

DANIEL

Week 6, chapter 2 continued

We left off in Daniel chapter 2 as Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar had a series of disturbing dreams. Be aware that we're not going to come close to finishing chapter 2 in this lesson; there is so much more here than meets the eye.

The king called his flock of seers and enchanters and magicians and astrologers together and told them he needed to have this persistent and troubling dream interpreted. However before he would listen to an interpretation first they had to prove themselves by telling him the details of the dream itself. But even more, if they couldn't tell him the subject of his dream they would be executed.

After some back and forth between the King and his seers, they admitted that it was humanly impossible for any man to know another man's dreams. The King promptly ordered that all of the seers in the capital city of Babylon were to be killed and their family homes destroyed because he lost any faith that they had legitimate gifts to interpret dreams or see the future. This mass execution was to include Daniel and his 3 Jewish friends who, the timing seems to indicate, were still in the midst of their 3 year education that was part of the process of changing their identity from Hebrew to Babylonian.

When Daniel is informed of this harsh decree he pleads with **Aryokh**, the chief of King Nebuchadnezzar's royal bodyguard, to give him an audience with the king because he believes that with a little time he can satisfy the king's demand concerning his dreams. Daniel and his 3 cohorts pray to the Lord to reveal to them the secret of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and the Lord mercifully hears and responds. Daniel, who we were told in Chapter 1 had the spiritual gift of deciphering dreams and visions, was naturally the one to whom God communicated the meaning, and it happened in a waking vision at nighttime.

In a most appropriate response Daniel prayerfully thanked the Lord for saving them and for giving him the key to unlock the king's dream. Let's re-read a portion of Daniel chapter 2.

RE-READ DANIEL CHAPTER 2:19 - end

What is important for us to know about this prayer of thanksgiving is that Daniel essentially acknowledges God's fundamental characteristics. He is an eternal God who possesses all wisdom and power. He controls time and brings on the seasons. He is the ultimate ruler over all human governments, anywhere in every age, and permits kings to reign, and removes them from power at His will. The God of Israel whose name is Yehoveh dispenses divine wisdom to the wise, heavenly knowledge to those who have discernment. But it is a given that true wisdom and discernment can only be bestowed upon a person by Yehoveh and all other is counterfeit.

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Verse 22 explains that God knows what is hidden in the darkness and that light dwells with Him. The Aramaic word that is translated in English to darkness is **chashok**, which in Hebrew is a word we have discussed on numerous occasions, beginning with

Genesis 1: and that word is **choshek**. **Choshek** isn't referring to the absence of visible light, like night time; rather it is a word that means spiritual darkness, evil. And thus the English word light in this passage more correctly means enlightenment, and thus this verse is meant to connect with the previous one that speaks of knowledge and discernment. God knows what is happening in the physical sphere of evil that is inherent to man's evil inclination and also in the spiritual sphere of evil that is Satan and his minions. And yet whatever enlightenment exists in our universe or any other dimension emanates from the Lord; in fact it is intrinsic to His make-up and nature.

Daniel's prayer ends by identifying himself with the God of Israel, who is also the God of Daniel's ancestors. And so once again the weighty issue of identity is thrust front and center. At this point we're going to detour for a few minutes into something that is anything but academic or trivial; rather it is in our time prophetic and it is heading towards catastrophe.

I want to begin by stating a God-principle, which it would behoove all Christians and Jews to embrace. We can only ascertain God's identity in the same way Daniel has outlined for us: by means of God's name and His inherent attributes. And it might seem within Judeo-Christianity that discerning God's identity is a long-settled matter and so to re-examine it has little bearing on modern Christianity or Judaism. But in fact God's identity, and thus (especially as Believers) who we identify with, has become muddled and compromised even though most Christians and Jews who occupy our synagogues and churches are unaware of it.

Because of the resurgence of Islamic influence especially in the Western world, there is a concerted effort mostly by well-meaning Christians to find a pathway to middle ground in order to achieve peace with the Muslim world. One of the new focuses of Christian Missionary work is now aimed, rightly so, at the more than 1 billion Muslims on our planet. And due to much failure to make very many converts, a new approach is underway that seems to be achieving better results; and this approach is to explain to Muslims that their god and the God of the Christians are the same god. And further that their holy book, the Koran, is just as valid and worthy as is the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian bible. Thus Christians ought to feel free to learn the customs and prayers of Muslims, and join them in their Mosques as they worship Allah together, in one voice. And Muslims ought to reciprocate by joining Christians in churches and praying with Believers.

