

# **MARCH OF EMPIRE - LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF DANIEL**

*by Floyd Hitchcock*

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

#### **LESSON TEXT – Daniel 2:19:30**

*Always Remember That Daniel Was GOD's Great Prophet to the Gentiles -- Daniel Offered Praise to GOD Because of Answered Prayer -- We Should Do the Same Thing -- The Manner in Which GOD Revealed Such Divine Truth to Daniel Was Not Uncommon -- A Word of Admonition Concerning Ordinary Dreams and Dreamers -- The Purpose of King Nebuchadnezzar's Dream -- GOD Used Daniel to Reveal the Dream to the King -- The Dream was a Divine Revelation -- The Importance of the Different Kinds of Metal in the Image -- The Image Represented THE MARCH OF EMPIRE During the Times of the Gentiles as Confirmed by Secular History -- Present Forms of Government Will Fall Under the Power of CHRIST and a New Messianic Kingdom of Righteousness Will Be Established.*

I wish to remind you again that Daniel was the great prophet to the Gentiles. Therefore, a study of this Book of prophecy is of present interest and importance in view of those things which are coming to pass throughout the world in these days in which we live.

The first chapter of the Book of Daniel gives to us a personal history of Daniel and of his three companions, who were carried away captive out of Jerusalem to Babylon.

The second chapter opens with an account of the dream which Nebuchadnezzar had, and which troubled him greatly.

#### **THE THREAT OF THE KING**

In our last lesson we learned that the king could not remember his dream and that he threatened to destroy the wisemen of Babylon unless they should tell him what the dream was and the interpretation of it. This, of course, endangered the lives of Daniel and his three companions.

#### **DANIEL'S REQUEST FOR TIME**

We learned also of Daniel's request for time and of his promise to recover and to interpret the king's dream. This was purely an act of faith on his part, but he trusted that in answer to prayer, GOD would reveal the matter to him. This is exactly what came to pass.

After Daniel and his three companions had prayed about the matter, in verse 19 to 30, it says,

**"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 for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: 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.**

**Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation. Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation. The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? Daniel answered in the presence of the king, 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. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart"**

### **IMPORTANT NARRATION**

These words are mostly narration and require very little explanation to understand. They are necessary, nevertheless, because they reveal the fact and the manner in which the king's dream was revealed to Daniel. In verse 19 it says, **"Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision."**

### **GOD OFTEN SPOKE TO MEN BY DREAMS**

It was not uncommon for GOD to reveal things in this manner to men in those times. In Job 35:15-17, it says, **"In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumbering upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their**

**instruction. That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride, from man."**

Also in Numbers 12:6, GOD spoke to Israel saying, "**Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.**"

## **JACOB**

Indeed, the Bible is full of instances where GOD spoke to men through dreams. You will remember the account of Jacob and of the ladder which he saw in a dream reaching from earth to Heaven. GOD also spoke to Joseph, and to Solomon in dreams. When JESUS was born in Bethlehem of Judea, GOD spoke to Joseph of Nazareth in a dream and later to the wisemen, warning them to return another way.

We should not feel, therefore, that Daniel was in any way an exception to the general rule when he sought GOD earnestly in prayer and the truth, which, he desired to know, was revealed to him in a dream.

## **WE SHOULD BE CAUTIOUS**

I do want to add a word of admonition just here, however, regarding the matter of becoming superstitious and of placing too much emphasis upon dreams which may come to us at any time. Some dreams are caused by physical conditions and seemingly have nothing to do with divine revelation. Today we have the full and complete Word of GOD as a basis for our faith and practice. Therefore, the need for revealing things by dreams is not as great today, perhaps, as it was in olden times when the Bible was not yet fully provided, as a rule of faith and conduct.

I want to say, therefore, that GOD is able to reveal things in dreams if He chooses to do so. But at the same time, we should be careful, and not place too much emphasis upon those things which some people dream and which do not seem to coincide with the plain teachings of the Bible. If the thing which has been received in a dream is from the Lord, the person who has received it will not be puffed up over the revelation, but will rather honor GOD in all humility, as Daniel did.

## **DANIEL PRAISED GOD FOR ANSWERED PRAYER**

Notice again in verse 19 and 20 it says, "**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 for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his.**"

Daniel's true humility in the matter is further stated in the 30th verse of our lesson text, where he said, to the king, "**But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have, more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.**"

Therefore, our conclusion is that men who make much to do of dreams and who tell their dreams, in a spirit of personal superiority in order to exalt themselves, are dangerous men to follow and should be let alone.

