

Lesson 91 Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of World Empires

I. Scripture Text

Daniel 2:1-49 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.

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

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

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

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.

6 But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.

7 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it.

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.

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 shew me the interpretation thereof.

10 The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean.

11 And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.

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

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

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:

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.

16 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation.

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

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.

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

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

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:

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

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.

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 shew unto the king the interpretation.

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.

26 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?

27 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, shew unto the king;

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;

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.

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.

31 Thou, O king, sawest, and beheld a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.

32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,
 33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

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.

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.

36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

46 Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him.

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.

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.

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.

II. Bible Story

DA2-1 King Nebuchadnezzar has a disturbing dream

Have you ever had a dream that disturbed you very much? Maybe it made you so frightened that you screamed or called for your parents. The proud King Nebuchadnezzar, the monarch who ruled the world, had a frightening dream. It was different from any dream he had ever had before, and he sensed that it must have some special meaning. Could it mean that something terrible was going to happen to him? The worried king was so troubled that he could not rest and he could not sleep, so he did what he always did when he was upset; he called for all the magicians, the astrologers, and the sorcerers of his court to come to him. Surely they could tell him the meaning of his troublesome dream. After all, it was their job to know all the mysterious things of life, and they could advise him. When the important men assembled before him, the king told them, "I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream." The king's advisors answered him, "O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation."

What the advisors didn't realize was that there was a special problem with the king's dream. He told them, "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. But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation

thereof."

The magicians looked at one another uneasily. How could they tell the king what he had dreamed? That was impossible! They insisted, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it."

The king knew that they were stalling for time. He knew that if they couldn't tell him his dream as well as the interpretation that their claim to have the power to interpret things for him was a lie. The king answered, "I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. 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 shew me the interpretation thereof."

The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, "There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

The king became even more furious. He commanded for all the wise men of Babylon to be put to death.

DA2-2 Daniel hears of the dream

The command to destroy all the wise men included Daniel and his three friends, for they had become a part of this select group of wise men about a year before.

"Why is the decree so hasty from the king?" Daniel asked Arioch, the captain of the king. Then Arioch told him the problem.

DA2-3 Daniel goes to the king

Daniel went in and asked that the king would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation. The king wanted desperately to find out what his dream meant.

DA2-4 Daniel and his three friends pray

Daniel returned to his three friends with an urgent prayer request. They had no idea what Nebuchadnezzar's dream was, but they knew that the God of heaven could reveal it to them. Daniel told his three friends to pray.

The four young men prayed earnestly to God about the matter, and that night God revealed the secret to Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar's dream was a look into the future, and it revealed what was going to happen to the great kingdoms of the world for a long time to come. The dream also revealed what would happen at the end of time.

Daniel was overwhelmed at what God had revealed to him. He told his three friends, and they praised the great and powerful God Who is in control of all the kingdoms of the world.

Daniel went to find Arioch, the captain of the guard. He told him, "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation."

DA2-3 (Use again.) Daniel offers to interpret the dream

In the presence of the king, Arioch, the captain of the guard announced, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation."

The king said to Daniel, "Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?" Daniel answered, "The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew 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." Notice that Daniel did not take credit for what God had shown him. He knew that all of his wisdom came from God, and he gave God the glory that rightfully belongs to God. Perhaps no one had ever spoken about the true and living God to King Nebuchadnezzar before. So here was a young Jewish captive, standing before the most powerful monarch in history, telling that great monarch about the King of kings and Lord of lords, the God of the universe, at Whose feet all nations and people shall bow one day.

DA2-5 The image of Nebuchadnezzar's 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. 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 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. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king."

The king must have really listened now as Daniel had not only recalled the dream for him but now he was going to give the meaning of it too!

"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." The king must have liked this part, telling him how great he was.

Daniel continued as he described the next kingdoms to come. "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."

Daniel now got to the best part of all, how God was going to set up His everlasting kingdom. "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; 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."

DA2-6 The outline of history

God was giving Nebuchadnezzar a glimpse into the future, telling him about the different kingdoms that would rule the world after him. What God told Nebuchadnezzar in that dream was a preview of what would take place, and we can see from history that it has come to pass just as the dream predicted. King Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian Empire, the head of gold, ruled the known world for more than 80 years. Then Medo-Persia (the silver breast and arms) overcame Babylon and became a world power for more than 80 years. That kingdom

was followed by the Grecian Empire (represented by the bronze belly and upper thighs), whose great conqueror was Alexander the Great, and then came the Roman Empire, represented by the iron legs. The two legs represent the eastern and western divisions of the Roman Empire. It was the Roman Empire that ruled the world when Jesus was here on earth. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, no nation has ever ruled the whole world though many have tried to do so.

The rest of Nebuchadnezzar's dream has not yet come to pass; it is still future. But as surely as the first part came to pass exactly as God predicted, so the latter part of the dream will also come to pass exactly as God said. The toes of the statue represent a ten-nation confederation of the last days that will be reigning when the great Stone cut without hands, which is Jesus Christ, the Rock of ages, will come back to earth and destroy all the Gentile kingdoms of the world, and then He will set up His Kingdom and rule on earth for one thousand years. At the end of the thousand years, the planet Earth will be wiped clean, but His kingdom will continue forever and ever.

