

“THERE IS A GOD IN HEAVEN”

There is a God in heaven and that He is concerned with human affairs. We can see His hand in history, and we can recognize His divine foreknowledge in this prophecy. “There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown . . . what will happen in days to come” (vs. 28). His wisdom is available to man, to His servants the prophets such as Daniel. Through Daniel, it has been revealed to us. As we meet the 2,500-year-old word of Daniel, we meet the word of the living God today. He cared enough to speak this truth to one individual, Nebuchadnezzar, and He still cares enough to speak that truth to each of us today.

This is a “miracle story,” because its main point teaches that only God gives the kind of wisdom that can reveal the mysteries of life. Earthly kingdoms are transitory, but God’s kingdom is forever. His mystery plan of salvation climaxes with the endurance of His kingdom.

Daniel 2:1: “And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.”

The event described in this chapter is dated to the second year of King Nebuchadnezzar II, the best-known ruler of Neo-Babylon. This king’s long reign is usually divided in two parts. During the first part he may be called “Nebuchadnezzar the Destroyer,” while in the second part “Nebuchadnezzar the Builder.” The first years of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign were characterized by extensive military campaigns. All this success did not come without its toll. Heavy taxes as well as other forms of subjugation were causing rebellions throughout the empire. In spite of the great success, everyone’s future—even that of the emperor himself—looked rather uncertain. In response to this uncertainty, God gave the king a dream about the future of the world.

Dreams were viewed as customary ways in which the divine world communicated with human beings. There are a number of similarities between this chapter and the story of Joseph (Gen. 41-47). In both stories there is a king who is troubled by a dream, the professional diviners fail to dispel the ruler’s anxiety, a young Hebrew captive accomplishes what the established experts could not do, the faithful captive attributes his success to God, and the captive is promoted to

a position of enormous influence in the kingdom. Thus, like young Joseph who explained the pharaoh's dreams "when two full years had passed" (Gen. 41:1), "Daniel in the second year of his exile would enlighten his mighty captor and save others from certain death."

Daniel 2:2: "Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to show the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king."

Daniel 2:3: "And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream."

Because the dream was very disturbing and made Nebuchadnezzar afraid, he summoned his royal experts for a consultation early the morning after he dreamed. The function of the wise men's rituals at the palace was both explanatory and therapeutic. Explain the symbols and conduct the rituals to do away with the evil powers behind the dream.

Daniel 2:4: "Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation."

Chaldeans were members of the ruling class in Neo-Babylon. Their customary greeting, "O king live forever!" contains a tone of irony here because the story's conclusion is that only God lives forever.

In a normal situation, the king would tell his dream, and the wise men would explain what it meant and attempt to remove the evil consequences of an unpleasant dream. The very nature of the dream suggested to Nebuchadnezzar that it did not convey good news, especially since something terrible happened to the statue.

Daniel 2:5: "The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, 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."

It was believed that if a person forgot his dreams, that meant that his god was angry with him. The fact that Nebuchadnezzar demands his soothsayers to tell him the dream itself should not be taken to mean that he had forgotten it; rather, he uses this as a test in order to have assurance that they can give him a reliable interpretation of it. He found it impossible, when he awoke, to recall the particulars of the dream.

Daniel 2:6: "But if ye show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor: therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof."

The king uses both sticks and carrots, threats and promises. On the one hand, he threatens them with mass execution and total destruction of their property. On the other, he promises sumptuous gifts and rewards.

Daniel 2:7: "They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it."

The wise men did not think the king had forgotten the dream because they continued to plead with him to tell it to them.

Daniel 2:8: "The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me."

The more the wise men go out of their way in trying to please him and keep him calm, the more agitated he becomes because he finds their answers to be seductive but also evasive. In the end, he accuses them of a lack of loyalty and even conspiracy.

Daniel 2:9: "But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can show me the interpretation thereof."

Daniel 2:19: "The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, 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 at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean."

They declare that this situation is unparalleled in the history of the world and that the king's demand is simply unreasonable.

Daniel 2:11: "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 flesh."

