

graceWORKS ! GOING DEEPER¹ The Papou Study Bible is a daily study provided by me to



help folks explore the depth and joy of the “conneXion” life of God. It’s my personal study, and is not intended as a doctrinal statement or statement of any church or denomination or congregation. It’s also my belief that “grace” works, and the servant of God should always want to go deeper. Multi-tasking as usual, I’m also calling this the “Papou Study Bible.” I’m writing it as if I were speaking to my girls who love me and any descendant they have that love their Papou too. And to anyone who wants to consider me a spiritual Dad or “Papou.” I want them to be able to study the Bible with Papou (grandpa in Greek) after I’m gone---and if they don’t, I’ll haunt them. The Scriptures say it’s noble to “search the Scriptures daily” to verify truth like the ancient Bereans did (Acts 17:11). My folks came from Berea. My incredible Dad (and your grandfather and great grandfather, guys), Vasil Charles Valekis taught me to do this like he did---every day until I die. He taught me and everyone I know to go to church no matter what and to put God first. While Mama (Maria Pagona Stratakis Valekis) never really did this, she made sure we listened to Daddy on this one. She would have hit us with a spatula or frying pan or worse if we didn’t. This is a simple sharing my “daily search.” And I’d like to think it is a continuation of God’s life through my Dad through me. Both my “Dads” by the way. And a way to honor him, mama and our loving “Dad”---God. And for all of us to be together, in Spirit, even when we I join them in heaven. I like to use the Blue Letter literal, very “visual,” Greek translation a lot to help “visualize” these truths the beautiful way Greek enables you to view. And I like to share this with folks serving in an elder capacity, or any capacity, to grow them, challenge them, and stretch them. But especially share it with anyone I’ve ever brought to Christ and family members who truly love me. And when you study these, I’ll make sure to connect with you from heaven. *Ever an orthodox Greek, Jim Valekis*

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Christ IN You Series

Colossians 1:27 (King James Version)

²⁷To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory

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Daniel 2 Part 5²

So I wanted to press the subject of the statue of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, and the information it shares with us.

Again, I think we live in “spiritual Babylon.” This prophecy shows the various phases of this kingdom, all the way down to the return of Jesus. I think it speaks more in overview than in specificity. The last empire, the Roman, seems to be the “mode” in which all successive kingdoms and rules operate until the return of Christ. Just want savor this prophecy a bit, as it meant a lot to me when my bible study restored the reality of God back to me in the 8th grade, no less!

Enjoy!

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Nebuchadnezzar's Dream



2 ³¹“Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. ³²The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.

It's fascinating to me that even though

Nebuchadnezzar was a rather ruthless and autocratic ruler, God cared about him enough to show him this vision. God works with anybody and everybody. Even despotic rulers that enslave His people.

³⁴While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands.

Obviously that is Jesus. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. ³⁵Then 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.



<https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/nebuchadnezzar-s-dream/>

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CCC expresses gratitude to this wonderful sight.

The **Neo-Babylonian Empire**, also known as the **Second Babylonian Empire**^[6] and historically known as the **Chaldean Empire**,^[6] was the last of the **Mesopotamian** empires to be ruled by monarchs native to Mesopotamia.^[7] Beginning with **Nabopolassar**'s coronation as **King of Babylon** in 626 BC and being firmly established through the fall of the **Neo-Assyrian Empire** in 612 BC, the Neo-Babylonian Empire and its ruling **Chaldean dynasty** would be short-lived, being conquered after less than a century by the **Persian Achaemenid Empire** in 539 BC.

The defeat of the Assyrians and the transfer of empire to **Babylon** marked the first time the city, and southern Mesopotamia in general, had risen to dominate the **Ancient Near East** since the collapse of **Hammurabi's Old Babylonian Empire** nearly a thousand years prior. The period of Neo-Babylonian rule thus saw unprecedented economic and population growth throughout Babylonia and a renaissance of culture and artwork, with the Neo-Babylonian kings conducting massive building projects, especially in Babylon itself, and bringing back many elements from the previous two thousand or so years of **Sumero-Akkadian** culture. . . . Babylonian sources describe Nebuchadnezzar's reign as a golden age which transformed Babylonia into the greatest empire of its time.

From wikipedia

So now let's learn the interpretation. God gave Daniel both the dream and the interpretation.

³⁶"This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. ³⁷Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; ³⁸in 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.

The Gold Head represents the neo-Babylonian Empire (see sidebar).

I connect the concept of "golden" age mentioned in this article with the fact that this kingdom was the "golden" one on this statue, the most "valuable," the most refined expression of world empires and rule---hence, a "head of Gold" pictured it. Now mind you, that doesn't mean it's "golden" in any pure spiritual sense from a godly perspective. I guess I'm saying it was at least the "classiest" version of all the "Babel" like empires that followed it. And again, look at what this empire stand for (and compare it to what our culture values):

- **unprecedented economic and population growth**
- **a renaissance of culture and artwork**
- **massive building projects**
- **bringing back many elements from the previous two thousand or so years**

A book that I'm going to read, entitled Postcards from Babylon, speaks of our culture in this way.

