel goes to Ariok and says, I've got the answer, Ariok goes in and tells Nebuchadnezzar, I have found a man of the captives of Judah. And he wants to sort of bask in the reflected glory of Daniel.

Of course, this is a little bit of a gamble, I guess, on Ariok's part, because if Daniel gets it wrong, Nebuchadnezzar could come back and say, who brought this idiot in here? Ariok? But Ariok seems to have confidence in Daniel. So the king answered and said to Daniel, who of course is

introduced to Nebuchadnezzar as Belteshazzar, are you able to make known to me the dream? Daniel says, there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets. 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. And Daniel proceeds with confidence to communicate the Word of God. You're never on safer ground than when you are stating the clear communication of truth to be found in God's Word.

It is the Word of God. It's living and powerful. It's sharp like a two-edged sword.

It pierces, it divides, it enables, it empowers. And why do we feel the need to embellish it? Why do we feel the need to add to it or to modify it or to somehow wrap ourselves in it? There is a lot of celebrity-ship involved in our modern day with TV ministries and book ministries and radio ministries and so on, where people are sort of making a name for themselves as they minister the Word of God. Now, Daniel is going to end up having a name for himself, but it certainly isn't something that he sought or cultivated.

He's not doing the Jesse Jackson. He says, this is from God, and I'm going to tell you what God says. And that's really what our approach should be.

Be ready always to give an answer to any man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. And be sure you have written your hymn of praise to God before you do. So, verse 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. Dreams, visions, can be a lot of things. And one of the safe ways of interpreting dreams for the Chaldeans and the astrologers would be to say, well, O King, this dream is a review and a summation of your past victories.

It could be something about the past. It could be something about the present. The first thing Daniel communicates to Nebuchadnezzar is, this dream, these visions, deal with the future.

It is predicting the future. As for me, I'm going to tell you what the future is going to be. He says in verse 30, 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. Our sakes, who make known the interpretation to the King. And Daniel acknowledges not only that God is the one who has revealed this, but that he has had assistance.

And this is an acknowledgment of the prayer and companionship and encouragement of his three companions. It is for our sakes, who make known, plural, the interpretation to the King, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart. So, the first thing Daniel says is, this dream

is about the future.

The second point that he makes is, there is a purpose in this dream. And it's a two-fold purpose. To deliver us, and Daniel includes his friends, who are the agents of delivering this, and to make known to you, O King, the thoughts of your heart.

Now, Daniel is going to launch into the formal statement of the dream. 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.

This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 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. 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. This is the dream.

This is the dream. Well, it's very detailed, it's very specific. It has this giant image made of five different sections, composed of five different kinds of material.

Head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze or brass, legs of iron, and finally the feet, partly of iron and partly of clay. The entire image is brought down when the feet of mixed iron and clay are smashed by this giant stone that is an unhewn stone. The stone that struck the image then becomes a great mountain that fills the earth.

This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. Verse 37, You, O king, are a king of kings, for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength and glory.

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. Remember we reviewed in the historical context, there has never been an empire like the Babylonian Empire to this point in history.

No one has subjugated as much territory as Nebuchadnezzar ever. He will be surpassed in terms of pure acreage by Alexander and the Romans and so on, but up to this point in history, no one has been the master of this large a domain. You are the head of gold.

But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours, then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. 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.

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. 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. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the feet of men, but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.

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. 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." What Nebuchadnezzar could not know, what Daniel was not in a position to see historically, was that the head of gold representing the empire of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar and for a few years his successors, would be the greatest empire of the ancient age. Following this is going to be the Medo-Persian empire, hence you have the dual nature of the shoulders, the chest and arms, indicating its dual nature. Later on Daniel is going to have visions that tell us that one side is stronger than the other.

In the same way that a right-handed person, if you measure your hand you find that your right hand is slightly larger and more muscular than your left hand. If you are left-handed it is reversed. In the same way, notice we are not footed, we can be left or right-handed.

Nobody says, well I am right-footed. I am left-handed and right-footed. We don't have a distinction in our feet, but we have a distinction in our hands, usually.

There are some people, like my daughter, who don't seem to have any distinction, they are ambidextrous. This image is going to have a strong side and a dominant side. You have the Medes and the Persians.

You have Darius the Mede and you are going to end up with the Persians under Xerxes Ahasuerus that you find in Esther. Then you have the belly and thighs of bronze or brass. This is going to be the Greek empire that Daniel says is going to dominate the entire earth.

It is going to dominate the entire earth. This is accomplished under Alexander the Great. He stretches the limits, pushes the envelope, goes where no man has gone before in terms of conquest, but he is going to die at the age of 28, I think.