The solution to the king's puzzle certainly lies with the gods, yet the wise men are only human beings, and they consider communication with the higher world impossible.

these were pagan "wise men" who believed that God's "dwelling is not with flesh." In the end of time there will be only two basic religions in the world: (1) That "faith of Jesus" which declares (as Scripture says) that in His incarnation the Son of God "was made in the likeness of men," that "God [sent] His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," that He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," that He "condemned sin in the flesh" by denying self all His life up to

Gethsemane and even to His cross.¹ And (2) this belief of the pagan “wise men” of Babylon in a “god” who does not “dwell with flesh,” that the Son of God did not “take” our fallen, sinful flesh upon Himself, but was cut off from DNA identity with the human race through some dogma of an Immaculate Conception, so He could not be “in all points tempted like as we are,” thus removing from humanity our Savior from sin and substituting for us a savior in sin.

Daniel 2:12: “For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.”

Nebuchadnezzar makes no effort to hide his rage. They must all die. The king is afraid and that is why he threatens to kill them all. This is the lowest point in Babylon’s history in that it demonstrated the bankruptcy of its astrological system.

Daniel 2:13: “And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.”

These events cleared the stage for Daniel to make his entrance and introduce the God who is the only Source of knowledge and wisdom. The young Hebrews who worshiped Yahweh were threatened by the same death decree.

The failure of the wise men to reveal the dream was a sure sign of the impotence of their god Marduk (Bel), who, according to Babylonian beliefs, was, along with his father Ea (Enki) and his son Nabu (Nebo), a dispenser of wisdom. With the death sentence pronounced on all the wise men of Babylon by a king who was a devout worshiper of Babylon’s patron god, Marduk’s house was divided against itself and was doomed to fall.

Daniel 2:14: “Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king’s guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon.”

Arioch was “the chief executioner,” the person entrusted to carry out the execution of the wise men and thus protect the life of the king in the face of a threat. Daniel is calm and acts right away with confidence.

Daniel 2:15: “He answered and said to Arioch the king’s captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.”

¹ Philippians 2:5-8; Romans 8:3, 4; Hebrews 4:14; John 5:30, 6:38; Matthew 26:39.

The problem is certainly impossible, humanly speaking. No wonder this has been called “theology for hard times.” Daniel can overcome his problem only with divine assistance. He needs a Saviour.

Daniel 2:16: “Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation.”

Going into the king could have cost him his life. His courageous intervention is met, surprisingly, with the king’s willingness to grant him a delay of the execution of the wise men—something that he was unwilling to do for the Chaldeans.

Daniel 2:17: “Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions.”

Before the Babylonians Daniel stands alone, but he has fellowship with his three friends.

Daniel 2:18: “That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.”

Faced with the harshness of a death decree, they decide to pray about the matter and entrust it into the hands of the God of heaven. While the other wise men relied on their wisdom, Daniel and his friends relied on prayer to God, the true Source of wisdom.

Daniel 2:19: “Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.”

Supernatural problems need supernatural solutions. God and God alone is the revealer of such mysteries. The answer came to Daniel through a night vision. Biblical revelation is a result of divine initiative, not of human initiation or manipulation.

Daniel 2:20: “Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his.”

Then follows a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. Wisdom, which the experts summoned by Nebuchadnezzar are supposed to have, and power, which is presumed to belong to the king, are, in fact, God’s to give.

Daniel 2:21: “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.”

When the faithful are persecuted, it is not enough for them to be aware that God knows the situation they are in. It is also important to know that God is ultimately in control of things and He can change

things. God not only possesses wisdom but He also gives it to humans.

Daniel 2:22: “He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.”

God “reveals the deep things of darkness and brings deep shadows into the light” (Job 12:9, 22). God knows all things whether they are done in darkness or in daylight. Darkness is that which is unknown and light is God-given wisdom. God forms the light and creates darkness.

Daniel 2:23: “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 addresses God as you. He can do this because his God is Someone worshiped by his ancestors, with whom God had made a covenant. The God of Abraham, Jacob, and Moses is the God who has given wisdom and power to Daniel. He is a personal God with whom Daniel has an intimate covenant faith.

Daniel’s display of faith is remarkable. Even before he goes to see the king, he assumes that the revelation about the dream is perfectly accurate, and he praises God for that.

Daniel 2:24: “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.”

Daniel has genuine concern for Babylon’s wise men. He does not want to see them executed. God uses him as a Saviour of men typifying the true Saviour of the world.

Daniel 2:25: “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.”

