

12 -- The Cleansing of the Heavenly Sanctuary (Part 1)

(*"The Revealer of Secrets"*)

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In our last lesson, we carefully examined the work of the Day of Atonement. We discovered that this service points forward to Christ's final phase of His ministry, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. In order to establish the date for the beginning of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, we will need to turn to the prophecies of the book of Daniel. The book of Daniel was written while the nation of Israel was captive to the nation of Babylon because of their apostasy from God. We will begin by looking into a prophecy found in Daniel chapter two. The focus of this chapter is the unveiling of the future by One who knows the future. The book of Daniel finds its center in the heavenly sanctuary and more specifically the Judgment. Daniel's name means "God is my Judge." This chapter reveals God's sovereign control in the affairs of world history. In Daniel chapter two, God pulls back the curtain of time and reveals to us those portions of history which affect His covenant people. It reveals the nations that have tried, at every step, to draw God's people away from Christ's ministry and to replace it with human designs and counterfeits. This unveiling extends down to our time! This chapter sets up our next lesson, which will reveal the start time for the Judgment! Our story begins with the God of Heaven giving the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar a dream. Please prayerfully read Daniel chapter 2 before proceeding with this lesson in order to get the backdrop to this study.

1. Why did God give the Babylonian king this dream?

Daniel 2:28 (KJV) *But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.*

Note: In this dream of the statue image, God pulls back the curtain of time and outlines the future rise and fall of the empires that would have a direct impact on His people.

2. When the king's counselors were unable to reveal and interpret the dream, what was Nebuchadnezzar's command?

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

Note: These Babylonian wise men professed to be interpreters of dreams; thus the king was not making an unusual request. It was something that they were accustomed to doing. The astrologers and magicians of Babylon claimed to have supernatural power, but when they could not reveal the dream to the king, they were shown to be imposters. The wise men were completely discredited. If the king had recalled the dream, they would have simply manufactured a bogus interpretation. In his rage, Nebuchadnezzar commanded all the wise men to be slain—even those who were not present. Among those absent from the first meeting with the king was a God-fearing captive named Daniel, who had just been trained for the king's service.

3. When Daniel learned about the death decree, what did he ask of the king and what did he tell his friends?

Daniel 2:16 (KJV) *Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation.*

Daniel 2:17, 18 (KJV) *Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret. ...*

Note: Daniel requested a little time from Nebuchadnezzar and promised that he would reveal the dream and its meaning. The king, who was still desperate to know the significance of his vision, granted Daniel's request. Then he and his friends appealed to the only Source who could reveal the king's dream. They prayed to the God of heaven.

4. How did the Lord reveal the dream to Daniel and to Whom did Daniel give praise and credit?

Daniel 2:19 (KJV) *Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision.*

Daniel 2:23, 28 (KJV) *I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, ... there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets. ...*

Note: The rise and fall of empires may appear as if happening by the will of men, but Daniel's prayer of praise clearly reveals the truth of divine intervention. Nothing happens that God is not already aware of. Sometimes we may not understand what is happening in our world today or why, but it is comforting to know that God is still sovereign and that He is watching and guiding in the affairs of men and nations. Only Daniel could reveal the dream to the king because he was the faithful servant of One who knows the future. Daniel rightfully gives full credit to the One who revealed the dream to him.

5. What did Daniel say the king saw in his dream?

Daniel 2:31 (KJV) *Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image.*

Note: The first thing the king saw was a great image made of different metals.

6. List the various metals that made up the image?

- a. *The head was of gold.*
- b. *The breast and arms were of silver.*
- c. *The belly and thighs were of brass.*
- d. *The legs were of iron.*
- e. *The feet of iron and clay.*

7. What did the stone cut out without hands do to the image?

Daniel 2:34 (KJV) Which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

Note: At this point, King Nebuchadnezzar was no doubt sitting spellbound on the edge of his throne. Daniel had related the dream precisely as God had given it to him. Now the king eagerly waited, wondering what the dream meant. Daniel proceeded to explain the interpretation as the Lord had revealed it to him, and we would do well to take it just as He gave it. The only safe way to interpret the Bible and prophecy is to allow the Bible to explain itself.

8. What does the head of gold represent?

Daniel 2:38 (KJV) Thou art this head of gold.

Note: The king was regarded as the head of the state. This is why Nebuchadnezzar represented Babylon, the empire that began the prophecy. Neo-Babylon ruled the world from 612-539 B.C. as one of the mightiest empires of antiquity, one that could appropriately be described as the head of gold. Notice that the prophecy begins with Daniel's time.

