

23. World Powers in Prophecy

“IN the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and ‘through all the play and counter play of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will.” - Ed 173.

SELECTED REFERENCES

PK 491-502; Ed 177-182; [6] Pages 102-112. [3] Pages 19-25.

Memorize. Daniel 7:27.

A. THE FAILURE OF FALSE RELIGIONS.

Daniel 2:1-13.

“The magicians practiced magic, using the term in its bad sense; that is they employed all the superstitious rites and ceremonies of fortune tellers, and casters of nativities and the like. Astrologers were men who pretended to foretell events by the study of the stars. The science or the superstition, of astrology was extensively cultivated by the Eastern nations of antiquity. Sorcerers were such as pretended to hold communication with the dead. In this sense, we believe, the word “sorcerer” is always used in the Scriptures. The Chaldeans here mentioned were a sect of philosophers similar to the magicians and astrologers, who made natural science and divinations their study. All these sects or professions abounded in Babylon.”-U. Smith, in “Daniel and the Revelation,” pages 29, 30.

“There was therefore nothing unjust in Nebuchadnezzar’s demand that they should make known his dream. When they declared [verse 11] that none but the gods whose dwelling was not with flesh could make known the king’s matter.... he saw that he and all his people were being made the victims of deception.” - Id., pages 31, 32.

B. A PRAYER-BAND VICTORY.

Daniel 2:14,30.

“God would give the heathen systems of the Chaldeans the first chance. He would let them try and ignominiously fail, and confess their utter incompetency, even under the penalty of death, that they might be the better prepared to acknowledge His intervention when He should finally manifest His power in behalf of His captive servants, and for the honor of His name.”-Id., pages 32, 33.

“Daniel at once went to his three companions, and asked them to unite with him in desiring mercy of the God of heaven concerning this secret. He could have prayed alone, and doubtless would have been heard. But then, as now, in the union of God’s people there is prevailing power. The promise of the accomplishment of that which is asked, is to the two or three who shall agree concerning it. (Matt. 18:19, 20.)” - Id., page 33.

“Daniel immediately offered up praise to God for His gracious dealing with them; and while his prayer is not preserved, his responsive thanksgiving is fully recorded. . . .

“Although the matter was revealed to Daniel, he did not take honor to himself as though it were by his prayers alone that the answer had been obtained, but he immediately associated his companions with him, and acknowledged it to be as much an answer to their prayers as it was to his own. It was, said he, ‘what we desired of Thee,’ and Thou has made it ‘known to us.’” - Id., pages 33, 35.

Daniel at the very first improved the opportunity to make known the true God-true to his call to witness.

C. THE DREAM ITSELF REVEALED.

Daniel 2:31,35.

“How admirably adapted was this representation to convey a great and needful truth to the mind of Nebuchadnezzar.... How could this be more impressively done than by an image whose head was of gold? Below this head was a body composed of inferior metals descending in value until they reached their basest

form in the feet and toes of iron mingled with miry clay. The whole was then dashed to pieces, and made like the empty chaff. It was finally blown away where no place could be found for it, after which something durable and of heavenly worth occupied its place.”-Id., pages 38, 39.

“In one night God revealed the history of over twenty five hundred years, and what the human historian requires volumes to explain is given in fifteen verses.”-S. N. Haskell, in “The Story of Daniel the Prophet,” page 33.

D. THE INTERPRETATION.

Daniel 2:36-45.

1. The head of gold (verses 36,38). BABYLON, 612 BC to the overthrow of Assyria, to 538 BC.

“It was the golden kingdom of a golden age. Babylon, its metropolis, towered to a height never reached by any of its successors. Situated in the garden of the East; laid out in a perfect square said to be sixty miles in circumference, fifteen miles on each side. Surrounded by a wall estimated to have been two hundred to three hundred feet high and eighty-seven feet thick, with a moat, or ditch, around this of equal cubic capacity with the wall itself. Laid out in luxuriant pleasure grounds and gardens, interspersed with magnificent dwellings-this city, with its sixty miles of moat, its sixty miles of outer wall, its thirty miles of river wall through its center, its gates of solid brass, its hanging gardens rising terrace above terrace till they equaled in height the walls themselves, its temple of Belus. Three miles in circumference, its two royal palaces, one three and a half and the other eight miles in circumference. With its subterranean tunnel under the river Euphrates connecting these two palaces, its perfect arrangement for convenience, ornament, and defense, and its unlimited resources-this city, containing in itself many things which were themselves wonders of the world, was itself another and still mightier wonder.” - Id., pages 42, 43.

