

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
AUGUST 10 2024

God even gave the dream

Scripture Story: Daniel 2.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 40.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of Daniel is a story of reliance on God to give him not only the interpretation of the dream, but the dream itself. This is important for a number of reasons: (1) It showed that the wise men of the kingdom were incapable of knowing the dream, let alone its interpretation. (2) It proved the power of God to King Nebuchadnezzar. (3) It showed God's power, wisdom, and grace. This story offers valuable lessons about God's personal involvement and foreknowledge of the events in human history. This account presents an amazing prophecy that highlights major historical periods from the time of the Babylonian Empire to the end of human history and the reign of God, whose kingdom will be eternal.

What a powerful God we serve! He not only allows certain situations in our lives, but also provides the way of escape to deliver His people from trouble. He knows the end from the beginning as revealed in the vision to King Nebuchadnezzar and to His servant Daniel many thousands of years ago.

We have countless reasons to be grateful and to praise and worship God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Realize that God sets up situations as well as decides their outcome. *(Know)*
- Understand that total dependence on faith is what God asks of us. *(Feel)*
- Learn to look for ways to depend more fully on God. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Gift of Prophecy, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 18

"The Scriptures testify that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and we believe it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Num. 12:6; 2 Chron. 20:20; Amos 3:7; Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 22:8, 9.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Why is Daniel chapter 2 a remarkable passage? How did the vision of the great statue reveal the future? In what kingdom was gold a popular metal? What kingdom used silver as standard currency? In what kingdom was the armor of the soldiers made of bronze? In what kingdom was the armor of the

soldiers made of iron?

In what period in history are we living now in light of the historical segments presented in the vision of the great statue? What event will mark the end of human history and will usher in God's kingdom of glory?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In 1853, when young Hudson Taylor was making his first voyage to China, his vessel was delayed near New Guinea because the winds had stopped. A rapid current was carrying the ship toward some reefs, and the situation was becoming dangerous. Even the sailors using a longboat could not row the vessel out of the current. "We have done everything that can be done," said the captain to Taylor. But Taylor replied, "No, there is one thing we have not done yet." There were three other believers on the ship, and Taylor suggested that each retire to his own cabin and pray for a breeze. They did, and while he was at prayer, Taylor was impressed with the confidence that God would send the much-needed wind. He went up on deck and suggested to the first officer, an unbeliever, that he let down the mainsail because a breeze was on its way. The man refused, but then they saw the corner of the sail begin to stir. The breeze had come! They let down the sail and in a short time were on their way! (Taken from W. Wiersbe, *Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers*, p. 240.)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

When we trust in God, oftentimes what seems like it might be ordinary becomes extraordinary. Whether it is discernment we should not have had, or wisdom that comes from beyond us, it is always an exciting adventure to experience God working. By faith we can truly see God at work in current events and in our lives.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- What does the giant statue's head of gold represent? (See Daniel 2:36-38.)
- What is the meaning of the chest and arms of silver? (See verse 39.)
- What kingdom did the belly and thighs of bronze represent? (See verse 39.)
- What kingdom did the legs of iron represent? (See verse 40.)
- What do the feet partly of iron and partly of clay represent? What are the characteristics of the statue's feet? (See verses 41-43.)
- What glorious event will mark the end of the history presented in the vision about the great statue? (See verses 44, 45.)
- What significant truths can you share about this amazing prophecy with someone who does not believe in God? Study carefully the historical facts that prove the accuracy of this prophecy. Consider the identifying marks of the kingdoms described in the vision and their succession. What does the accurate fulfillment of this prophecy reveal about God?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Genesis 41.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

"The gold head stood not only for Nebuchadnezzar but also for his kingdom of Babylon [604-538 B.C.]. . . .

"Media and Persia were united together and conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.

". . . In 331 B.C., [The Medo-Persian Empire 538-331 B.C.] was vanquished byAlexander the Great, founder of the Macedonian-Greek Empire. After Alexander's death his dominion was divided into a number of Hellenistic Greek kingdoms. Meanwhile Rome was evolving in the west, and in due course, began to influence the Hellenistic kingdoms. By 168 B.C. Rome dominated the Mediterranean as the fourth empire of the statue prophecy.

". . . The Roman Empire [146 B.C.–A.D. 476] did not capitulate to a fifth monolithic empire. It deteriorated over a very long period and was appropriated piecemeal by whatever tribal coalition was ambitious enough to grab a portion. France, Italy, Great Britain, the two Germanies, and other nations of Europe are contemporary results of this piece-

meal and long-continued process.