The so-called EmergentChurch is quite open to this concept. Even a new term called Chrislam has been coined to identify this movement within Christianity. I personally encountered this phenomenon well over a decade ago as I was working in an executive capacity at an evangelical mega-church. The Pastor dropped a booklet on my desk and asked me to review it and then tell him how many we needed to order. It had been produced by the missions board of this well-respected evangelical denomination, and because the annual missions week focus was only a few weeks off, hundreds of thousands of this booklet had been printed in order to be handed out to the many congregations.

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And the booklet essentially explained to the denominational membership that for the sake of spreading the Gospel of Christ we ought to accept that Allah is the same as Jehovah and is the same as the God of Israel. And that there is nothing wrong with the Koran as a holy book; and that we ought to seek out Muslims to pray with and to pray with them in the name of Allah. In fact, the Muslims have always been praying to Jesus, they just didn't know it. After I climbed down off the ceiling and gathered myself I went in to the Pastor, showed him some underlined passages, and he went red in the face. He immediately put in a call to the missions board and logged his protest and told them that this booklet was unwelcome in his church.

I have close contact with one of the largest non-denominational Christian missions group in the Middle East; and many of their missionaries hold the same viewpoint about Allah and Islam that I just explained to you. And even those missionaries who have some misgivings and reservations about it, still adhere to it in practice because of the good results they have seen in getting Muslims to accept Jesus. But all is not as it seems.

Quite recently I had dinner with two folks who are active in missions to the Muslims, one in particular who deals with it at the highest levels. And both were eager to explain that due to this relaxed and enlightened approach to Middle Eastern Arabs large numbers of Muslims have now become (to use their term) Christian-Muslims. I replied that I didn't understand the meaning of that term; how could a Christian also be a Muslim, since they were separate religions. The response was that these Muslims believed in Jesus, wanted peace with Christianity, but also retained their Muslim identities. And thus the long sought after middle ground had been found and so we all ought to rejoice and join in the effort.

A little later in the evening, I talked separately to one of the men and asked him this question: have you ever asked these Muslim "converts" who Jesus is? And at that point he leaned over near to me and confessed that indeed that this issue was troubling to him because the Christian-Muslims who professed belief in Jesus did **not** believe that he was God, the Son of God, or God's Messiah. Nonetheless he felt that while they did not accept the divinity of Yeshua, and they were equally insistent on maintaining their Muslim identity that they were either Christians or on their way to becoming Christians. And he pointed out that many accepted modern day Christian denominations essentially hold the same belief that Jesus was a good man but was not divine; and this also agrees with the beliefs of most of the modern school of bible scholars. So, for him, case closed. The situation may not have been ideal, but it was a good thing nonetheless. Well, Yeshua has a different standard for answering the question: who is Jesus?

Matthew 16:13-17 CJB

13 When Yeshua came into the territory around Caesarea Philippi, he asked his talmidim, "Who are people saying the Son of Man is?"

14 They said, "Well, some say Yochanan the Immerser, others Eliyahu, still others Yirmeyahu or one of the prophets."

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¹⁵ *"But you," he said to them, "who do you say I am?"*

¹⁶ *Shim'on Kefa answered, "You are the Mashiach, the Son of the living God."*

¹⁷ *"Shim'on Bar-Yochanan," Yeshua said to him, "how blessed you are! For no human being revealed this to you, no, it was my Father in heaven."*

I cannot begin to tell you how this new distorted idea among many Believers and Christian Missionaries of how Jesus is to be presented to Islam (and even to Western gentiles), and what constitutes faith in Christ troubles my heart; and how catastrophic this is to our faith. I certainly do not hate Muslims. And Muslims are certainly worthy of being told the Good News of Jesus and of being saved as much as anyone else. I have Muslim friends and acquaintances, and most are good people. But the Old and New Testaments are clear that our identity, and which god we identify with and how to identify that god, is everything for a human being. Here at Seed of Abraham we have spent years studying the Old Testament and it is overflowing with stories of Israelite Kings and their subjects adopting elements of pagan worship of other gods and the cultures attached to them, and adding it to their worship of Yehoveh. I even gave you the scholarly name for this phenomenon: syncretism. And what was God's reaction to this? Unequivocal condemnation of it. Sometimes killing those Hebrews who practiced it. Various disasters befalling His people in the Holy Land as supernatural judgment. And in the end, exile. In fact this was the primary subject of the many prophets the Lord sent to warn and chastise His people, Israel.

