



## An Incredible Dream

*And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. 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. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. 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. 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. 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. They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. (Daniel 2:1-7)*

I have a good friend who holds a Ph. D. in Psychology. In his doctoral studies Bruce focused on Carl Jung's philosophy of psychology rather than Sigmund Freud's. Over many years I have been fascinated at Bruce's response to dreams and dream symbolism. His explanations are not something that one can prove, but they seem quite consistently to be pertinent to the dreamer's experience and immediate circumstances, often insightful even prior to Bruce knowing what the dreamer is facing. For example, one of Bruce's clients told him about a dream she recently had, to which Bruce carefully advised this woman to seek immediate medical attention for any symptoms or problems she was sensing, as well as to "get her house in order." She saw her medical doctor and was shortly diagnosed with advanced colon cancer. She lived less than a year after that dream. Apparently her mind knew more about her body than she realized.

Daniel faced a far more daunting challenge than my friend Bruce. The king had a dream but, upon awakening, could not remember it. Have we not all had those dreams? However, the king was so disturbed by the dream that he demanded to know more about it. His magicians, astrologers, sorcerers and Chaldeans" pleaded the unreasonableness of his demands. How could they interpret his dream if he couldn't even recall it to tell to them? If the king would give them the details of the dream, they would have no problem coming up with some kind of interpretation.

At this point neither the king nor his worthless staff of superstitious soothsayers was aware of the full significance of this dream. This was not an ordinary dream, brought on by too much rich food or by too many busy and stressful activities during the day. God sent this dream to

Nebuchadnezzar. It would reveal to Nebuchadnezzar not only what would happen to his beloved Babylon, but it would also predict the history that would unfold in that region for the next five hundred years. For our omniscient (all knowing, past, present, and future) God, prophecy is no problem. He knows the future as fully as He knows the past or the present. The dream was to and for Nebuchadnezzar, but no doubt it was also intended to serve as a comfort to Daniel and to the other faithful Jewish exiles who would spend seventy long years as slaves in Babylon.

Just before the king's command to execute his incompetent staff was enforced, Daniel became aware of the problem and asked for time to pray, to seek God's help. After his time in prayer Daniel sent word to the king that his God would give the king both the content and meaning of the lost dream.

The dream that we discover predicted the demise of Babylon, followed by three subsequent world powers, each increasingly powerful, but also increasingly brutal and less refined than Babylon. However, in the end the dream catapulted God's prediction from human powers and successive governments into a sure prophecy that God would step into human history during the era of these four world governments and set up a far superior kingdom of His own.

For Daniel and other faithful believers who seemed at the moment wholly lost in hopeless Babylon, this divine prediction sounded a note of powerful comfort and assurance. However weak and staggering at times, up to the Babylonian captivity, Israel/Judah existed as an independent nation. David, according to God's prophecy, became Israel's king. Through endless battles with their neighbors, Israel managed to survive

and continue as an independent nation. Upon Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam became king over Israel. However, he listened to foolish counselors and taxed the nation into a rebellion that would never heal. Jeroboam led the northern region of the country, involving ten of the twelve tribes, into the formation of a separate nation. He set up a false, hybrid (half imitating the right way and half imitating the surrounding pagan religions) form of religion and consciously worked to keep his people from socializing with the people in the Southern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom became known as Israel, and the Southern Kingdom as Judah. Within a few generations Israel was overcome and absorbed into Assyria, never again to exist as a separate nation. In fact Israel lost its whole identity, its citizens intermarrying with other peoples and becoming the half-breed Samaritan peoples who continued to inhabit the Northern Kingdom region in the first century.

For a time Judah, the Southern Kingdom, continued to survive. However, Judah too nearly followed Israel's ungodly examples, bringing God's severe judgment against her in the form of the Babylonian exile. After seventy years in Babylon less than fifty thousand Jews would return to their homeland and slowly rebuild their beloved city and country. From that time till the first century Judah existed, but she existed as a possession of other nations, not as an independent nation. Faithful Jews in Babylon understood the reasons for their captivity, as did the Jews who remained behind in Judah during that dreadful seventy years of divine judgment. It is no wonder that we read Jeremiah and nickname him the "Weeping Prophet." He had good reason to weep. Consider his early assessment of Judah's sin and subsequent judgment.

*For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. (Jeremiah 2:13)*

This double sin brought God's judgment against Judah in the form of those seventy years of Babylonian exile. While Daniel lived his faithful life in the palace halls of Babylon, Jeremiah struggled to survive amidst the ruins of once-beautiful Judah. He sees the dry blighted countryside of a truly "God-forsaken" country and her people.

Faithful servants of God in this dark era had good reason to wonder about their future. What would be the outcome of their sad, though well-deserved state? Would God so fully abandon them as to revoke His ancient promises and

prophecies? Would God turn from fulfilling the many prophecies He had given them through His prophets, even the prophecy of a coming Messiah who would sit on David's throne and rule with righteousness? Would the scepter depart from Judah before Shiloh the Prince of Peace came? (Genesis 49:10) In the last amazing segment of this dream given to a Babylonian king God would remind His beloved people that He had not forgotten a single one of His long-standing promises. He would remain faithful to His promises, though they had forsaken Him and fallen under His judgment. This prediction of God's future faithfulness, despite Judah's shaky survival, becomes the centerpiece of Daniel's story, all twelve chapters of this incredible book.

We will linger for some time on this amazing dream. It sets the stage for what we will see throughout the remainder of Daniel's writings. God does not always reveal His timeline to us. In fact He seldom does, though in one amazing prophecy in the ninth chapter of Daniel He does just that with amazing precision over almost five hundred years. However, God typically reveals His plans to His faithful servants, particularly when those plans involve them in some way. For example, consider God's "conversation" with Himself prior to sending judgment against Sodom.

*And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? (Genesis 18:17-18)*

What we see in Daniel is God's gracious revelation of His judgments and providence that will unfold across the next five hundred years, particularly as His gracious acts involve His chosen people and His faithful keeping of every promise and prophecy that He gave to them. If they read and believe the revelation to Daniel, future generations of Jews for the next five centuries will remain faithful and continue, despite frightening ordeals at times, to look forward to the greatest and most important prophecy that God ever spoke to His people in the Old Testament. He would take upon Himself human flesh, dwell among us for a brief season, and finish the essential and critical work necessary to fulfill every provision of His eternal covenant with and for His beloved people, including us today.

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church  
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Worship service each Sunday      10:30 A. M.  
Joseph R. Holder      Pastor