In a culture that venerates materialism and militarism, the only way to truly follow Jesus is to be countercultural. Sure, the prosperity gospel extols materialism and the religious right celebrates militarism, but these are nothing but attempts to smuggle the idols of Mammon and Mars into Christianity. A synchronistic religion that attempts to amalgamate Jesus and American values may be popular, but it's unfaithful to the Spirit who calls the people of God out of Babylon. The writer of Revelation called the Christians of the first-century catacombs away from the idolatrous seduction of empire with these provocative words:

And then the author uses the call in Revelation 18 decrying our own Babylon-like system:

Revelation 18	
<p>²With a mighty voice he shouted: “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!”^[a] She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal. ³For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries.</p>	<p>The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.” ⁴Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “Come out of her, my people,”^[b] so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues;</p>

The author of this book, with whom I agree, says that our American modern day cultural penchant to glorify our position in the grand scheme of things borders close to what Rome said about itself. Notice this scathing quote about our cultural approach to Christianity and how different it was from the first church:

The original Jesus movement was not a pietistic religion of private belief about how to go to heaven when you die. The original Jesus movement was a countercultural way of public life. It was the kingdom of Christ, and as such it was a rival to the kingdom of Caesar. This is what made the principalities and powers of Rome so nervous about the Way. Though it's well known, it still needs to be emphasized that Jesus and his two most important apostles, Peter and Paul, were all executed by the Roman Empire. Why? Not for their religious beliefs about an afterlife, but because the kingdom of heaven they announced and enacted posed a challenge to the dominant myth that Rome had a manifest destiny to rule the nations and a divine right to shape history. Either it was Jesus who was the last best hope of the earth or it was Rome. But it couldn't be both.

Don't get me wrong. I love that many of our Founding fathers were believers and our own founding documents say we were "created." But no government on earth, or no nation for that matter, can make the kingdom of heaven "happen" on earth.

The author adds this:

If Christianity is not seen as countercultural and even subversive within a military-economic superpower, you can be sure it is a deeply compromised Christianity. A Christianity at home in an empire is the kind of compromised Christianity that the book of Revelation so passionately and creatively warns us against. A church in bed with a superpower is what Constantine inaugurated when he believed that Christ and Roma could be wed. But Christ cannot be wed to Roma. Christ can only be wed to his bride, the church. The reality is that the goddess Roma—who John rudely calls "Babylon the great, mother of whores"^[4]—

Ok. Enough of that. God told Nebuchadnezzar:

³⁹"After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours.

This is the Medo Persian Empire established in 539 B.C., the date of the fall of Babylon.

Question: "What is the significance of the Medo-Persian Empire in biblical history?"

Answer: The Medo-Persians, led by **King Cyrus II**, invaded Babylonia from the east in June of 539 B.C. and captured its capital, Babylon, in July of the same year. In biblical chronology, this occurred near the end of the **Babylonian exile**. Within a short time, **Daniel** became a trusted adviser to the new Medo-Persian Empire. This kingdom of the Medes and the Persians was later ruled by Artaxerxes II, or Ahasuerus, who married **Esther**. Today, Persia is essentially synonymous with modern Iran, and this was not so different in ancient times. However, Persia as an ancient *kingdom*, especially when referenced along with Media, encompassed Egypt in the west to parts of India in the east, and included Asia Minor from the eastern border of Greece to Tajikistan.³



Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.

This is the Greek empire established by Alexander the Great. I think it's interesting that even though his kingdom did not last, the Greek influence did. He enabled "Greek" to become the lingua franca of his world, the language that helped spread early Christianity.

⁴⁰Finally, 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.

This is the Roman Empire, forms of which some believe continue to this day. It's representative of a system of rule rather than the actual Roman Empire. It was composed of the strongest metal, symbolizing endurance and toughness. But, because it lacks the Spirit of God and the spirit of communion, it will fail and be replaced by the "Stone" (Rock) cut without hands.



³³ [What is the significance of the Medo-Persian Empire in biblical history? | GotQuestions.org](https://www.gotquestions.org/What-is-the-significance-of-the-Medo-Persian-Empire-in-biblical-history/)

And like the Scripture says, Christ is “that Rock.”

⁴¹Just 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. ⁴²As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³And 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.



⁴⁴“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. ⁴⁵This 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.”

Nebuchadnezzar’s very pagan response was typical. He worshipped the messenger, rather than the message.

⁴⁶Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. ⁴⁷The 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.”

⁴⁸Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. ⁴⁹Moreover, at Daniel’s request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

Daniel survived in a spiritual Babylon by remaining dependent upon God and open, but not intrusive, with His relationship with Him. It made the king regard him. He was also able to sift through the plethora of opinions being proffered by others in this place of multi-message confusion (a lot like our culture, which is described by some as a digital Babylon) by appealing to the inspiration of God for discernment and answers.

We can too!

Footnotes:

- a. **Daniel 2:2** Or *Chaldeans*; also in verses 4, 5 and 10
- b. **Daniel 2:3** Or *was*
- c. **Daniel 2:4** At this point the Hebrew text has *in Aramaic*, indicating that the text from here through the end of chapter 7 is in Aramaic.

New International Version (NIV)

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