Therefore I want to be clear in this matter: Allah is not the Arabic name of the God of Israel. It is the name of a uniquely Islamic god whose origination is with the Nabateans moon god system. This is not speculation, it is simple historic fact. The Koran is a schizophrenic compilation of words that begins with respect for Christian and Jews, but then quickly turns to demonizing us and demanding that we convert to Islam or be subjugated as slaves or outright murdered. The attributes that create the identity of the God of Israel are the opposite of the attributes that create the God of Islam.

Identity. It is all about identity. And identity is established by means of name and attributes, just as it is on your Passports. We are told by Christ that we cannot identify both with God and with mammon. We cannot identify both with the world and with Yeshua. And we cannot identify both with Allah and with Yehoveh, anymore than the Hebrews were allowed to identify both with Ba'al and Yehoveh no matter how they rationalized it or how much they insisted upon it for the sake of getting along with their neighbors.

It is important to realize that merely saying you believe in Jesus doesn't establish a saving faith. In fact much of Islam accepts the historical reality that a Jewish man named Jesus (Yeshua) lived and was a good man and a great teacher. So it is not that difficult of a step for them to go from a tacit approval of Jesus within the framework of Islam, to becoming more familiar with His teachings and adopting especially His admonitions regarding love and peace. And this is because not all Muslims are warlike. It is this peaceful aspect of Jesus that Christian-Muslims are accepting; but they do not accept His divine nature or His ability to save. Now as a caveat: there indeed are Muslims who have sincerely converted and become Christians and I personally know a handful of them. But the

key is that they have renounced their Muslim identity. And they have accepted the divine and saving nature of Messiah, and would refuse the label of Christian-Muslim.

Therefore in our day and era we have to be aware and alert that there is category of religious people who look admiringly to Jesus; I call these folks **Jesusites**. They are distinct from Christians and/or Messianic Jews and need to be looked at as separate and apart. Jesusites are those who accept that a Hebrew man name Jesus (Yeshua) existed; that he was a great teacher and philosopher who preached love and tolerance, and that if the whole world adopted his attitude and teachings we would have universal peace. He was essentially the Middle Eastern version of Gandhi. And just as Gandhi wasn't divine, neither was Jesus. But to the Jesusites that doesn't make him any less worth following.

Sadly, in what is loosely called the church today, we have several denominations that have let go of their Christianity, or new ones have arisen, and have instead become Jesusites. They want to retain the label of "Christian" but I am determined not to help them validate it. Jesusites may be good people, and there is indeed no better teacher they can look to than Jesus; but they are not saved, they do not have the Holy Spirit in them and therefore they are not Christians. Because these folks still desire to be called Christians it waters down the meaning and definition of the term Christian, which ought to mean those who know Christ as God, Lord, and Savior. And that sort of process of dilution of faith and resultant dissolution of identity is essentially what King Nebuchadnezzar intended for Daniel and his 3 friends. But Daniel refused to succumb to it, and his prayer re-establishes that he remains faithful to the God of Israel, who Daniel identifies by means of His incomparable name, attributes, character and nature. Because outside of this, there is no other means of identification.

Daniel was brought before the king and the king asked the same question he did to his Chaldean seers: "Can you tell me what I dreamt?" And interestingly in verse 27 Daniel gives Nebuchadnezzar an answer similar to what the seers had given the king. He says that no human being can do that; not even those who possess the knowledge of the Chaldean black arts can tell the king the secrets of his dream. HOWEVER.....there is a God in heaven who can. And so despite the fact that Daniel is nothing special, and is no magician or sorcerer, God has chosen to reveal to him what the king dreamt, and the meaning of it, so that the king could understand it. And what Yehoveh revealed to Daniel is that the dream was all about the **acharit-yommaya** (which is Aramaic), that is the same as the Hebrew **acharit-hayamim**. A literal translation would be "in the latter part of the days". Or as is more familiar to us, "the latter days".