As a result of the vision which he had received, in verses 21 and 22 Daniel said of the Lord, **"He changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: 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."**

### **WHY GOD GAVE THE DREAM TO THE KING**

The purpose of the dream which King Nebuchadnezzar had is clearly revealed in verses 28 and 29, where Daniel said to 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. Thy dreams, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; As for thee, O King, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass."**

### **THE DREAM REVEALED UNTO THE KING**

With these things in mind, we are ready to take up our study of the dream itself, which is recorded in verses 31 to 35, where Daniel said, **"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out, without hands, which smote the image upon his feet, that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image because a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."**

### **THE DREAM WAS OF DIVINE ORIGIN**

I want to say, first of all, that, it was a miracle of GOD's grace that such a dream as this, which was dreamed by King Nebuchadnezzar, was revealed to Daniel and was made known through him to the king. This marks it at once as a divine communication from the Lord to an earthly monarch. It therefore bears the stamp of divine approval and speaks with authority to all those who shall come to know its meaning.

### **THE DREAM WAS A DIVINE REVELATION**

What we have here in symbolic language is a divine revelation of the march of empire from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to the end of present world dominion. In other words, this

passage gives to us an outline of history during "**the times of the Gentiles**," which began with Nebuchadnezzar and the subjection of the Children of Israel to Gentile political overlordship, and which will continue until the present kingdoms of the world have been destroyed and the kingdom is restored to Israel, through the coming again of their Messiah.

### **THE IMAGE OF A MAN WAS A FIT SYMBOL**

It is interesting, to say the least, that this great metallic image which Nebuchadnezzar saw was in the form of a man. This was certainly a fit symbol to represent the times of the Gentiles during which period the government of the earth has been committed chiefly into the hands of men. The times of the Gentiles are often spoken of as "Man's Day." Perhaps that is the reason the image of a man was chosen by the Lord to symbolize the march of empire during the times of the Gentiles.

### **WHAT THE DIFFERENT METALS IN THE IMAGE INDICATE**

The next thing which we wish to mention about the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw is the fact that the metals of which it consisted deteriorated from top to bottom. We are told in our lesson text that the image's head "**Was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.**"

Since the image represents the march of empire through the times of the Gentiles, the different kinds of metal indicate a deterioration in the quality of Gentile governments. That, my friends, is exactly what has, and is coming to pass.

This is well confirmed in the interpretation of the dream as given in verses 36 to 43 of our lesson text, where Daniel said, "**This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. 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. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.**"

### **CONFIRMED BY HISTORY**

These words are not difficult of interpretation in the light of history. It is generally conceded that the first world empire was Babylon, whose ruler was Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore,

according to the vision, Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, for he represented the Babylonian empire.

As we all know, the second world empire was Media-Persia, which was represented by the silver in the image, which Nebuchadnezzar saw.

The third world empire was Greece, which was represented by the brass in the image. The fourth world empire, as we know, was Rome. This great empire eventually became divided into two parts, the eastern and the western, as represented by the two legs of the image, which were made of iron.

The feet of the image, according to Nebuchadnezzar's vision were part of iron and part of clay.

It is not difficult to see, therefore, that the last form of Gentile government will be an admixture of that which is strong and that which is weak. The ten toes of the image represents ten kings that shall arise, whose confederacy will constitute the last form of Gentile world dominion.

The revelation of the divine truth, thus given, was at once simple, and yet very profound. It is an old saying that, "prophecy is history prewritten." How wonderful indeed the in the dream which Nebuchadnezzar saw and in the interpretation of it which Daniel gave, we have an outline of world history and the march of empire during "the times of the Gentiles."

### **WHERE ARE WE TODAY?**

If you ask where we are today in the ongoing of events, as symbolized by this great image, it would seem that we are living in that period represented by the feet of the image, and I am not so sure but what some of the toes are already coming into view, for as we have stated, they represent ten kings who are to arise during the closing days of the Gentile age.

### **THE IMAGE IS TO BE BROKEN TO PIECES**

Another interesting thing about this great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw is stated in verses 34 and 35 where it says, "**Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet there were of iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.**"

Thus, my friends, we see that the Gentile age is to end abruptly, not in peace but with a great catastrophe that will destroy all Gentile governments in their present form.

