

THE RISE & FALL OF EARTHLY KINGDOMS

Daniel Chapter Two, Part Two

The vision of chapter 2 is the first vision in the book of Daniel, and it is of great significance. It can be likened to a skeleton with each succeeding vision adding on the flesh, layer after layer. A correct understanding of this chapter is an essential orientation in order to anticipate the structure of all the other visions in Daniel. All the succeeding visions of Daniel as well as Revelation will fit into the time line of this first vision.

As we look at Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation, we want to remember that this first vision sets a sequential pattern of the rise and fall of world empires which concludes with the everlasting kingdom set up on this earth, and is a template for all subsequent visions in the book of Daniel. This method of interpreting the prophecies is called the "historicist" view and allows us to always know where we are in the scope of time.

Daniel and Revelation reveal the core issues of the great controversy—the principles of the kingdom of God versus the principles of the kingdom of Satan. As we behold the character of our God, we become changed into the same image thus fulfilling the main objective of the prophecies—to re-create in man the image of God. When we combine this *experience* with knowing where we are in the scope of time—we will go forth with a powerful "present truth" message that will swell into the loud cry and the whole earth will be filled with the glory of God.

We will find as we look closely at each of the visions of Daniel that great emphasis has been placed on the fourth kingdom "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, diverse from all the beasts that were before it." (Daniel 7:7). This kingdom exemplifies the principles of the kingdom of Satan more so than any other kingdom, and it viciously attacks Christ, His saints, His truth, and His sanctuary.

The remarkable accuracy of twenty-five hundred plus years of history foretold in advance through Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream brings compelling credibility to the Bible as trustworthy evidence of God's unfailing faithfulness in communicating valuable truth through His prophets.

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.

John 13:19 Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He.

John 14:29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

Verses 31-35 Daniel reveals the dream to Nebuchadnezzar

The king saw a great image. The head was of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass or bronze, the legs of iron, and the feet and toes of iron and clay. He then saw that a stone was cut out of the mountains without hands and smites the image on the feet and the whole image crumbles and blows away.

The stone then becomes a great mountain and fills the earth.

Verses 37—45 Daniel goes on to interpret the dream

Verses 37-38 "Thou art this head of gold"

To understand these things,—to understand that "righteousness exalteth a nation;" (Proverbs 14:34) that "the throne is established by righteousness" (Proverbs 16:12) and "upholden by mercy" (Proverbs 20:28); to recognize the outworking of these principles in the manifestation of His power who "removeth kings, and setteth up kings" (Daniel 2: 21),—this is to understand the philosophy of history.

In the word of God only are these principles clearly set forth. Here it is shown that the strength of nations, as of individuals, is not found in the opportunities or advantages that appear to make them invincible; it is not found in their boasted greatness. It is measured by the fidelity with which they fulfill God's purpose.

An illustration of this truth is found in the history of ancient Babylon. To Nebuchadnezzar the king the true object of national government was represented under the figure of a great tree, whose height "reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: the leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all;" under its shadow the beasts of the field dwelt, and among its branches the birds of the air had their habitation. (Daniel 4:11, 12). This representation shows the character of a government that fulfills God's purpose—a government that protects and upbuilds the nation.

God exalted Babylon that it might fulfill this purpose. Prosperity attended the nation until it reached a height of wealth and power that has never since been equaled—fitly represented in the Scriptures by the inspired symbol, a "head of gold." (Daniel 2:38)

Verse 39—40 The succession of kingdoms inferior to Babylon

Notice that the principle of "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7), applies to nations as well as man.

The metals in the image, symbolizing the different kingdoms, became less and less pure and valuable, from the head down. The head of the image was of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, and the feet and toes iron mingled with clay. So the kingdoms represented by them deteriorated in value and at the same time, the metals become harder and harder representing the deterioration of religion. Could this correlate to the hardening in rebellion as the end of human probation closes? As in the days of Noah, "that every imagination of the thoughts of his (man's) heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5)

Verse 39 The fall of Babylon

Babylon, shattered and broken at last, passed away because in prosperity its rulers had regarded themselves as independent of God, and had ascribed the glory of their kingdom to human achievement.

Daniel 4:30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? 31) While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

God desired to save Nebuchadnezzar and in mercy warned him of the consequences of his pride.

Daniel 4:27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

Daniel chapter four records the repentance and transformation that finally came to Nebuchadnezzar. But we find that his grandson, Belshazzar, also had a prideful, rebellious spirit.

Dan 5:22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; 23) But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

Thus the decree followed:

Daniel 5:27 TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

The power exercised by every ruler on the earth is Heaven-imparted; and upon his use of the power thus bestowed, his success depends.

The second kingdom of silver was the Medes and the Persians.

Daniel 5:28 PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

The third kingdom of brass was Greece.

Although the symbols change in Daniel 8, the succession of empires is the same as found in the other three visions of Daniel.

Daniel 8:20 The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.

