

Sabbath School Lesson #3 – From Mystery to Revelation – 11-17 Jan 2020

Christ would have us know, as did Daniel, that God is over all. When God gave Daniel wisdom to know and interpret king Nebuchadnezzar's dream, "Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His" (Daniel 2:20). God is over all; "He changeth the times and the seasons; He removeth kings, and setteth up kings" (Daniel 2:21). He set Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, over all the kingdoms of the earth (see Jeremiah 17:5-8; Daniel 2:37-38); but when Nebuchadnezzar arrogated to himself divine power, he was driven out from men and went to live among the beasts, that he might know that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Daniel 4:32). Christ would also have us know that God dwells with men – God with us. When the Chaldeans protested to king Nebuchadnezzar that the king required too much of them, in demanding that they should declare his dream, they said that only the gods could tell such a thing "whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Daniel 2:11). But Daniel knew the true God, whose dwelling is with flesh, and he obtained the desired answer for the king. It is not enough to assent to the fact that Divinity is in the heavens. What we must know is that God is near at hand to help, and that "wisdom and might are His," as Daniel said. His name is Immanuel – God with us. If any lack wisdom – and who does not? – He will supply it, and as for strength, He will strengthen "according to His mighty power."

Like many today, the Chaldeans believed there was God but God's "dwelling is not with flesh" (Daniel 2:11). "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Of His work He said, "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (John 14:10). His life, therefore, was in the fullest sense a godly life. It is the life of Christ that saves us (Romans 5:10). Not the simple fact that He once lived on earth, but the fact of His now living in us. He is a present Saviour. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is born of God" (1 John 4:2). It does not speak about confessing that Jesus *did come* in the flesh, but that He *is come* in the flesh. Through Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, the life also of Jesus is to be manifested in our mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:11) that so we may be filled with the fulness of God (Ephesians 3:17-19). It follows, then, as a matter of course that, believing in Christ, we are justified by the faith of Christ, since we have Him personally dwelling in us, exercising His own faith. All power in heaven and earth is in His hands – knowing this, we simply allow Him to use His own power in His own way.

Last week we read about Daniel and his fellows in the king's training. Immediately after Daniel had finished his course, his talents were called into action. In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign as sole ruler of Babylon, but the fourth year after he had begun to reign conjointly with his father, he dreamed a dream which troubled him greatly, and the more so because he could not remember what it was. Excessively annoyed and troubled, he sent for the magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers, and demanded of them that they should tell him the dream. They replied: "O king, live forever; tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation." But Nebuchadnezzar could not tell the dream, any more than they could tell the interpretation without the dream, and after parleying with them for a while, he ordered that all the wise men of Babylon should be destroyed (see Daniel 2:1-13).

Although Daniel was not among those to whom the king had applied for an interpretation of his dream, the command was to destroy all the wise men of Babylon, and so it included him and his companions. It seems that the first intimation Daniel had of the whole affair was when the officers came to take him to the place of execution (see Daniel 2:14-15). Daniel immediately went to the king and asked for a little time, promising that he would tell the dream and the interpretation. Daniel did not use the respite granted to him in incantations, as the magicians would have done, but went to his house, and, with his three companions, prayed to the God of Heaven. "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of Heaven. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God forever and ever; ...; He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding. He revealeth the deep and secret things; He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my

fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee; for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter" (Daniel 2:19-23).

In this action of Daniel we have an example of true faith in God. As soon as the secret was revealed to him in the night vision, he began to praise the Lord. Daniel did not wait to see if the king would recognize what had been revealed to him, as being his dream, but was positive that the Lord had given him just what he asked for. Daniel evidently acted in accordance with the words of the Saviour: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). If this injunction were followed by all those who seek the Lord, how much praise there would be to God for blessings conferred. It was a trying occasion when Daniel went before the king to make known to him his forgotten dream, and one well calculated to cause a young man to tremble. If he failed, one word from the haughty monarch, who had once been disappointed, and who now believed that all his professedly wise men were knaves, would have cost him his head. But we may be sure that Daniel did not tremble, because he knew that he should not fail. He disclaimed the possession of natural wisdom more than other men, and said: "The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king; but there is a God in Heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days" (Daniel 2:27-28).

Then without any hesitation he proceeded to tell the dream, which we read in Daniel 2:31-35. The verses contain in outline the history of the world from the days of Nebuchadnezzar until the end of time. Immediately after relating the dream, the prophet addressed the king as follows: "Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of Heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. *Thou art this head of gold*" (verses 37-38). With simple words of divine truth, Daniel rehearsed the greatness of Babylon. The expression, "*Thou art this head of gold,*" does not refer to Nebuchadnezzar per se, but as the representative of the magnificent empire that the world ever saw, although Babylon owed her wonderful prosperity to him.

The extent of the Babylonian Empire is indicated in verse 38: "Wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all." This means universal dominion. A few years later, the prophet Jeremiah bore testimony to the same effect. The kings of Tyre, Edom, Moab, with Zedekiah, king of Israel, were contemplating a revolt from Babylonian rule. To show them the folly of such an attempt, the prophet, by the command of the Lord, sent a message to them, saying: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Thus shall ye say unto your masters: I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son" (Jeremiah 27:4-7).

This language is not figurative, for history testifies that Babylon was indeed the most magnificent city that the world ever saw. That Babylon was a great city, fitting the head of gold representation, well deserved the title given to it by the prophet Isaiah, – "The glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency" (Isaiah 13:19). To the mind of man it would seem that such a magnificent city must stand forever, but God had spoken to the contrary. Without pause, Daniel, said: "And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee" (Daniel 2:39). Jeremiah, when he spoke of the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar's empire, foretold the fall of Babylon, and also told under whose reign it should fall. He said: "And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come; and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him" (Jeremiah 27:7).

Thus we find that in the days of Nebuchadnezzar's grandson the kingdom of Babylon should pass away, and other nations and other kings should establish themselves, and serve themselves of this kingdom. And in the direct record of the fall of Babylon, given in Daniel 5, Nebuchadnezzar is repeatedly spoken of as the grandfather of Belshazzar, the king who was reigning in Babylon at the time of its fall – see our future study on Daniel 5.