“In their feeling of security lay the source of their danger. Cyrus resolved to accomplish by stratagem what he could not effect by force. Learning of the approach of an annual festival in which the whole city would be given up to mirth and revelry, he fixed upon that day as the time to carry his purpose into execution. There was no entrance for him into that city unless he could find it where the river Euphrates entered and emerged, as it passed under the walls. He resolved to make the channel of the river his highway into the stronghold of his enemy.... When the water was turned into the lake, the river soon became shallow enough to ford, and the soldiers followed its channel into the heart of the city of Babylon.” - Id., pages 45, 47.

“Many a tongue would have spread wild alarm through the city had the dark forms of armed foes been seen stealthily treading their way to the citadel of their supposed security....

“The soldiers of Cyrus first made known their presence in the city by falling upon the royal guards in the vestibule of the palace of the king. Belshazzar soon became aware of the cause of the disturbance, and died fighting for his life. This feast of Belshazzar is described in the fifth chapter of Daniel, and the scene closes with the simple record, ‘In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.’” - Id., page 48.

2. Breast and arms of silver (verse 39). MEDO-PERSIA, 538-331 BC. Battle of Arbela.

“The succeeding kingdom, Medo-Persia, answered to the breast and arms of silver of the great image. It was to be inferior to the preceding kingdom. In what respect inferior? Not in power, for it conquered Babylon.... But it was inferior in wealth, luxury, and magnificence.

“Viewed from a Scriptural standpoint, the principal event under the Babylonian Empire was the captivity of the children of Israel; under the Medo-Persian kingdom it was the restoration of Israel to their own land. At the taking of Babylon, Cyrus, as an act of courtesy, assigned the first place in the kingdom to his uncle, Darius [the Mede], in 538 BC. But two years afterward Darius died, leaving Cyrus sole monarch of the empire.” - Id., page 51.

3. Belly and thighs of brass (verse 39). GRECIA, 331-168 BC. Battle of Pydna.

“In the ever-changing political kaleidoscope, Grecia came into the field of vision, to be for a time the all-absorbing object of attention, as the third of what are called the universal empires of the earth.

“After the battle [of Arbela] which decided the fate of the empire, Darius [Codomannus] endeavored to rally the shattered remnants of his army, and make a stand for his kingdom and his rights. But . . . Alexander pursued him on the wings of the wind. . . .

“When Alexander arrived, he beheld only the lifeless form of the Persian king. . . . Now, brutally slain by the hand of traitors, he lay a bloody corpse in a rude cart. The sight of the melancholy spectacle

drew tears from the eyes of even Alexander, familiar though he was with all the horrible vicissitudes and bloody scenes of war. . . .

“When Darius died, Alexander saw the field cleared of his last formidable foe. Thenceforward he could spend his time in his own manner.... He encouraged such excessive drinking among his followers that on one occasion twenty of them died as the result of their carousal. At length, having sat through one long drinking spree, he was invited to another.... He was seized with a violent fever, of which he died eleven days later, June 13, 323 BC. While yet he stood only at the threshold of mature life, in the thirty-second year of his age.”--Id., pages 52-54.

4. Legs of iron (verse 40). ROME, 168 BC. to 476 AD., Dethronement of Romulus Augustulus.

Gibbon calls it “the iron monarchy of Rome,” and says: “The empire of the Romans filled the world. And when that empire fell into the hands of a single person, the world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. To resist was fatal; and it was impossible to fly. “-”History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” chap. 38, general observations; chap. 3, par. 37.

