

Daniel 2 (Part 2) - John Karmelich

How many of us go through moments of doubt about God's existence, or even our belief that one has to believe Jesus is God in order to be saved! Congratulations you're human! I've heard of some incredible bible scholars who deal with their own moments of doubt. How does God in effect respond? I'd argue it's to study His Word, as 30% of the bible is predictions about what will happen in the future (from the writer's perspective). It's God's way of stating He and He alone knows the end from the beginning, and stating proof of what will happen in the future is His best way to remind us that all of "this" is real and it's worth trusting God even during our moments of doubt. With that said realize this section of Daniel is a prime example of that!

Let me summarize this section of scripture and then I'll come back to how it's relevant to our lives. We read of Daniel standing in front of the most powerful emperor the world has known to date. When that encounter happened, the emperor (Nebuchadnezzar) was troubled due to a bad dream. He decided that everyone on the "government payroll" who claimed to be wise or had access to the gods were due for a test to see if they had any significant power! Daniel was a teenage apprentice then, and was among the group of people taken captive from the land of Israel. The point is God told him what the king's dream was. The second half of Chapter 2 (this lesson) is Daniel explaining the dream to the emperor. To sum it up, that dream was in effect the (future to Daniel) history of that region, from when the Babylonians ruled that area, all the way when the Romans ruled six centuries later, plus some "end time" stuff! Yes this is a complicated dream which is why I wanted a separate lesson to describe it!

To me this text brings up questions. Why was this dream given to a non-Jewish king, and not a Jewish prophet? Why did God reveal the dream meaning to Daniel and not to the emperor himself? Obviously God's God and He can do what He wants when He wants! The key reason is the fact Daniel was taken captive during the start of the long time period when non-Jewish men ruled over Israel. In effect this is God's way of saying I'm not done with My people, even though they're not in charge of the place that I placed them in! It's a reminder that no matter what, God's still in charge. When things look bleak, God is still ruling over the affairs of mankind!

With that said, let me try to answer a few key questions as well as explain this text in more detail: Let us begin with the fact that Nebuchadnezzar was the first person to successfully destroy Jerusalem as a city (after they existed as a nation) and begin the long time period when non-Jewish people ruled over God's "world headquarters" here on earth! One reason for this message was for him (and us) to realize God is still in charge and He decides who will rule (where and when) and for how long!

OK no more stalling, onto the dream itself: Daniel himself tells Nebuchadnezzar what his dream that caused the edict of "Tell me what it means or die". Keep in mind there's a time delay so I'm sure that all of the facts were a bit fuzzy to the emperor at this point. Daniel started by saying the emperor saw a large statue. It had a head made of gold. That head was on top of a breast and arms made of silver, below that it had a waste and thighs made of bronze and its legs were iron and its feet were a mixture of iron and clay.

One has to admit, this is strange. What's even stranger is then the dream included an uncut stone which then destroyed the statue, and the stone took over the whole world. I have to admit if I had that dream, I would be thinking, "no more late night spicy food for me"! The good news is we learn what this does mean in this chapter, but the same vision is in effect discussed in Chapter 7 and even in Revelation 17. All I'm saying is whatever this is, it's significant enough to be discussed several places in the bible. Let

me put another way: Every aspect of Jesus first coming was predicted in the Old Testament in different places. A strange as this dream is validated by the fact much of it has already come true I'm certain the parts that haven't come true yet will, simply because I believe God's word, is well His word!

Meanwhile back to the dream itself. To understand it, one has to know a bit about Middle East history. One has to remember that God describes things from Israel's perspective. The gold head of this statue is referring to Nebuchadnezzar himself. That had to stroke to his ego! In fact that text doesn't name by name the kingdom that conquered Babylon or the next one. Why? So Nebuchadnezzar wouldn't know who to watch out for! The text just says three kingdoms will rise that are going to be inferior to his, as each kingdom in this statue was lower in value (gold, then silver, then bronze). History teaches us that the Persians conquered the Babylonians and the Greeks conquered Persia. The Roman Empire was the bottom part of the statue. Later in the book Persia and Greece are mentioned by name, but not Rome as it didn't exist when Daniel wrote the book!

The reason all of this is relevant to us isn't about making us experts in Middle East History. It is for us to realize that just as Jesus came to save our sins, He's coming a second time to rule the world from the nation of Israel. That's why Israel still exists as a nation today! For those who don't know the stone in the dream is Jesus Himself. Remember the uncut stone (as in it's from God) destroys the world empires and takes over the whole world.

That leads me back to ancient Middle-East history: The Persian Empire controlled more territory than the Babylonians. The Greeks had even more territory and the Romans controlled more than them. So why does the text say each of these empires were inferior to the Babylonians? Because the government structure of the other empires had some checks and balances. As the old joke goes, who conquered the Romans? Nobody! Rome split into two kingdoms. The western half died about 400 AD if memory is correct and the eastern half lasted until roughly 1450 AD.

If Jesus is the stone that toppled the statue, does the stone represent the Christian church which was set up during the time of the Roman Empire? I'd argue no, because Jesus isn't ruling over the world yet. As most scholars argue, it refers to a future time when the Roman Empire will somehow be revived yet it's not like the old one. There's a biblical expression used by Jesus called "The Time of the Gentiles". That refers to the fact that non-Jewish people will rule over Israel until the Messiah (i.e. Jesus) comes to rule the world! Even modern Israel is subject to the United Nations or the United States, so they aren't truly independent yet. Daniel's prediction not only includes those empires who ruled in the Middle East and much broader territories from around the Mediterranean to India as it was part of the Greek Empire! In this prediction the toes represent ten future kings (Revelation 17:12, cross-reference) who'll lead a new (revised) Roman Empire when Jesus "sets up shop". Yes, that'll be a sign of when it occurs. Does that mean Jesus can't come today as there is no empire exactly like that today? First of all the rapture of the church can happen at any time! Second, it could occur during the 7-year horrible time period that most of Revelation deals with. Remember that Daniel's prediction is that the bottom part of the statue was a mixture of iron and clay implying the "revised" Roman Empire will be a mixture of strong and weak at the same time.

OK John, you have to admit all of this sounds like you've had too much spicy food! For what it's worth Nebuchadnezzar promoted Daniel to his number two man after this! Daniel then gave his three Jewish friends important jobs. The point being that Nebuchadnezzar was impressed that Daniel knew what the dream was, and what it meant! Since we know from history that Daniel correctly named the 3 empires that followed Babylon, that's why I trust the future predictions made in this book. So how do we know Daniel wasn't late dated? It's an established historical fact that the entire Old Testament was translated

into Greek about 270BC, including Daniel. He lived when Nebuchadnezzar ruled, and in effect Daniel gave hope to Jewish people that all wasn't lost when "Gentiles ruled". The message for us is to trust in His word is true, even when we have moments of doubts!

If interested, the other two links on this section of the book are a more detailed lesson that I did write about twenty years ago. You're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John