21) And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

It is very interesting to note that Babylon was noted for the amount of gold that it had, and the Medes and Persians were wealthy in silver. Greece was known for its brass weapons, and the fourth kingdom, Rome, has been called the Iron Roman Kingdom. Scripture even identifies the fourth kingdom as iron.

Daniel 2:40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

Daniel 7:7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

We know from history who the fourth beast was as well as the dates these world empires reigned.

Babylon	605 B.C.—539 B.C.
Medo-Persia	539 B.C.—331 B.C.
Greece	331 B.C.—168 B.C.
Pagan Rome	168 B.C.—476 A.D.

Although these were not the only nations in the world, these four represent the nations that interacted with God's people.

Verse 40 The fourth kingdom

The fourth kingdom of Daniel two is represented by the iron which continues till the stone smites the image and all the kingdoms crumble and are blown away and found no more. Notice this kingdom has three phases continuing till the stone hits the image on the feet and destroys the image.

1. The iron (Rome)
2. The ten toes
3. The iron and clay

The fourth empire should arise, more fierce, more determined, and more powerful than any kingdom that had preceded it. As strong as iron, this kingdom would subdue and break in pieces all the nations of the world.

It is important to notice more focus is given in this prophecy about the fourth kingdom and about the stone that is cut out of the mountain than the other kingdoms. We will find that this is also true in Daniels other visions. The reason this is so is because the fourth kingdom represents the principles of Satan's kingdom, and the stone represents the principles of God's kingdom and how He deals with Satan's rebellion.

Verses 41-43 Potter's or miry clay

This symbol represents Israel which typifies Christ's church.

Isaiah 64:8 But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our Potter; and we all are the work of Thy hand.

Jeremiah 18:1-6 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2) Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words. 3) Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. 4) And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. 5) Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 6) O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

“The kingdom shall be divided”

Iron and clay cannot mix. Iron represents the political state and clay represents the church. When the church forms a union outside of marriage, it is called spiritual adultery or fornication and is an illegitimate union which is not recognized by God. The whore represents the apostate church in Revelation.

Revelation 17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: 2) With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

“There shall be in it the strength of the iron”

As stated before, the iron continues till the stone destroys the image. The iron represents the political strength whereas the clay represents the weaker element—the church, the apostate church who has fornicated with the state. History reveals that this union, represented as the church appealing to the state for its strength, always results in persecution of God's people.

Examples of this illicit union and the persecution that followed can be seen in what happened with Christ, John the Baptist and Elijah.

“They shall mingle themselves with the seed of men”

There have been several attempts to unite into a world empire but God has foretold this will never happen just as iron cannot mix with clay, despite the historically frequent intermarriages between the families of heads of state.

The following lists some of the attempts to unite Western Europe.

A. D. Charlemagne

A. D. Charles V

Louis XII

Napoleon

Kaiser Wilhelm

Adolph Hitler

European Common Market

Saddam Hussein

Verses 34, 35, 44, 45 “The stone” = “the kingdom of God”

cut out without hands (vs 34)

cut out of the mountain (vs 45)

smites the image (vs 34)

breaks to pieces the image & the wind carries it away (vs 35)

breaks in pieces & consumes (vs 44)

became a great mountain (vs 35)

filled the whole earth (vs 35)

it shall never be destroyed & it shall stand forever (vs 44)

The stone primarily represents Christ. But, the stone secondarily represents His remnant church, those who have received His mind and have brought every thought into the captivity of Christ reflecting His character perfectly.

Luke 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

1 Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. . . 9) But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Ephesians 2: 19-22 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God. And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner Stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

“The stone” = the judgment

As we study the prophetic outlines of each of the visions in Daniel we find that the judgment of Daniel chapter seven and the cleansing of the sanctuary of Daniel chapter eight correlate with the stone smiting the image in Daniel chapter two. (See chart). We judge ourselves by the reception or rejection of His word.

1 Peter 2:6-8 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner Stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the Stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the Head of the corner, And a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Matthew 21:42-44 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the Head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 43) Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. 44) And whosoever shall fall on this Stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

John 12:47, 48 And if any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48) He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

Just as Satan was cast down by the revelation of the love of God revealed at the cross, the love manifested by the saints will cast down these earthly kingdoms who have manifested the same self exalting and forceful character of Satan their master.

1 John 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Hebrews 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Verses 46, 47

Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that God is the revealer of secrets and Lord of Kings. In the next chapter we will find that this knowledge had not yet reached his heart.

Verses 48, 49

Daniel and his fellow captives are promoted in the kingdom.

From the rise and fall of nations as made plain in the books of Daniel and the Revelation, we need to learn how worthless is mere outward and worldly glory. Babylon, with all its power and magnificence, the like of which our world has never since beheld—power and magnificence which to the people of that day seemed so stable and enduring—how completely has it passed away! As “the flower of the grass” it has perished. So perished the Medo-Persian kingdom, and the kingdoms of Grecia and Rome. And so perishes all that has not God for its foundation. Only that which is bound up with His purpose, and expresses His character, can endure. His principles are the only steadfast things our world knows.