5. Feet and toes; clay and iron (verses 40,42). TEN KINGDOMS.

“These ten kingdoms came into existence in the territory of the Roman Empire between the years 351 and 476 A. D. They were the result of the barbarian invasions of those times. The kingdoms were as follows: The Alemanni (Germany), the Franks (France), the Burgundians (Switzerland), the Suevi (Portugal), the Vandals (who have been destroyed), the Anglo-Saxons (England), the Visigoths (Spain), the Ostrogoths (who have been destroyed), the Heruli (who also have been destroyed), and the Lombards (Italy).”-C. B. Haynes, in “Our Lord’s Return,” page 22.

6. “Iron is not mixed with clay” (verse 43).

Attempts to unite the nations of Europe by conquest: “In the eighth century, Charlemagne made an attempt to do what God had said should not be done. He tried to bring the kingdoms of Europe under his dominion and unite them in a great Christian empire. But, just as God foretold, he failed. During the sixteenth century a similar attempt was made by Charles V, but he failed. During the latter part of the seventeenth and the first part of the eighteenth centuries Louis XIV tried to bring nearly all Europe under his dominion. But God had said more than twenty centuries before that, ‘They shall not cleave one to another,’ and Louis XIV failed. . . .

“Perhaps the greatest, and what appeared for a time to be the most successful, attempt to bring all the divided parts of the ancient Roman Empire under one rule, was made during the first part of the nineteenth century by Napoleon Bonaparte. But all the wisdom of this brilliant military genius, all his shrewdness and ingenuity, all his great knowledge of military tactics, and all the strength of his mighty legions, was not sufficient to break the power of seven short words of Scripture.” - Id., pages 23, 24.

7. “Mingle . . . the seed of men” (verse 43).

Attempts to unite the nations of Europe by marriage: The intricate relationships existing between the reigning houses of Europe, at the beginning of the World War in 1914, are briefly as follows: “The Empress Dowager Dagmar of Russia and Queen Mother Alexandra of England were sisters. . . . The kings of Norway and Denmark were brothers. . . . The king of England and the rulers of Russia and Greece were first cousins of the kings of Norway and Denmark, and also first cousins of each other, all five being grandsons of Christian IX of Denmark. The oldest son of the late Queen Victoria of England became Edward VII of England. The oldest daughter of Queen Victoria, Princess Victoria, married Emperor Frederick of Germany, and became the mother of the Emperor William of Germany. Thus the king of England and the emperor of Germany were first cousins, both being grandchildren of Queen Victoria. . . . The queen of Greece and the emperor of Germany were first cousins of the king of England.” - Id., pages 25-27. The czarina of Russia, the queen of Norway, and the queen of Greece were all first cousins, being grandchildren of Queen Victoria, while the queen of Norway and the king of England were brother and sister.

8. “The stone” (verse 44, 45). KINGDOM OF GOD, eternity.

“Inasmuch as every specification of Daniel’s prophecy, except the last, has already been fulfilled, and the record stands as the history of the world. The assurance is made doubly sure that the last specification will be fulfilled, and that the God of heaven will soon set up His kingdom. The prayer which

has been repeated through the centuries, ‘Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,’ is about to be answered. The message to every soul is, ‘Get right with God,’ ‘prepare to meet thy God.’ “-”Armageddon and the Kingdom of Peace,” page 73.

KEY TEXTS

Daniel 2:21,22,35,41,44,45

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What was the condition of Babylon at the time of the captivity of Judah?
2. How had Daniel and his companions been prepared for this the supreme moment of their lives?
3. In what ways was God’s hand seen in the immediate events of Daniel 2?
4. What seems to you to have been the chief cause of the fall of Babylon?
5. What divisions were represented by the iron and clay? Can there ever be a united Europe?

TEST QUESTIONS

Answer With Ample Bible Proof

1. What were the chief characteristics of each world empire, as indicated by the image?
2. What were the approximate dates of the rise and fall of each of the world powers?
3. What were the nations represented by the toes? Give their ancient and modern names.
4. How will Europe finally come to its end?
5. What are the characteristics represented as being those of the final world power?