So what does this term mean? What is it referring to? First, obviously this is referring to a time in the future of when the words were uttered. Second, it is a concept that is entirely Hebrew and is used regularly in the Hebrew prophetic writings with which Daniel was most familiar. So whatever the gentile King Nebuchadnezzar might have taken it to mean, we are to understand it in the same way that all previous Hebrew writers (and Daniel) intended it. It is some future time in which God will be dealing with the human race and it includes the involvement of the Hebrew Messiah.

Put another way, the phrase **acharit-hayamim** lifted out of context and standing alone is only referring to some undefined future time; any future time. But in the bible, when taken in context, the

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phrase is in reference to a Messianic Kingdom even if the initial manifestation of a specific “latter days” prophecy might not be in Messianic times (such as Jacob prophesying the outcome of the 12 tribes in Genesis 49), but a later manifestation of that same prophecy will involve the Messiah. As an illustration think of the coming of Yeshua around 30 A.D. He accomplished part of His prophesied mission, but the fulfillment of the remainder of the prophecies concerning Messiah only happen after His 2nd coming that is yet future to us.

So here is an important but a bit complicated principle concerning prophecies of the latter days: for the people who were alive before Messiah came the 1st time, the *a^{charit-hayamim}* was future to them. For them Yeshua’s 1st coming would be “the latter days” that they had looked forward to. What they didn’t know then was that the “latter days” manifested itself more than once and the 2nd manifestation would be very far into the future.

For us, today, Messiah’s 1st coming is ancient history; it is something we look back upon. So “the latter days” for us means when Yeshua comes the 2nd time. Thus in the bible there is a 1st “latter days”, and a 2nd “latter days”. The 1st “latter days” has come and gone; the 2nd “latter days” is yet to arrive. Both are fully valid, but as of now only 1 of them has occurred.

Now that your head is properly swimming, let’s move on to verse 31 when Daniel begins to tell the king the dream he had dreamt. The king saw an enormous statue that was made out of shiny metal. For some unexplained reason the sight of the statue brought on a feeling of fear within the king, and so the statue is called “terrible”. It was the image of a man. The head was made of gold, the chest and arms were made of silver, the belly and thighs were made of bronze, its legs were made of iron, and its feet and toes were made partly of iron and partly of clay.

But then something else that was mysterious and terrifying happened. A great stone struck the statue at its feet; it caused the statue to break into many pieces, which were so small that they blew away in a wind the same way that chaff does in the winnowing process. This stone had been quarried without the work of humans and tools; in other words the stone appeared supernaturally. But even more, after smashing the statue the stone grew into a huge mountain that engulfed the entire planet.

Now, this statue in the dream was only an image. It was not an idol, it was not menacing, it was not alive and it did not move. The only moving object in the dream was the great stone that struck, toppled and destroyed the statue. In fact, if we can take it completely literally, the statue was fully formed and present in the dream before the stone showed up to disintegrate it. No doubt the king was by now suitably impressed by Daniel’s words and was all ears.

Let’s briefly consider the statue itself. First notice that it was one piece; each successive part or portion melded into the next. It was a unity. And what we can know in hindsight is that it represents the gentile empires that will dominate the world, in succession, until Messianic times. The second thing to notice is that the only undivided part of the statue is the head of gold. That is the head was a unified whole. But beginning with the silver chest and arms the statue is divided, so to speak. Or perhaps better it becomes an amalgam of parts (that is, the two separate arms are joined together by the chest). The same occurs with the bronze belly that is the joining point of the hips and thighs,

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and then with the iron legs we have two separate parts that don't have a clear joining point and yet they work together. The feet are different yet in that they are a mixture of iron and clay. Thus some scholars have argued that what is pictured is a statue consisting of 5 parts and not 4. However as we move along in Daniel we'll see that the clear intent of Daniel was to describe a statue consisting of 4 parts, and not 5.

Something else we should notice. The hardness of the metals increases as we go from head to feet: gold is the softest, silver next, then bronze and finally iron. Further the specific gravity (the mass, the weight) of each metal used decreases in succession. Gold is heavier than silver, which is heavier than bronze, which is heavier than iron. Even the value of the metals decrease as we move from gold, to silver, to bronze, to iron. So there is obvious symbolism here not only in the metals chosen but in what order they are stacked that we will in time consider.