". . . The feet and toes represent the nations of modern Europe—some strong, some weak—that dwell in the territory of the western Roman Empire. . . .

"Many ambitious and talented men have tried to unite Europe. . . . But the five simple words 'They will not hold together' [Daniel 2:43] held true in [each] case."—Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Daniel for You and Your Family*, 1981, pp. 35–37

"Will the European countries negate this picture? They may, with difficulty, agree upon certain political principles, and they may enter into agreements to facilitate trade and commerce, but each of these countries may be expected to retain control of its cultural, linguistic, and territorial properties. They may join together for certain common purposes, but according to Daniel's prophecy, they will never be joined into one complete political entity as was the Roman Empire" (taken from William H. Shea, *Daniel: A Reader's Guide*, p. 103).

"The next empire portrayed by Daniel's prophecy will be the worldwide kingdom of God, introduced by Jesus Christ Himself at His glorious second coming (Daniel 2:44)" (taken from Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Daniel for You and Your Family*, p. 37).

"This is the central fact of the conclusion to this dream-vision: That the God of heaven will one day set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. It will never be displaced by another metal kingdom that will come down the road of history, for history itself will end in that kingdom of God. It will be history's great climax. This is the goal toward which history is moving" (taken from William H. Shea, *Daniel: A Reader's Guide,* p. 104).

When did you experience God's miraculous power in your life? How does recognizing God's sovereignty and His intervention in our lives help you trust His will for your life?

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

"Doing" Bible Study

Students learn by doing; this is knowledge that is pretty common. However, how do you have students "do" a lesson study from the Bible? There are numerous ways that they can connect the story to their lives. Anything from song to Scripture reading to role-playing will allow the students to feel as if they are experiencing the story. Even something as silly as getting them to stand when they are used to sitting makes it possible for them to remember things better than they would have otherwise. This is important as they begin to internalize the Scriptures and apply them to their lives.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight *convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Bring the students into a circle and have them all hold hands. This will build a sense of community. Ask them each to think of a time when they had to rely totally on God. Then ask each one of them to pray for the willingness to rely completely on God regardless of the circumstances.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Daniel's example of full reliance on God is remarkable. It can take awhile for us to learn to surrender every area of our lives to God's leaning, but complete dependence on God will allow Him to guide us and accomplish His goal in our lives. What can we do to learn reliance on God? It seems that crisis often forces us to rely on God. This lesson seeks to help students realize their need for leaning on God in faith regardless of the circumstances. What can we do, as teachers and mentors, do to help disciple each young person so that they can more readily see the power of God in their lives, regardless of whether they experience good times or bad times? We can always point them to the characters in the Scriptures who learned to trust no matter the circumstances. As the prophetic revelations in the book of Daniel indicate, we can trust God to lead us, because He who oversees the events taking place in human history is also intimately concerned and deeply involved in our lives.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 40.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Daniel 2.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 40.

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Photo by Colleen Cahill

keytext

"Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. The king said to Daniel, 'Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.' "

(Daniel 2:46, 47, NIV)

flashlight

"In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 499).

what do you think?

Please answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think that God allowed king Nebuchadnezzar to forget his dream? (See Daniel 2:1-5.)
2. What was Daniel's response when he found out that none of the Babylonian wise men could interpret the king's dream? (See Daniel 2:16-18.)
3. How did God honor Daniel's faithfulness? (See Daniel 2:19.)
4. How did Daniel witness to the king about the God Who revealed the dream and its interpretation? (See Daniel 2:27, 28.)

did you know?

Did you know that during the Babylonian Empire gold was the most prevalent metal in Babylon? Gold was therefore a fitting characteristic of the Babylonian Empire that dominated the ancient world from 604 to 538 B.C.

During the Medo-Persian domination, 538-331 B.C., silver was the standard currency. In 331 B.C. the Medo-Persian Empire was conquered by the Greek armies whose armor was made of bronze. In 146 B.C. the Greek Empire was conquered by the Roman armies. The Roman Empire was in rule between 146 B.C.-A.D. 476. and was known for its iron rule and fierce armies whose armor was made of iron. In A.D. 476 the Roman Empire lost its power and it was divided among various barbarian tribes. Much like iron and clay cannot be organically fused together, so in spite of repeated attempts, the political powers that have since come and gone could never achieve cohesive unity. The vision of the great statue culminates with Jesus' second coming that will usher in God's glorious kingdom.