DA2-3 (Use again.) Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges Daniel's God

Nebuchadnezzar was delighted to hear all of these interesting future events. The mystery of his forgotten dream had been solved! Nebuchadnezzar now remembered clearly the dream, and he also now knew what the dream meant. The king was so appreciative and awestruck that he fell down before Daniel, commanding that Daniel be given an offering and that incense be burned before him as if he were a god. He then 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 couldst reveal this secret." The king gave Daniel great gifts and much honor, promoting him to rule over the whole province of Babylon. He also made him chief over all his wisemen.

Though Nebuchadnezzar honored Daniel, he knew clearly that it was Daniel's God Who had revealed the secret of the dream, for Daniel

made that very clear to the king. The king acknowledged that Daniel's God was much greater than the gods of Babylon or any other gods that people worshiped.

Daniel did not forget his friends; he asked the king that his friends also be promoted, and the king agreed to do so, but he promoted Daniel to the highest position of all. God used Daniel to reveal Himself to King Nebuchadnezzar. At that time the king took his first step toward the true God as he admitted that Jehovah is the God of gods and Lord of lords. Thus God would continue to use Daniel to bring him to the place where Nebuchadnezzar would come to know God personally.

This is another proof that the Bible is a miracle book, inspired by God. How else could Daniel so accurately predict the coming kingdoms? For all of these empires have come to pass just like Daniel said they would, except the last kingdom represented by the statue's feet and toes, which is yet future. We can be sure that that kingdom will also come to pass and will be destroyed at Christ's glorious return to earth to set up His reign on earth for a thousand years.

All who have received Jesus as their Savior will be part of Christ's everlasting kingdom. There is an exciting future ahead for all of us who are saved. If you've not accepted Christ, why don't you, as we pray, ask Him to forgive your sins and tell Him that you believe that Jesus died on Calvary for the punishment of your sins, and ask Him to come and live in your heart forever.

III. Activity 1

Age 3 through Grade 1

Materials needed:

- ☐ a copy of page 91a for each student
- ☐ crayons

Explain to the students that each part of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream was made up of different materials. Have them color in the parts of the image according to the different materials used: the head, yellow (gold); the

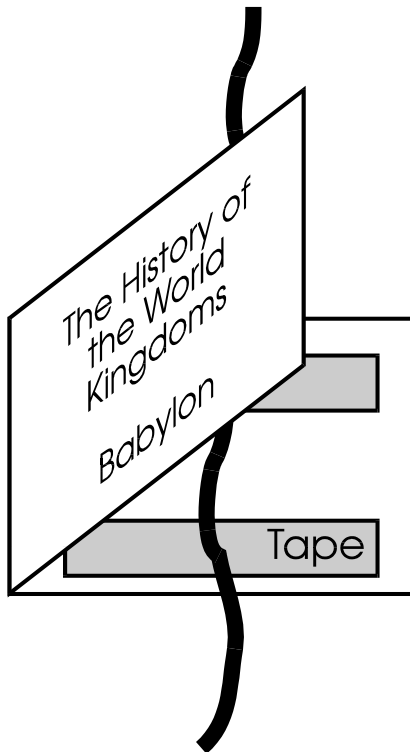
arms, gray, or light black (silver); the belly and thighs, orange (brass); the legs, black (iron); the feet, brown (iron mixed with dirt); the rock, gray, or light black. The older students may follow the directions for Activity 2 below.

IV. Activity 2

Grade 2 through Grade 4

- ☐ a copy of page 91a for each student
- ☐ crayons
- ☐ a piece of yarn, 15" long
- ☐ double stick tape
- ☐ scissors for each student

Follow the directions for Activity 1, above. Have the students cut the parts of the image apart on the solid lines and then fold on the dotted line. Place double stick tape on each part and then fold onto the yarn as in the illustration below.



V. Activity 3

Grade 5 through Grade 7

Materials needed:

- ☐ one copy of **Lesson 91, page 7** for each

student

- ☐ a copy of *Halley's Bible Handbook* for each student
- ☐ a pencil for each student
- ☐ a Bible for each student

For deeper study have the students work alone or in pairs to answer the study questions. The answers requiring *Halley's Bible Handbook* can be found on pages 336–343.

Answers:

1. 60 square miles.
2. 53.
3. b.
4. Jeremiah and Isaiah.
5. 70 years.
6. a.
7. c.
8. a.
9. Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greece, Rome

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of World Empires

Use *Halley's Bible Handbook*, pages 336–343, if you need help in answering the questions.

1. How big was the city of Babylon?

2. How many temples were in the city of Babylon?

3. What was one of the Seven Wonders of the World in the city of Babylon?

- ☐ a. The great temple of Marduk.
- ☐ b. The hanging gardens.
- ☐ c. The palace.

4. What two prophets prophesied about the destruction of the city?

5. How long did the Empire of Babylon last?

- ☐ a. 7 years.
- ☐ b. 70 years.
- ☐ c. 700 years.

6. How long was Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon?

- ☐ a. 45 years.
- ☐ b. 70 years.
- ☐ c. 7 years.

7. What was Daniel's family background like?

- ☐ a. He was a commoner.
- ☐ b. He was a craftsman.
- ☐ c. He was a member of the royal family.

8. What were the things probably that Daniel refused to eat at the king's table?

- ☐ a. Sacrifices to heathen gods.
- ☐ b. Pig meat.
- ☐ c. Cakes and candy.

9. What were the four world empires represented by the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