Arioch claims full credit for “discovering” Daniel. At the same time, he downplays the young Hebrew’s credentials—he introduces Daniel not by his official Babylonian title but as a captive from Judah.

Daniel 2:26, 27: “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.”

In contrast to the rest of the wise men, who confidently relied on their own wisdom when they said, “We will interpret it,” Daniel pointed to God—the only Source of wisdom—whose messenger he was.

Daniel 2:28: “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.”

Daniel begins his speech with a disclaimer through which he dissociates himself from the wisdom of this world. “There is a God in heaven” is the supreme theme of the book of Daniel and the cardinal principle of the Bible. Daniel readily admits that only God knows the future and can reveal it. Daniel has been allowed to take part in the council of the Lord.

Daniel 2:29: “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.”

Daniel places this dream in its context and circumstance for the king. “A dream comes when there are many cares” (Eccl. 5:3). A man is only shown in a dream what emanates from the thoughts of his heart. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream came as God’s answer to the king’s desire to know what will happen in the future.

Daniel 2:30: “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.”

This secret dream prophecy is given for the purpose of exalting the true God and not the messenger who brings the interpretation. This secret is revealed to you, O Nebuchadnezzar, in order that you might comprehend the origin of the fears of your own heart regarding your future and that of your kingdom. Then you may know how to prepare for what is to come.

Daniel 2:31: “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.”

A statute represented the presence of someone with authority—a god or a king. When a powerful people conquered a foreign land, they would set up imposing monuments to signal their presence in the subdued land. The intimidating size of these monuments served as effective imperial propaganda in the conquered lands. To

Nebuchadnezzar this statute was magnificent and terrifying at the same time.

Daniel 2:32: "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."

The image is composed of varying metals from gold to silver, bronze, iron, and baked clay. The elements are placed in the order of declining monetary value. With the exception of the baked clay there is an increase in strength and hardness followed by a stone.

Daniel 2:34: "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."

To mix iron with clay is obviously a poor choice of material for attempting to hold the iron pieces together. The weakest substance was used in the feet, where it would have to bear the weight of the metals.

The stone was cut out without a chisel mark on it. No human hand was associated with this quarried stone. The stone represented no human earthly achievement. This prophetic dream-vision contains the apocalyptic element of God's direct involvement in world powers.

Daniel 2:35: "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 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."

Here the order of the metals is reversed from bottom to top. How dramatically the statute is destroyed. They become chaff for the wind and are blown away as a result of God's judgment.

Daniel 2:36: "This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king."

Daniel and his God will interpret.

Daniel 2:37: "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory."

Nebuchadnezzar was the emperor, but his dominion was derived from a yet great King. His rulership was derived from the Sovereign of the universe.

Daniel 2:38: "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."

God initially gave this responsibility toward his creation to Adam and Eve. God has now temporarily bestowed guardianship to Nebuchadnezzar. He must have felt well-pleased when he heard the words: "Thou art this head of gold."

Daniel 2:39: "And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth."

Historically, in what sense was the Persian kingdom inferior to that of Nebuchadnezzar? After all, the Persians conquered Babylon, and Media-Persia actually came to include more territory than the Babylonian Empire. But superiority can exist in other areas besides mere square miles.

The culture of Babylon was renowned throughout the ancient world while that of the Medes and Persians was looked down upon as rustic and primitive. The Persians had no written language until the time of their empire. Old Persian was created as a written language by the Persian kings to use in inscribing monuments. They more commonly used the Elamite language for keeping their own records. On the other hand, the written Babylonian language went well back into the third millennium B.C., and that rich heritage of language brought with it all of the science, religion, and culture of the Babylonian Empire. So there were various ways in which Babylon was superior to Persia even though the Babylonians did not conquer as much territory as the Persians did.

The third kingdom depicted by the image was symbolized by bronze (2:39). The Greeks followed the Persians. Although earlier commercial and cultural contacts had taken place, the great intrusion of Hellenism (Greek thought and culture) into the Near East came with the invasions of Alexander the Great. Not only did he defeat Darius III, the last Persian king, but he also marched all the way to the Indus Valley of northwestern India in his wide-ranging conquests. Alexander's kingdom did not last as long as either that of the Babylonians or the Persians, however, for after his death it soon splintered into a number of pieces which were taken over by the generals who had served under him.

Daniel 2:40: "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."

