

BIBLE CHARACTERS

by

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Moody Press

CHAPTER 2

THOU ART THE HEAD OF GOLD!

"Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him" (Daniel 2:1).

We hear of Daniel again some few years later on, and under new conditions. The King of Babylon had a dream; and his dream greatly disturbed him. He musters before him the magicians, the astrologers, the soothsayers, and the Chaldeans (or learned men), and requires from them the interpretation of this night-vision of his. He either cannot or will not narrate to them the incidents of the vision, but demands an explanation without detailing what he had seen in his dream. **"The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces and your houses shall be made a dunghill."**

That was a pretty unreasonable demand. It is true that he offered them rewards and honors if they succeeded. But of course they failed. And they admitted their failure. **"There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore there is no king, Lord, nor ruler that asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth; and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with men."**

Except the gods. They did not mean the GOD of Heaven - Daniel's GOD. He could have revealed the secret quick enough. They meant the idol-gods of Babylon, with whom these so-called wise men thought, and wrongly thought, the power of interpretation lay.

"There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter". They were wrong there; and that they soon found out. The king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon; and the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

The king's officer came to Daniel; but Daniel was not afraid. Says the officer to him, You are classed among the wise men; and our orders are to take you out and execute you. Well, says the young Hebrew captive, **"the king has been very hasty. But let him only give me a little time;**

and I will show the interpretation."

He had read the law of Moses; and he was one of those who believed that what Moses had written concerning secret things was true: **"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us, and to our children."** He probably said to himself, My GOD knows that secret; and I will trust to Him to reveal it to me. And he may have called together his three friends; and have held a prayer meeting - perhaps the first prayer meeting ever held in Babylon. They dealt with the threatening message of the King of Babylon just as Hezekiah had dealt with the threatening letter of the King of Assyria a hundred years before. They spread it before the Lord. And they prayed that this secret might be revealed to them. And after they had prayed, and made their request to GOD - and the answer did not come right off, then and there - they went off to bed, and fell asleep.

I do not think that you or I would have slept much, if we had thought that our heads were in danger of coming off in the morning. Daniel slept: for we are told the matter was revealed to him in a dream or night-vision. Daniel's faith was strong: so he could sleep calmly in the prospect of death. If his friends did not sleep through the night it is most likely they were praying.

DANIEL STANDS BEFORE THE KING.

In the morning Daniel pours out his heart in thanksgiving. He blessed the GOD of Heaven. He had got into the spirit of Psalm 103: **"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!"** Paul and Silas had the same spirit of thanksgiving when they were in the prison at Philippi. Daniel makes his way to the palace, goes into the guard-room, and says to the officer: Bring me in before the king; and I will show unto the king the interpretation. He stands in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar; and, like Joseph before Pharaoh, before proceeding to unfold the dream, he gives glory to GOD: There is a GOD in Heaven that revealeth secrets. Daniel took his place as nobody: he himself was nothing. He did not wish the king to think highly of him. That is the very highest type of piety - when a man hides himself, as it were, out of the way; and seeks to exalt his GOD and lift up his Redeemer, and not himself. And then he proceeds to describe the dream: **"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."**

I can imagine how the king's eyes flashed out at those opening words; and I can fancy him crying out, Yes, that is it: the whole thing comes back to me now.

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.

Yes, that is it exactly, says the king; I recollect all that now. But surely there was something more.

And Daniel goes on: **"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.... This is the dream: and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king."**

And then, amidst death-like stillness, Daniel went on to unfold the interpretation; and he told the

king that the golden head of the great image was none other than himself. Thou art this head of gold! He then goes on to tell of another kingdom that should arise - not so beautiful, but stronger; as silver is stronger than gold: that described the Medo-Persian empire. But the arms of silver were to overthrow the head of gold. And Daniel himself lived to see the day when that part of the prophetic dream came to pass. He lived to see Cyrus overthrow the Chaldean power. He lived to see the scepter of empire pass into the hands of the Medes and Persians. And after them came a mighty Grecian conqueror, Alexander the Great, who overthrew the Persian dynasty; and for awhile Greece ruled the world. Then came the Caesars, and founded the empire of Rome - symbolized by the legs of iron - the mightiest power the world had ever known: and for centuries Rome sat on those seven hills, and swayed the scepter over the nations of the earth. And then, in its turn, the Roman power was broken; and the mighty empire split up into ten kingdoms corresponding to the ten toes of the prophetic figure.

I believe in the literal fulfillment, so far, of Daniel's God-given words; and in the sure fulfillment of the final prophecy of the stone cut out of the mountain, without hands, that by and by shall grind the kingdoms of this world into dust, and bring in the kingdom of peace.

Whilst the feet were of clay, there was some of the strength of the iron remaining in them. At the present day we have got down to the toes, and even to the extremities of these. Soon, very soon, the collision may occur; and then will come the end. The stone cut out without hands is surely coming - and it may be very soon.

What does Ezekiel say, prophesying within some few years of the time of this very vision?
"Remove the diadem, and take off the crown..... I will overturn, overturn, overturn; and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is: and I will give it Him."

What does Paul say? **"The appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; which in His time He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate; the King of kings; and Lord of lords;... to whom be honor and power everlasting."**

Yes, the Fifth Monarchy is coming: and it may be very soon. Hail, thou Fifth Monarch, who art to rule the world in righteousness, and sway the scepter from the river unto the ends of the earth. Shortly the cry, CHRIST is come! will be ringing through the earth. It is only a little while. Cheer up, ye children of GOD; our King will be back by and by! And to those who have not as yet given their hearts to CHRIST, I would say, Lose no time! If you want a part and lot in that coming kingdom of the Lord you had better press into it now while the door is open. By and by Too late! too late! will be the cry.

When King Nebuchadnezzar heard the full description of his dream and listened to its interpretation, he was satisfied that at last he had found a really wise man. He gave Daniel many great gifts, and raised him - just as Pharaoh had raised Joseph ages before - to a place near the throne. And when Daniel was raised to position and power he did not forget his friends; he requested of the king that they should be promoted; and they also were put in positions of honor and trust. GOD blessed them signally; and - what is more - He kept them true to Him in their prosperity, as they had been in their adversity.

From that moment Daniel becomes a great man. He is set over the province of Babylon: he is

lifted right out of bondage; right out of servitude. He was a young man, probably not more than twenty-two years old: and there he is - set over a mighty empire; is made, you might say, practically ruler over the whole of the then known world. And GOD will exalt us when the right time comes. We need not try to promote ourselves; we need not struggle for position. Let GOD put us in our true places. And it is a good deal better for a man to be right with GOD, even if he hold no position down here. Then he can look up and know that GOD is pleased with him: that is enough.

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT!

How goes the fight with thee
The life-long battle with all evil things?
Thine no low strife, and thine no selfish aim;
It is the war of giants and of kings.

Goes the fight well with thee
This living fight with death and death's dark power?
Is not the Stronger than the strong one near,
With thee and for thee in the fiercest hour?

Dread not the din and smoke,
The stifling poison of the fiery air;
Courage! it is the battle of thy GOD:
Go, and for Him learn how to do and dare!

What though ten thousand fall,
And the red field with the dear dead be strewn!
Grasp but more bravely thy bright shield and sword;
Fight to the last, although thou fightest alone.

What though ten thousand faint,
Desert, or yield, or in weak terror flee?
Heed not the panic of the multitude;
Thine be the Captain's watchword - Victory!

Dr. H. Bonar

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