### **A NEW KINGDOM WILL BE ESTABLISHED**

We now come to a very important prophetic announcement in Daniel 2:44-45, where it says,

**"And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold: God hath made known what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."**

These words, my friends, are a description of the future kingdom which will arise after the stone, which is mentioned in verses 34 and 35, strikes the image upon the feet and destroys all present forms of Gentile world government. In verse 35 it says, **"And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."** The marginal reading of this passage says, *"A mountain is one of the biblical symbols of a kingdom."*

Since this is true, we may affirm that the stone referred to in this passage, which is to smite the image of Gentile world dominion upon the feet, is none other than the Lord JESUS CHRIST who is the Son of GOD, the Messiah of Israel, and the Saviour of the world. The kingdom, therefore, which shall arise and fill the whole earth can be none other than the kingdom of the Messiah, which has been promised in the covenants of the Old Testament Scriptures, and which has been spoken of by the prophets. Therefore, it is the Messianic kingdom of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, which is referred to here, in this important passage, and which will be the fifth universal kingdom upon the earth. But mind you, such a kingdom can not and will not come, until after the stone shall have smitten the image upon the feet, and all present Gentile government shall have been destroyed.

## **AN OLD ARGUMENT SETTLED**

These words should settle once and for all the age-old argument as to whether CHRIST will reign over a literal or a spiritual kingdom. The fact of the matter is, that, it is both spiritual and literal.

When JESUS came in His first advent, the Jews rejected Him because they were looking for a king who would establish a literal kingdom and who would deliver them from under the yoke of Roman bondage. Because JESUS did not do this, at that time, they rejected Him and caused Him to be crucified. After His crucifixion, however, JESUS arose again from the dead and ascended into Heaven. There, he is waiting for certain things to be accomplished before He returns again to smite the image of Gentile world dominion, and to establish His own kingdom of righteousness.

## **SOME MISTAKEN IDEAS**

Today and throughout the church age multitudes of people, even among professing Christians, have assumed that because CHRIST did not establish a literal kingdom at the time of His first advent that His kingdom must of necessity be purely spiritual and that it belongs to Heaven, and not in any sense to the earth. In this, however, they have been as much mistaken as the Jews were when they rejected CHRIST because He did not establish a literal

kingdom. In consequence many professing Christians today are ready to reject CHRIST because He has declared, in His Word, that He is coming again to establish a Messianic kingdom of righteousness over all the earth.

But happy is the man who understands the scriptures and who knows that the kingdom of CHRIST is to be both literal and spiritual. The spiritual aspects of the kingdom will be based upon the work of CHRIST, which He accomplished for us, by His sacrificial atoning death upon the cross! The literal aspects of the kingdom will be based upon the promises, given in the covenants of the Old Testament to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and to David.

## **NEW TESTAMENT CONFIRMATION OF THIS TRUTH**

The New Testament also confirms the fact that CHRIST will come and reign in righteousness. In Matthew 25:31-34 it says, **"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."**

## **A PROPHETIC PICTURE OF MESSIAH'S KINGDOM**

The character of the Messiah's kingdom is beautifully described in Isaiah 11:1-9, where it says, **"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the sucking child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountains; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."**

This passage, my friends, shows the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and confirms the fact that the stone which was cut out without hands and which will smite the image of Gentile world dominion upon the feet, is to become a great mountain or Kingdom and fill the whole earth. We may rightfully speak, therefore, of this fifth, universal kingdom, which is to arise, as the "Stone Kingdom," for it is to break in pieces and destroy all present forms of Gentile government.

## THE STONE A FIT SYMBOL OF CHRIST

I wish to remind you that CHRIST is spoken of in the Scriptures as "The Stone." To the children of Israel He was a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. This is confirmed in I Peter 2:6-8 where it says, **"Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."**

## CHRIST A LIVING STONE

To the church also of the present age, CHRIST is described as a living Stone. This is confirmed in I Peter 2:4-5, where it says, **"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, and holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."**

## A WARNING TO THE UNSAVED

To the wicked of the earth also, CHRIST will come as a stone to break in pieces and destroy evil men, Kingdoms, and all wickedness out of the earth, in order that His own kingdom of righteousness may be established.

After our study and understanding of these things, I want to repeat again the words of our lesson text in Daniel 2:44-45, where it says, **"And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to the people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."**

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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