These pieces of the Greek Empire were picked up by Rome and absorbed into that empire. The process took a century and a

quarter—from the time Rome defeated mainland Greece in the B.C. By that time, the Greek Empire had disappeared, having been absorbed by the next power on the scene of action, the iron kingdom of Rome. With this conquest, the four main metal symbols of the image were complete. Thus, in historical order, the gold represents Babylon; the silver represents Media-Persia; the bronze represents Greece; and the iron represents Rome.

Daniel 2:41: “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.”

What comes next? Are these all of the great Mediterranean world powers to come on the scene of action? Will there be other kingdoms greater than Rome? The prophecy takes an interesting turn at this point for there are no more metals. There is, however, another element in the image; the symbol of clay (vs. 33). The iron continues, indicating that what follows after Rome will be Romelike, but it will not be solid like Rome. It will be divided.

Daniel 2:42: “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.”

These divisions are accentuated by the mixture of iron and clay. This is not the right way to build a strong image. To build a strong image another metal should have been used or more iron should have been added to the image. That was not the case. Instead, the weakening element of clay was added to the iron, thus taking away its strength. The mixture of iron and clay represented the divisions and disunity that came to the Roman Empire.

Daniel 2:43: “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.”

The emphasis here is upon disunion and disunity—a stark contrast with the iron that went before it. Iron was the hardest and most unified metal known to the ancient and classical worlds. From the strongest and most unified nation, the territory that had made up the Roman Empire would go to being the weakest and most divided. Such was the fate of Rome as described by the prophecy.

Historically, did the predicted disunity and mixing take place?

It is easy to see what happened to the Roman Empire under the onslaught of barbarian tribes. Under their impact, the city of Rome itself fell in A.D. 476. From that time forward, the Italian peninsula

came under the control of the Ostrogoths for the better part of a century until their final defeat in A.D. 555. Historians commonly use the sixth century A.D. to mark the transition from Imperial Rome to Medieval Rome. When Rome entered that century, it was still powerful militarily and politically; it was a populous and prosperous city that was still beautiful in its architecture and monuments. When Rome came out of that century, it was a broken-down, depopulated center that controlled virtually nothing. The clay had been introduced into the iron.

This state of affairs was to continue until the end (vss. 33-35). In spite of the military conquerors of the past and the political leagues of the present, the nations of Europe (not to mention the rest of the Roman Empire) have not cleaved one to the other. Will the European Common Market and the political affiliation of European countries negate this picture? They may, with difficulty, agree upon certain political principles, and they may enter into agreements to facilitate trade and commerce, but each of these countries may be expected to retain control of its cultural, linguistic, and territorial properties. They may join together for certain common purposes, but according to Daniel's prophecy, they will never be joined into one complete political entity as was the Roman Empire.

Daniel 2:44: "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."

This is not the end of the vision, however, for there is one more stage in the image's career—its destruction and the scattering of its fragments to the four winds. In symbol this is accomplished by the great stone which strikes the image on the feet of iron and clay. It smashed them, and then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth (vs. 35).

In other words, all the kingdoms of this world will eventually be destroyed and swept away, and there will be no further human kingdoms to succeed them. The kingdom that would follow would be of an entirely different nature, represented not by a metal, but by a rock cut out without human hands (vs. 34). It was to be a kingdom of an entirely different order from those preceding it.

This is the central fact of the conclusion to this dream-vision: that the God of heaven will one day set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. It will never be displaced by another metal kingdom that will come down the road of history, for history itself will end in that kingdom of God. It will be history's great climax. This is the goal toward which history is moving.

Daniel 2:45: "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."

When the whole image is to be broken all to pieces, from head to feet, it is smitten upon *the feet*, and so is broken all to pieces, from feet to head. This shows that the seat of life of all the kingdoms that were represented in that image *is in the feet and toes*.

In the time of the iron of the image, the kingdom represented by the iron was to be "divided." And it is "the toes of the feet," which "were part of iron and part of clay." The prophecy in the seventh chapter of Daniel says that it would be divided into ten kingdoms, represented by ten horns on a great and terrible beast. And these ten horns correspond to the toes of the image, which, as the image was that of a man, were ten.

