

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

PART TWO – ANSWERING THE UNANSWERABLE

Daniel and his three friends had been kidnapped from aristocratic families in Judah and taken as prisoners to Babylon to be trained as future leaders of their people, but in a Babylonian mould. Their three years in the University of Babylon were an immense challenge as they trusted God to shape their character and behaviour while still being outstanding students of the Babylonian language and customs. As A grade students they topped their class and were soon offered important jobs as royal advisors. You might suppose that their future careers were now secure. Wrong!

The king's long term advisors had learned that the secret of success as bureaucrats was to give the boss the advice he wanted to hear. Nebuchadnezzar had finally worked out what his officials were up to. After one particularly bad nightmare the king had had enough. The advisors were asked to explain his dream without being told what the dream was. The penalty for failing to do this would be a painful death and the demolition of their homes. For once their response was right – that was a question only God could answer.

The king was not impressed and ordered all his advisors be executed, including the trainee advisors from Judah. When Arioch, the police commander responsible to carry out the sentence of death, arrived at Daniel's home, Daniel first asked for time to pray and at least temporary mercy for the senior advisors. Daniel and his friends prayed not in panic but in praise and thanksgiving, knowing that God alone gives wisdom if only we ask Him without doubting.

Daniel was brought before the king. First he made it plain that the answer he would give was not his but was from the God of heaven. There was no way he wanted to receive any credit or glory for what God had revealed. The king sat in stunned silence as Daniel recounted his dream exactly as it had happened and then explained what God was warning him about.

The king's dream had been of a great statue made of 4 different materials, gold, silver, bronze and finally iron mixed in the lowest part with clay. It was a summary of the history of that part of the world for the next thousand years. His Babylonian empire would be replaced by Persia. This happened in 539BC. Persia would be defeated by Greece, which took place in 331BC. Finally Rome would overthrow Greece in 63BC. Rome which seemed to be the strongest empire of all would last in the West until 476AD and in the East, centred on Constantinople, present day Istanbul, for another 1000 years. Even Rome would eventually collapse because the iron of a strong military government was mixed with the human clay of man's weakness. During the time of Rome a new empire, that of Jesus, would be founded which would last for eternity.

Nebuchadnezzar not only knew that Daniel's account of his dream was accurate but he would have had the witness of the Spirit in his heart that the glimpse of future history he was being given was the truth. He acknowledged God's wisdom and Daniel's faithfulness and promoted him to prime minister of Babylon, in charge of all the other

advisors. Daniel's first act in his new role was to appoint his three friends as regional governors. Their rise to the top was quite an achievement for a group of foreign teenager prisoners!

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY ON DANIEL, CHAPTER TWO

Q.1 What does the story of Nebuchadnezzar and his dream tell us about what God is doing in the hearts of those who look tough on the outside and pretend they have got it all together?(Acts 9:1-9) Why did the king tell his counsellors to explain his dream without first hearing what the dream was about? What was he going to do to them if they could not answer?

Q.2 What did Daniel do about it when he heard what was expected of him?(Matt.10:19,20) Did he panic or pray?(Phil.4:6,7) What had he learned about God which would help him at moments like these?(Jas.1:2-8) How do you handle bullies?

Q.3 What does this story teach us about the difference between human wisdom and God's wisdom?(I Cor.2:6-13) How does God use His wisdom to get through to the toughest unbelievers?(I Kgs.10:6-9)

Q.4 How did God answer Daniel? Did Daniel take the credit for his brilliant explanation to the king?(Matt.5:14-16; Acts 3:12; 14:15) What effect did all this have on Nebuchadnezzar? Is there any way we can expect God to do similar things in our lives?