

GOD'S HAND IN HISTORY

Daniel 2:1-49

The Book of Daniel 2:4b – 7:28 is written in Aramaic and the remainder of the book is written in Hebrew.

In 2:4, "Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic...."

Why Aramaic?

This is the kind of question that should occur to you as you read your Bible.

In the KJV this language is called Syriack. This, of course, refers to the language of the people of Syria. What I didn't realize is that the land was not called Syria at the time of Daniel. It is properly called Aramaean for the land of Aram (Gen 10:22; 28:5). The Aramaic language was written in Hebrew characters (alphabet) and differs in vocalization and structure.

Many languages use the same characters, "a, b, c" viz. English, Spanish, French.

Aramaic was the common language of the Chaldeans. It was adopted by the Jews who returned from the Babylonian captivity and was spoken in the time of Christ. It was the language of commerce and trade. Both Ezra and Daniel (1-7) wrote parts of their books in Aramaic.

Syriack is a dialect that developed out of Aramaic.

Does anything "just happen?"

O. K. God controls the really big events, but does He care about me?

Remember that the overarching theme of Daniel is the sovereignty of God! That includes everything from the hairs on your head to the rise and fall of governments. If we really believed that and remembered it all the time, we wouldn't waste so much time being anxious.

What are some of the serious problems that confront the nations of the world? [Crime, pollution, earthquakes, floods, drug abuse, AIDS...TERRORISM]

Daniel 2 should encourage you.

Have you ever had a dream that seemed to tell you something?

Freud and frauds make a living telling people what their subconscious mind was telling them through dreams. Is there anything to it?

1. KING'S DREAM DEMANDED

2:1-13

In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. ² Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. ³ And the king said to them, "I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream." ⁴ Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation." ⁵ The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. ⁶ But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation." ⁷ They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation." ⁸ The king answered and said, "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm— ⁹ if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation." ¹⁰ The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. ¹¹ The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

¹² Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. ¹³ So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.

There are occasions in the Bible where God revealed something in dreams.

Why would God use a heathen king?

Because He chose to do it!

2. DANIEL'S PRAYER ANSWERED

2:14-23

Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁵ He declared to Arioch, the king's captain, "Why is the decree of the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. ¹⁶ And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king.

¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸ and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. ²⁰ Daniel answered and said:

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
to whom belong wisdom and might.

²¹ He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding;

²² he reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what is in the darkness,
and the light dwells with him.

²³ To you, O God of my fathers,
I give thanks and praise,
for you have given me wisdom and might,
and have now made known to me what we asked of you,
for you have made known to us the king's matter."

3. KING'S DREAM REVEALED

2:24-35

²⁴ Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him, "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation."

²⁵ Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: "I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation." ²⁶ The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?" ²⁷ Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanter, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: ²⁹ To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. ³⁰ But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.

³¹ "You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. ³² The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Arioch "found" Daniel? (25)

Daniel makes it clear where he got his insight. (26-30)

4. KING'S DREAM INTERPRETED

2:36-45

³⁶ "This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. ³⁷ You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, ³⁸ and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. ³⁹ Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. ⁴¹ And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. ⁴² And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. ⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ⁴⁵ just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure."

Gold had always been a symbol of Babylon; the gold head was a worldwide empire. Babylon never possessed the entire world, but it controlled enough of it to be considered worldwide.

Neither did the Jews ever completely possess Canaan (Joshua 13:1); and Christians don't quite lay hold of all of the blessing that God has for them.

The second world empire is Medo-Persia (Cf. 5:28; 8:20).

Darius the Mede overthrew Babylon (5:30-31) and he was succeeded by Cyrus the Persian (6:28). Their laws were known as "the laws of the Medes and Persians" (6:8), and the kingdom was a dual one with "two arms."

The third world empire is Greece (8:21), which began as the Macedonian kingdom of Philip II and his son, Alexander the Great.

Alexander entered Asia Minor in 334 B.C., 2-4 years after Darius the Mede came to power.

In three years Alexander overcame Medo-Persia. In another eight years he was ruler of the largest empire that had existed up to that time.
[He wept because there were no more worlds to conquer]

The Bible does not state that the Roman Empire was the successor to Greece, but history is clear and iron fits the image of Rome.

a) Some Bible students believe that the two legs of the image suggest feet and toes which would mean 10 parts to the kingdom. Notice that the number 10 is not mentioned, so it could mean any number of smaller kingdoms that would succeed the Roman Empire. From here on it is wise not to be dogmatic, because no one has it all exactly right.

There is no indication of a separation or parenthesis in time between the 4th kingdom and the Lord's coming. The image apparently carries the course of human world government from the time of Nebuchadnezzar without interruption to the time when the image will be smitten by the stone cut without hands.

Jesus referred to this sweep of world rule as "the time of the Gentiles" (Lu 21:24).

At the end of this time Jerusalem will be no longer be "trampled on" by the Gentiles [Rev 11]. In this view the times we are in will carry us to the end of the age and the return of Jesus.

b) Another view says that each of the kingdoms had world domination and no power today fits that description. They are looking to a 10-kingdom confederacy. The European Common Market will come into much discussion to support this view.

The dream image indicates a downward degree of power.
Each power has less total control than the previous one.
The rock (34) is Christ and all agree on that. (Cf. Ps 2:9; Mt 21:42)

View a) says that the 4th kingdom is the church, while view b) says that there is a kingdom yet to come that will be the 4th. This is why the interval is necessary and the church is a "parenthesis".

5. DANIEL'S SERVICE REWARDED

2:46-49

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. ⁴⁷ The king answered and said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery." ⁴⁸ Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. ⁴⁹ Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king's court.

Four things happened:

- a) Nebuchadnezzar revered Daniel. Some criticize Daniel for allowing this. But we don't really know what Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel had already plainly given God the glory for what he did. (27-28, 30)
- b) Nebuchadnezzar learned to honor God (47). He may not have been converted until 4:34-37, but he took a right step here.
- c) Daniel was promoted over the unbelieving Babylonians and could serve as a power for good.
- d) Daniel remembered his friends (49).

While there are differences about the "what" and the "when" there are some sure things we know:

1. God has a purpose and men will not escape it nor change it.
2. No matter how powerful a government may be, God can overcome it and set up a new one.