The smiting of the image on the feet, to break it all to pieces, shows that the seat of life and strength of the kingdoms represented by the image are in the feet. "The feet and toes" of the image represented the divisions of the kingdom of iron. These divisions are represented in the modern nations of Western Europe, the great power of the present day. And it is a fact that all the life and strength of what was Babylon, Medo-Persia, Grecia, and Rome, lie to-day in these powers, which compose "the feet and toes" of the image. Therefore, when the image shall be smitten on the feet, it will be the smiting of these powers.

And when these shall be smitten, it will be not only the breaking to pieces of these powers and kings, but also the breaking to pieces of all that was "the brass, the silver, and the gold," as well as of what is the iron and the clay. All are to be broken to pieces *together*. All are to become as the chaff of the summer threshing-floors. All are to be carried away by the wind, and "no place found" for any of them. When that smiting comes, no empire, kingdom, nor government of this world will exist any more; but the kingdom of God, which breaks in pieces

and consumes “all these kingdoms,” will fill “the whole earth,” and stand forever.

God is interested in making Christ the King of the world. The only way that this can happen is for God to do it rather than man through his political attempts to establish Christian nations.

Daniel 2:46: “Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshiped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him.”

The king’s reaction to Daniel’s interpretation is curiously positive, given the fact that Daniel had clearly stated that his kingdom will not last forever. The head of gold lays prostrate before God on the ground.

Daniel 2:47: “The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.”

Nebuchadnezzar could still be classified as a polytheist, but he was moving, under the influence of Daniel and his true God, toward henotheism—a belief in the superiority of one god, without denying the existence of other gods. Nebuchadnezzar still recognized the existence of the gods of Babylon, but he acknowledged the superiority of Daniel’s God, Yahweh. A knowledge of the true God of heaven was beginning to dawn upon his understanding.

Daniel 2:48: “Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.”

For Daniel and his friends, the dramatic turn of events in connection with the king’s dream resulted in advancement up the ladder of the Babylonian bureaucracy. Nebuchadnezzar lavished gifts upon Daniel and made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon. He also placed Daniel in charge of all the wise men of Babylon. This seemed only fitting—especially since Daniel’s success in interpreting the dream had just saved all their lives. Human nature being what it is, however, this probably did not endear Daniel to them. They remained at odds with him over a number of points. He had shown them up with his superior wisdom. Now he had authority over them, and he had carried out his search for wisdom in a way entirely different from their techniques. Daniel did not need to search sheep livers for anomalies or study the stars. He could pray directly to the true God who revealed deep mysteries to His servants.

Daniel 2:49: “Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.”

Undoubtedly, it didn’t help relations between Daniel and the other wise men when Daniel requested—and secured—promotions for his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, as administrators over the province of Babylon.

Daniel chose to neither curry favor with the king nor engage in historical philosophical speculations. He chose, instead, to declare that there would be exactly four world kingdoms that would follow each other in succession—not one, two, or three, but four. And the fourth would not signal an end to human history, but would disintegrate and be followed by another period of history marked by this divided condition. He predicted precisely four kingdoms followed by divisions that would not be put back together again. How did Daniel know that there would be exactly four kingdoms—Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome—followed by a divided condition representing the breakup of Imperial Rome?

How did Daniel know this? He tells us. “There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown . . . what will happen in days to come” (vs. 28). His wisdom is available to man, to His servants the prophets such as Daniel. Through Daniel, it has been revealed to us. As we meet the 2,500-year-old word of Daniel, we meet the word of the living God today. He cared enough to speak this truth to one individual, Nebuchadnezzar, and He still cares enough to speak that truth to each of us today.

It must be remembered that “*his enemies* are put under his feet.” When the nations are subdued under him, they are his enemies still. And what will he do with them when they are given to him? The second psalm answers this question: “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” And with this agree all the prophecies. Thus in Dan. 2, the kingdom of Christ is represented—not as converting the nations and incorporating them into itself, but—as breaking in pieces and destroying them. They are not brought into subjection to a mild sway of gospel peace; for there is no gospel grace offered to sinners after Christ ends his priesthood and receives his power over the nations. The kingdoms of earth will be dashed in pieces, broken, destroyed; they become as the chaff of

the summer threshing floors, driven away by the wind, so that “no place is found for them.” To represent all this as the conversion of the nations, and their adopting the gospel of the kingdom as their “national religion” is to greatly pervert the Scriptures. It is crying “peace and safety” when destruction is impending. 1 Thess. 5:1-3.