Then his kingdom after him is divided not just two ways, but actually five ways. This is represented by the legs of iron which eventuates in the Roman Empire. Iron, of course, is very typical of Rome and the Roman Empire.

They are the ones that really put their iron and steel to good use. The fourth kingdom is as strong as iron just as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything. Like iron that crushes, it will break in pieces and crush all the others.

This is the military might of the Roman legions unmatched in previous history. That takes you all the way down to the ground. Then you have a change in direction.

Everything has been vertical to this point. You have a head of gold, you have shoulders and arms, you have belly and thighs. By the way, Matt was telling me the other day on PBS about the Spartans, one section of the Greeks.

I saw a little bit of that late last night. You want to talk about a depraved, even though they were highly disciplined and in some ways had this tremendous self-discipline in other areas, they were just depraved. They ought to just put the word Spartan as a synonym for depraved.

Mandatory homosexuality for men, one thing or another, it was compulsory. I won't even go into the gory details. That's the mildest thing I can say about them.

I think it is not without significance that in the image, where do you find the private parts located? Where do you find the things that need to be covered up to hide the shame of nakedness? It is in the section of the image dedicated to Greece. It is just typical. It is just appropriate that all the body parts you use to be depraved are found in that section of the image.

Notice when you get to the ground and after the Roman Empire, there is a change because it is the feet, the toes, that are of iron mixed with clay. There is a difference. You're moving in a different direction to look at the feet.

Everything has been vertical from the head to the heel, but now you've got the feet sticking out in a different direction. That angle, that heel-ankle area is the great interruption, the part that is not visible. There is a change so that when the symbolism of this image resumes, you're moving horizontally instead of vertically.

That is the interval between the time of the Lord Jesus Christ in the waning days of the Roman Empire and the time of the revived Roman Empire, which those feet of iron mixed with clay symbolize. When you look in history, you cannot find any analog, you can't find any fulfillment. The head of gold is fulfilled.

The shoulders and arms of silver is fulfilled. The belly and thighs of brass is fulfilled. The legs of iron are fulfilled.

It's easy to document in history, but after Rome, you don't find feet of iron mixed with clay. These strong elements that are mixed with the weak, the brittle, that which is fragile. There is a part that is strong and there is a part that is fragile.

If you have an iron skillet and you have a ceramic cup, which one is strong and which one is fragile? It goes without saying. If you can somehow break those up and then intermingle them and shape them into the shape of a foot, how much pressure do you think that foot is going to be able to take? If it was an iron foot, it would stand for a long time. Remember the old statue

of Saddam Hussein that they pulled down when they invaded Baghdad? They had a hard time getting that thing down because the feet were really stuck on.

Even after they pulled the image down, the feet were still sticking up there, weren't they? Strong feet. Feet of iron. That's not what this image has.

It's iron mixed with ceramic. I promise you, if that statue of Saddam had had iron mixed with clay for feet, the thing would have come over in no time. It could have knocked it over with spit wads and one would be motivated to do so.

Well, iron mixed with clay. This is yet future. This has not happened yet.

The fulfillment stops when you hit the ground. When you touch the ground, the fulfillment stops and it's not until the future that the rest of the vision takes place because this great stone that is cut without hands is going to represent this kingdom that is going to rise up and crush all that come before it. The stone cut without hands strikes the image where? In verse 34.

If I was going to knock an image over, where would I strike it? I'd hit it in the center of gravity. If you're playing football and you're supposed to tackle somebody, where are you supposed to put your shoulder to knock him down? Center of gravity. Hit him in the chest.

Drop your shoulder and plow into him. Wrap him up. Knock him down.

This stone is going to smash the feet and the entire image is going to be broken in pieces. The stone cut without hands strikes the image on its feet of iron and clay. So, in verse 43, as you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men.

Who is they? Well, what defines the legs? The fourth empire. Iron. The Roman Empire.

And what defines it? What is it that continues or that is consistent from those legs down into these elements that are mixed with the ceramic in the feet? That is going to mingle with the seed of men, but they will not adhere to one another just as iron does not mix with clay. When it talks about the seed of men and it talks about the feet, you can't help but think back to the early chapters of Genesis. You can't help but think of that scene in the garden in Genesis chapter 3 and chapter 4 where you have the serpent beguiling the woman and the partaking of the fruit.

God coming in the cool of the day. Adam, why are you where you are? I was naked and I hid myself and then God speaks and you get the passing the buck deal all the way to the serpent. Then God addresses the serpent and curses it and says, I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed.

He shall bruise your head and you will bruise his heel. Well, here you have the seed of men mingled with. Now, which do you think? Is the iron or the clay the seed of men? It's the clay.