INTO THE STORY

"The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), 'Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?'

"Daniel replied, 'No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you were lying in bed are these:

"As Your Majesty was lying there, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than anyone else alive, but so that Your Majesty may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.

"'Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

"'This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

"'After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

" 'In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

" 'The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.' "

(Daniel 2:26-45, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What does the giant statue's head of gold represent? (See Daniel 2:36-38.)

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What is the meaning of the chest and arms of silver? Next, what kingdom did the belly and thighs of bronze represent? (See verse 39.)

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What kingdom did the legs of iron represent? (See verse 40.)

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What do the feet partly of iron and partly of clay represent? What are the characteristics of the statue's feet? (See verses 41-43.)

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What glorious event will mark the end of the history presented in the vision about the great statue? (See verses 44, 45.)

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What can you share about this prophecy with someone who does not believe in God? What does the accurate fulfillment of this prophecy reveal about God?

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punch lines

"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior" **(Habakkuk 3:17, 18, NIV).**

"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God" **(Psalm 20:7, NIV).**

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" **(Hebrews 11:1, NIV).**

"For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" **(1 John 5:4, NIV).**

further insight

"Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 253

"This prophecy of Daniel is an introductory lesson. It prepares us for the even more stupendous predictions that come later. As we observe its fulfillment in international affairs over the centuries, our minds are opened to understand other outstanding prophecies in Daniel and Revelation that deal with vital developments in the Christian church; and we are prepared for still other, reassuring predictions about the wonderful things Jesus is doing for us right now. Arranging the prophecies in order, from simple to complex and from public to personal, is another evidence of how much God cares for us."—C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Daniel for You and Your Family*, vol. 1, p. 38

Sabbath

Read Daniel 2:27, 28.

Answer the questions in the *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson. Daniel once again is found to be completely relying on the wisdom that God has given him.

It's amazing when you think about everything Daniel was able to do throughout his life by having complete dependence on God. Ask yourself: "Do we live our lives with that same dependence on God?" "Why is it that we have such a hard time depending on God for everything?" Remember, Daniel didn't depend on God just for the interpretation of the dream; he depended on God for the dream itself.

Have you ever taken credit for something that was not entirely your accomplishment? Have you ever been a part of something great that was not as much your work as that of a team, yet you still thought you should get the glory? Daniel was very clear on whom to give credit to for the telling and the interpretation of the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. His is a great example of how to give credit to God for the things He does and reveals to us. He began by proclaiming God's divine power and His role in the events of history.

Sunday

Read Daniel 2:26-45.

Answer the questions in the *Out of the Story* section of the lesson.

Daniel, was not interested in proving his worth to the king; rather, he was interested in proving God's worth to the king.

What can Daniel's story teach us?

Consider the identifying marks of the kingdoms described in the vision of the great statue and their succession. Study carefully the historical facts that show the accuracy with which this prophecy has thus far been fulfilled. How can you explain this prophecy to someone who is looking for historical evidence for the fulfillment of prophecies that were given by God?

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Monday

Read Daniel 2:46, 47.

When we allow God to be who He is, in all of His glory, even the most cynical among us see that God is the God of all. The king recognized the power of God immediately as He worked through His servant Daniel.

Describe a time when God could work through you so that those around you could witness His loving care and leading in your life.

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Tuesday

Read Hebrews 11:1.

What new facts did you discover from the *Did You Know?* section of the lesson? As the quote in the *Flashlight* section tells us, God has in His hand the events of history. This gives us a great deal of comfort, knowing that no matter what happens, God has this all under control!

Wednesday

So what is faith? Reread *Punch Lines* and *Further Insight* for some thoughts about faith.

Faith is _____

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It is essential for us to trust that God is in control of human history and therefore of the events in our lives. What reassurance do you have that God cares enough for you to guide your future if you trust Him?

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Thursday

Read Psalm 20:7.

How do you describe faith in God? Sometimes it is as simple as trusting Him when you don't have the answers and the circumstances are dim. Sometimes it is trusting Him when all you have left is that trust. God will not fail you. Believe and have faith in Him!

Friday

Read Romans 1:17.

How can you apply in practice the principle of living by faith?

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Give God permission to guide your future that you may fulfill His plan for your life.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 40.

**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.