9. Would the Babylonian kingdom last forever?

Daniel 2:39 (KJV) And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee. ...

Note: Succeeding kingdoms, inferior to Babylon, would rule in their turn. Just as silver is inferior to gold, so the kingdom that followed Babylon enjoyed diminished glory. Led by Cyrus in 539 B.C., the Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylon and reduced it to ruins. The Medes and Persians were the ruling world power from 539-331 B.C. During their reign, all taxes had to be paid in silver.

10. What metal would represent the kingdom that followed Medo-Persia?

Daniel 2:39 (KJV) Another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

Note: Even the Medo-Persian kingdom would not last forever. The brass kingdom of Greece came into power next when Alexander the Great conquered the Medes and Persians at the battle of Arbela in 331 B.C., and Greece remained in power until about 168 B.C. Notice how each succeeding mineral depicted in the image is less valuable, yet more enduring than the one before it.

11. What metal represents the fourth kingdom?

Daniel 2:40 (KJV) The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron...

Note: The iron monarchy of Rome conquered the Greeks in 168 B.C. and enjoyed world supremacy until Rome was captured by the Ostrogoths in A.D. 476. Rome is the kingdom that dominated the world when Jesus Christ was born. Notice how Daniel foretold a thousand years of world history with unerring accuracy. The rise and fall of these four world empires- Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome-are clearly foretold in the Bible and proven by the history books.

12. What would happen after the fall of the Roman Empire?

Daniel 2:41, 42 (KJV) The kingdom shall be divided... as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

Note: When the Roman Empire began to crumble in A.D. 476, it was not overtaken by another world power. Instead, barbarian tribes conquered the Roman Empire and divided it, just as Daniel prophesied. Ten of these tribes evolved into modern Europe. They were the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Alemanni, Sueves, Anglo-Saxons, Heruls, Lombards, and Burgundians. Seven of them still exist today in Europe. For example, the Anglo-Saxons became the English, the Franks became the French, the Alemanni became the Germans, and the Lombards became the Italians.

13. Would these 10 kingdoms ever succeed in uniting?

Daniel 2:43 (KJV) *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.*

Note: Through marriage, alliances and treaties, men have vainly attempted to reunite the European continent. All throughout history, leaders such as Charlemagne, Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, Mussolini and Hitler have fought to build a new European empire, but these words of Scripture have stopped every single would-be world ruler. Revelation 13 tells us there will be another attempt to establish a universal religion, but Daniel's prophecy clearly states that the world will remain politically divided for the rest of Earth's history.

14. Who will set up the final kingdom?

Daniel 2:44 (KJV) *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed...*

Note: The next great universal kingdom will be the kingdom of heaven, which is described in Matthew 25:31-34.

15. What does the stone do to the other world kingdoms?

Daniel 2:34, 35 (KJV) *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. ...and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.*

Note: The stone that was cut without human hands represents God's kingdom. It will not be a conglomeration of earthly kingdoms, but a total replacement (Revelation 21:1). The Scriptures declare that when Jesus Christ returns to earth, He will completely consume all the kingdoms of earth and establish an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 2:44). What exciting news! Jesus Christ is coming again! All history is moving toward this climactic conclusion, when the Son of God shall return in majesty to bring in the kingdom of everlasting righteousness.

King Nebuchadnezzar may have thought that he had defeated the true God when he besieged Jerusalem and plundered the temple (Daniel 1:1, 2), but he was shown very quickly that God is ruler over all. Human events are under His control, and ultimately He will win the conflict. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and the 10 divisions of the Roman Empire may have sought to usurp divine authority and destroy the people of God, but all earthly kingdoms will eventually be crushed at the coming of Christ. Thank God, He will win the great controversy between good and evil!

16. After hearing Daniel's clear interpretation of the dream, what did Nebuchadnezzar say about the Lord?

Daniel 2:47 (KJV) *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.*

Note: Having seen that God knows and guides world events, even Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that the God Daniel served was above all the heathen gods of Babylon. Because of their faithfulness to God, Daniel and his three friends were elevated to positions of prominent leadership for the kingdom (Daniel 2:48, 49). God always honors those who honor Him (1 Samuel 2:30).

Daniel chapter two has laid the foundation to our next sanctuary study in which the starting point for the judgment will be revealed!!

Your Response to Jesus

Recognizing that the God of heaven knows the future and is guiding events in the lives of men and nations today, are you willing to put your trust in Him and allow Him to have full control of your life?

Answer _____