People are clay, right? We are the fragile element. What is the iron going to represent? Well, the

clay. If you are mixing with the seed of men, you are by definition not the seed of men.

So what do you have to be? We know from our study in the book of Revelation, we know from our familiarity with the future chapters of Daniel that angelic influence and angelic participation is evident in human history. It appears that there was angelic participation in the days of the Persian empire when Gabriel comes to talk to Daniel and he says, I was held up in getting here and I was doing battle with the prince of Persia and so forth. If there is angelic manipulation and angelic influence going on in the days of the Persians, it stands to reason that there is angelic influence at a national level in all of the stages of human history in the time of the Babylonian empire, the Medo-Persian empire, the Greek empire, the Roman empire, and will be again in the revived Roman empire.

We know that in the days of the Antichrist, read the book of Revelation, it is all about Satan trying to implement his plan and his policy in the latter days. He is going to personally take charge and he is going to have his minions all over the place. In the trumpet judgments that we have been studying in Revelation, you see that there is angelic activity both unfallen and fallen in that time.

So the iron here would seem to not only represent strength but also, when Daniel says that they will mingle with the seed of men but they will not adhere to one another just as iron does not mix with clay, that you are going to have confusion in the ranks of the demonic forces that are at work in the days of the revived Roman empire. We just saw this Friday night in Revelation where when the bottomless pit is opened up and the locusts come forth, they have a general. They have a king over them.

Abaddon and Apollyon controls them and keeps them in line and gives them direction and focus. But after that, when you have the 200 million soldier army coming forth, there is no king and there is no control. And when they wipe out a third of life, it is chaos.

And you get the idea that Satan himself is going to lose control of his own fallen forces. And one of the reasons that that final conflict is going to result in defeat and in dissolution and in Satan being bound for a thousand years is that they do not adhere to one another just as iron does not mix with clay. Those nations, the confederation of nations in the revived Roman empire, represented by horns and so on in the visions of both Daniel and in Revelation, that confederation breaks up.

It cannot maintain its unity. And behind those nations are fallen angels. They mingle with the seed of men in that sense.

In the days of these kings, notice it says, they will not adhere to one another. In the days of these kings, the God of heaven will set up. So we know that these elements of iron and clay are a mixture of human agency and some other agency at the king level.

And in those days, God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. The

kingdom shall not be left to other people. It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms.

Notice all these kingdoms are Gentile. But the stone made without hands, representing of course the Lord Jesus Christ, is going to crush all of those. And all Gentile kingdoms will be subordinated, will be broken.

Their power will be taken away. The great God is made known to the king. What will come to pass after this, the dream is certain and its interpretation is sure.

Well, why does God give this information to Nebuchadnezzar at this time? Does Nebuchadnezzar need to know about all the rest of the image? Does he need to know about the, you know, we're most interested in the feet because that's the part that's yet to come and is near at hand. But we're back in the vicinity of 602, 603, 604, 605 BC. Why does God send this vision to Nebuchadnezzar at this time? Nebuchadnezzar is the king of the greatest empire the world has ever seen.

And God, and he is concerned, he's troubled in his night visions. It's unprecedented. Nobody's ever done this kind of thing before.

God is positioning Nebuchadnezzar as his tool, as his implement to accomplish judgment, to further his plan and purpose for Israel, for Judah. So God tells Nebuchadnezzar, this is your place in history. You are the head of gold.

And there will others come after you, but all of them are ultimately going to be superseded. But you remember when we read in 2 Kings this morning, chapter 20, Hezekiah is told by Isaiah, you're going to be okay, but in a later day, the city's going to be sacked, the temple's going to be robbed, and your sons are going to be made eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. And what is Hezekiah's reaction? Well, he just wipes the sweat from his forehead as well.

At least there will be peace and truth in my days. And he's not so worried about what comes after. And the same idea here.

Nebuchadnezzar says, well, I'm the head of gold. This thing about the feet being crushed, that will be after my time. I don't have to worry about that.

He likes the idea of being the head of gold. But at the same time, the vision tells him that his reign and his empire are temporary and will be superseded. So this is going to be a factor when we get to chapter 3, isn't it? God has revealed to him what's about to happen.

He's revealed to him his place in history. And this is going to do two things. As Daniel said, the purpose of this dream is two-fold.

One is for our sakes, who convey the meaning to you. The other is for you. Nebuchadnezzar is informed of his place in God's plan, and something's going to happen with Daniel and his

friends.

And this is what we find out in verse 46. King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face prostrate before Daniel and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. Very typical of Nebuchadnezzar.

He is all about incense and offerings and religious ceremony. Then the king answered Daniel and said, truly, and notice, this is not worship. Daniel otherwise would be saying, please, oh king, don't worship me.

