

God Gave a Dream

‘A wife said to her husband over breakfast, “I had a dream last night that you gave me a pearl necklace. What do you suppose that means?” He answered, “You’ll find out tonight”. And sure enough, that evening he gave her a book entitled *Interpreting Dreams*.’ I wonder what happened next!

Remember that King Nebuchadnezzar had a most troubling dream. We may also wonder what happened with that situation after the king had ordered the whole lot of the wise men in the empire killed with the sword, Daniel and friends included. As we heard two weeks ago earlier in Daniel 2, the dream so upset the king that he could hardly think of anything else. Likely a recurring nightmare that just wouldn’t quit, it reappeared several times on different nights when he tried to sleep. To say that the king was out of sorts would have been an understatement. Which provides yet another reason for why he had insisted that all his “wise” men not only interpret the dream, but tell him what he had dreamed first—a truly impossible task for any mere human being! And when they finally summoned the courage to tell him point blank that what he asked was simply not possible, which he himself surely realized absent truly supernatural means, his rage stoked even hotter. Concerned that he and his beloved Jewish friends

would lose their lives over this, as we read before, they convened an all-night prayer meeting. And during the night our God gave Daniel the answers to all the questions about the king's dream.

But why a dream at all? Why give such a vision to a wicked, pagan emperor? We know that this is far from the first time God has given a dream to someone. In fact, it seems that this is one of God's favorite means of communicating. After all, we all know the old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words. And it's true that pictures convey much more than mere words. Pictures, images, moving pictures, video as it were, are far more information dense than just words. With one huge caveat: one must know what the images, symbols, things in the vision and dream mean. For example, without knowing what the icons mean in an elevator's control panel, one doesn't have any idea of what button to push. But once one knows that two arrow shapes pointing toward each other mean to close the doors, and two arrow shapes pointing away from each other mean to open the doors, well, all that meaning can be conveyed without using words at all.

For God, with the vast range of colors, images, sounds, feelings and emotions that are all components of visions and dreams He can communicate to us vast amounts of information and, yes, His Own feelings and emotions. Why, God in Holy Spirit can actually minister to us individually through our dreams, even if we don't remember them. But when there is a message that needs to be remembered, well, God makes it unforgettable. As in the

case here with King Nebuchadnezzar. Much like God did when He gave the dream of fat and skinny cows to the pharaoh of Egypt in Joseph's day, here God gives this pagan emperor, the then most powerful man in the world, leading the most powerful empire, the superpower of that era, a prophetic dream revealing the future, centuries and millennia into the future.

In just this particular instance, God reveals a glimmer of just how great He is. This vision displays His omnipotence. He controls who sits on what throne, and when, and when that nation or empire begins and ends. He shows here this most powerful man on the planet, just Who's Boss! And for the moment, Nebuchadnezzar agrees. So astounded is he at Daniel's ability to not only interpret the dream, but describe it in minute detail, at Daniel's continuing insistence that it was God in Heaven Who had revealed all this to Daniel, that Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself to point of bowing down before Daniel! Gasp! Really gasp! This was unprecedented and unheard of. The king of mighty Babylon bowing down in front of another human being, and not just any man, but a teenager, a something like 17-year-old Jewish boy. One of Babylon's conquered peoples no less. The conqueror bowing before the conquered?! Unbelievable. And the mighty conqueror then commanding all his people to similarly humble themselves and worship Daniel's God! Absolutely amazing!

Now back to the dream. What did it all mean? Well, God gave Daniel not only the dream, but the interpretation of its vari-

ous elements, all to impress on the most powerful man in all the world that the God of the Jews is the One and Only Living God. He did what no other god, idol, deity, supernatural whatever, could do. He proved Himself to be more powerful and knowing more than all others. Though King Nebuchadnezzar was suitably impressed at this moment, he seemed to be afflicted with the same malady that so many humans suffer: a faulty memory. For only a chapter later, the king is forced to acknowledge once again that God is God when Christ Jesus Himself, as yet unknown by name to anyone, appeared in the fiery furnace shielding Daniel's three friends from the flames for the crime of not bowing down to a statue that had been made to honor the king by some crooked, royal advisors jealous of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

In this momentous first dream given to the king, he saw an enormous sculpture of a man. The very fact that it was a man tells us that it is showing the works of mankind. Things not of God. This construct of mankind exists through many centuries. From the head downward, the centuries progress forward in time. The head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar himself. Gold was the most precious commodity in the ancient world, and in wealthy Babylon, gold leaf was applied just about everywhere in the capital city of Babylon. And the supreme idol deity of Babylon was marduk, the god of gold! That this head represented the king was totally appropriate and immediately recognizable as himself as soon as he knew that the whole statue represented humankind

through many ages. Below the head was a torso of silver. For Babylon, as great as it was, would not survive. Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty would not last. Babylon the conqueror would itself be conquered by the united Medes and Persians, modern-day Kurds and Iranians. Babylon fell only 64 years after this dream! Represented by silver in the statue reflects their lesser status in the greatness, glory and majesty of human kingdoms.

But the Medo-Persian Empire itself would not last. For God in His providence raised up another "upstart" ethnic group which would topple it. The Macedonian Greeks, under Alexander the Great in four short years completely overran the Medo-Persian Empire. In fact, the empire Alexander formed was the largest empire to date stretching from the Indian subcontinent to Egypt to the frontiers of Roman Italy. In the statue in the dream, it is represented by copper, which was the main metal the Greeks used. This, too, was perfectly recognizable. Though Alexander's empire did not last long, as he died at only 32 years old, the cultural and linguistic influence of Greece would last for centuries, and even millennia as the Greek language remained the lingua franca in the succeeding eastern Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, until the fifteenth century. It is no accident that Christ Jesus came during this period when the Greek language in which our New Testament was written was at the zenith of its power and richness as a language. Everything in God's timetable is perfectly positioned and accomplishes multiple things all at the same time. Only a

omniscient mind could keep track of billions of threads of history and bring them all to a climatic event at the absolute perfect time.

The two legs of the mankind statue were of iron, the most widely used metal of the next empire, the Romans. Because of the previous conquests of Alexander, the Romans could expand their cultural influence, largely derivative as it was from the Greeks. At the bottom of the man statue, the feet and toes were a mixture of iron and clay. Their specific reference is not clearly stated, but it seems they are a number of smaller nations that share a heritage from Rome and other weaker influences. Regardless of who they are, and frankly, they're almost certainly all about to be revealed in our own history, their time will be quite short indeed. For the interpretation concludes with verses 44-45 declaring that God will set up an everlasting kingdom that will pulverize all human kingdoms to dust. For there will be a stone cut from the mountain, not by human hands, thus it is divine, that will strike the toes, toppling the entire edifice, crushing all the kingdoms of earth. This rock will grow larger and larger until it encompasses the entire earth, and it will endure forever. That stone, which the builders rejected, not cut by human hands, is none other than Christ Jesus Himself, the Rock of our salvation. For this rock will crush all on whom it falls, and it is the rock on which Christ Jesus builds His church. And that, my friends, is the kingdom to which we belong! With our General, Lord Jesus, we win. We are the champions until the end of time and beyond!