So next in verse 36 Daniel says that now that he has told the king the dream, he will interpret it for him. Daniel's speech begins with a preamble that sounds as though it is merely the customary flowery compliments that are usually heaped upon a potentate of Nebuchadnezzar's high position. However we would be wrong if we concluded that. Essentially Daniel is only confirming that a prophecy from many years earlier had come to pass. In verses 37 and 38 we hear Daniel saying that Nebuchadnezzar is the King of Kings and has been given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory.

Let's dispel a common misperception: Nebuchadnezzar was anything but evil in God's eyes. He was not looked at as a wanton barbarian who ruthlessly and wickedly harmed the Hebrews. Yehoveh had raised him up, and given him great honor, and awarded him with tremendous power. Part of the purpose of that power was to be used as God's means to appropriately punish His people for their syncretism, unfaithfulness and idolatry. God was well pleased with the king, and says this about him in Jeremiah:

CJB Jeremiah 43:10 *Tell them: 'This is what ADONAI-Tzva'ot, the God of Isra'el, says: "I will summon N'vukhadretzar the king of Bavel, my servant, take him and set his throne on these stones I laid here; he will come and spread his royal canopy over them.*

But then Daniel 2:38 goes on to say that wherever people dwell on earth the animals and the birds have also been handed over to him. God has given dominion over the earth's creatures to Nebuchadnezzar. Does that have a familiar ring to it? Of course it does.

CJB Genesis 1:28 *God blessed them: God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air and every living creature that crawls on the earth."*

This speaks of the authority that God gave to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Now in the 6th century B.C. the Lord was handing this authority over to the gentile King Nebuchadnezzar. But this ought not to come as a surprise to us and I'm sure it wasn't to Daniel. Because Jeremiah had prophesied exactly this.

Jeremiah 27:1-7 CJB

CJB Jeremiah 27:1 *At the beginning of the reign of Y'hoyakim the son of Yoshiyahu, king of Y'hudah, this word came to Yirmeyahu from ADONAI:*

² *"ADONAI says this to me: 'Make yourself a yoke of straps and crossbars, and put it on your neck.*

³ *Send [similar yokes] to the kings of Edom, of Mo'av, of the people of 'Amon, of Tzor, and of Tzidon by means of the envoys they send to Yerushalayim, and to Tzidkiyahu king of Y'hudah.*

⁴ *Give them this message for their masters by telling their envoys that ADONAI-Tzva'ot, the God of Isra'el, says for them to tell their masters:*

⁵ *""I made the earth, humankind, and the animals on the earth by my great power and my outstretched arm; and I give it to whom it seems right to me.*

⁶ *For now, I have given over all these lands to my servant N'vukhadnetzar the king of Bavel; I have also given him the wild animals to serve him.*

⁷ *All the nations will serve him, his son and his grandson, until his own country gets its turn- at which time many nations and great kings will make him their slave.*

And for good measure through Jeremiah the Lord emphasizes in chapter 28 His intentions:

Jeremiah 28:14 CJB ¹⁴ *For here is what ADONAI-Tzva'ot, the God of Isra'el, says: "I have put a yoke of iron on the necks of all these nations, so that they can serve N'vukhadnetzar king of Bavel; and they will serve him; and I have given him the wild animals too.""*

So we can forget any notion of Daniel flattering King Nebuchadnezzar or of the King of Babylon being comparable to the Egypt's Pharaoh of the exodus; essentially Daniel is merely acknowledging that what God said He would do, He has done. But notice in Jeremiah 27:7 that this God-ordained dominion is to last only 3 generations: Nebuchadnezzar, his son, and his grandson. After Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty has ended, God's wrath will turn from His own people to Babylon. Not because Nebuchadnezzar and his offspring were seen by God as evil (even though God had held off on judgment). But rather because with the kings that followed Nebuchadnezzar and his royal descendants, Babylon ceased being reasonably accommodating to God's people, and ceased serving God's purposes, even though they didn't fully realize the fruits of their actions.

In physical reality did Nebuchadnezzar actually have dominion over the entire planet? No; only over a vast area of the Middle East that was the center of early civilization. But he did hold sway over the known world of people of that day. Yet whatever additional nations Nebuchadnezzar might have decided to conquer would indeed have become his with the Lord's blessing.

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Next time we'll begin to carefully dissect the meaning that Daniel assigns to the statue and each of its parts.