This is appreciation. This offering and so on is acknowledgement and honor and recognition. It's not necessarily worship.

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. Daniel has achieved his objective in ensuring that Nebuchadnezzar understands the source of this wisdom and this knowledge. Daniel doesn't stand there with the applause track running and the spotlights waving, saying, yep, I'm pretty cool.

I'm pretty good. I've put all these wise men in the shade. I'm the Babylonian idol.

Instead of American idol, he's a Babylonian idol. He beat out all the competition. Daniel achieves his goal because of the way he presented this information.

He introduced it and told Nebuchadnezzar all the way through, the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass. This ought to characterize our lives as well. People ought to know that anything good that comes from us, anything beneficial that comes from us, comes from God.

We are just the intermediate agency. Daniel accomplishes this. Nebuchadnezzar recognizes it.

You get the idea that this is the point of Nebuchadnezzar's salvation. He says, truly, your God is the God of gods. He is the Lord of kings.

He is the revealer of secrets, since you could reveal the secrets. The king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts. He made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon.

This had to be a mixed blessing for the men of Babylon. On the one hand, they're not killed and their houses are not made of dung heap, but it's almost as bad that the upstart first year student in the wise man academy winds up being in charge of all of them. People are always complaining about somebody being promoted ahead of them or over them or out from under them to be their boss and it kind of grinds.

But this is what happens. He is made the chief administrator of all the wise men of Babylon. Also notice Daniel petitioned the king and he sent Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego over the

affairs of the province of Babylon.

Daniel says, I appreciate being put in charge. I'd like to have some people to delegate to. I'd like these guys to be my staff.

And the king says, you've got it. So they do the day-to-day administration of the province and this is how these three men are going to spend the remainder of their lives administering the day-to-day affairs of the province of Babylon. One of which is the oversight of the captives by the river Kebar.

Why is it that those captives are well cared for? Why is it that Ezekiel and the rest of those individuals down there are not starving and are not being beaten and treated like the Israelite slaves in Egypt in the days of Moses' birth? It's a relatively comfortable captivity because Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are in charge of the government. It's like giving the keys of the jail to the prisoners. And who would have thought as these captives were led away from Jerusalem and marched that long distance to Babylon that they would find themselves in a prison camp under the auspices administered and overseen and provided by their own princes.

The three good princes that were left out of all of the nobility that failed God down in Jerusalem. What has God done? God has taken His people out from under bad leadership in Jerusalem, wiped out that bad leadership and put the three good leaders in charge of the good people who were sealed in their foreheads and qualified to survive the judgment. God takes care of His own.

This captivity ends up being a deliverance for faithful people in Jerusalem. Initially it looks terrible. I can only imagine what Noah's family thought when the ark slammed shut and the animal smells started drifting through the atmosphere in there and they started figuring out what are we going to do for light.

They sat there for seven days and the thing never moved and long about day six they're thinking, nice job on the ark but how long are we going to sit here? It didn't seem like a deliverance at the time and yet it turns out to be the greatest of deliverances. The most famous deliverance in the Bible is Noah's family surviving the flood and one that ought to be right up there with it is the faithful people in Israel like Ezekiel who are taken to a safe place and are cared for and provided for by the greatest princes, the only faithful princes left in the whole tribe of Judah and what a privilege for Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah to spend the remainder of their days looking out for their own. They actually get to fulfill the destiny that they thought they lost when they were carried away captive from Jerusalem.

They thought, well, I'm never going to be a prince of my people. I'm never going to be able to make a difference. I'm being dragged away here.

What will I ever be able to do? And here they are with the privilege of caring for their own people, God's people, for the rest of their lives. It's a tremendous feat of circumstantial

manipulation on God's part. There is nothing too hard for the Lord.

Many times we can't figure out how God is going to do what he's going to do but he's got it figured out and all we have to do is trust him like these men did and look at the great privilege and the great blessing and the great outworking of God's plan and purpose in their lives as a result of their faith. They trusted God. They didn't eat the king's meat and look at what God does with them for the rest of their lives.

Well, this is a good place for us to stop. We'll pick up and launch into chapter three and look at the image of gold. It's not an image with a gold head and silver chest and arms and belly and thighs of brass and legs of iron, is it? Nebuchadnezzar says, I can do the God of heaven one better.

I'll make my entire image out of gold. I'll create a dynasty and a posterity that will never be surpassed, that will never be replaced, will never be superseded and God's going to give him a different think on that. But let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for this wonderful illustration of your grace, your faithfulness to those who are willing to place their trust in you. We pray that we can be people of like faith, that your glory can be reflected in our lives in the same way that we see it reflected here in the lives of these great faithful men. We pray that in all things our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be glorified.

We ask it in his name. Amen.