

## SESSION FOUR

**DANIEL 2:31-49***God's Kingdom As The Finale of History***OVERVIEW**

THE DREAM IS STATED	INTERPRETATION OF THE DREAM		NEBUCHADNEZ-ZAR'S RESPONSE
A Statue of a Man Which a Stone Smashes	Gentile Kingdoms	Messiah's Triumph and Kingdom	Esteems Yahweh Above Babylonian Deities
2:31-35	2:36-43	2:44-45	2:46-49

**A. DANIEL DECLARES THE DREAM (2:31-35)**

## 1. The Statue of the Man (2:31-35)

Observations:

- a. "its appearance was awesome" (v 31)

The Aramaic word *dēhal* (ܕܗܠ) means "fear," and the point is that the statue was frightful or terrifying (notice its large size).

- b. Notice the decreasing value of the metals (gold iron/clay).  
 c. Notice the increasing hardness of the metals.  
 d. The fifth (and final) part is unique.

1) It is not pure metal, but a composite of metal and clay.

2) It shares the same metal as the fourth (iron), suggesting that there may be some connection between them.

## 2. The Smashing Stone That Destroys the Statue (2:34-35)

Observations:

- a. Described as "cut out without hands" - suggests a divine source of origin and power rather than human (v 34).  
 b. Although the stone destroys the entire statue, the point of assault is at the feet (v 34).

- c. The metaphor of the wind carrying away the chaff speaks of a complete removal of the statue ("not a trace of them was found"), not simply a dominion over the statue.
- d. When the statue is destroyed, it is destroyed decisively and completely, not gradually (v 35 - "crushed all at the same time").

## **B. DANIEL REVEALS THE INTERPRETATION OF THE DREAM (2:36-45)**

### 1. Introductory Comment (v 36)

Note the "we" in verse 36. This may suggest that Daniel's companions were with him before the king.

2:47 - "Surely your God is a God of gods"

The word "your" in the Aramaic text is plural! This may have made Daniel's request on behalf of his friends all the more appropriate (v 49).

### 2. Interpretation of the Statue (vv 37-43)

#### a. Introductory Comments

##### 1) Interpretation in the text itself

Clarifies that the various components are symbolic of kingdoms which succeed one another, with Babylon (and her king, Nebuchadnezzar) being the first in the series.

##### 2) These kingdoms represent the Gentile powers that dominate over God's chosen people Israel until the time that Israel is restored by the Messiah (Jesus Christ).

This period is known in Scripture as "the times of the Gentiles" (see Luke 21:24 where Christ pointed this out in his prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction, vv 20-24).

##### 3) The dream of the statue is given to Nebuchadnezzar because he was first of many Gentile rulers who would exercise authority over Israel during the period of "the times of the Gentiles."

## b. Interpretation Schemes of the First Four Kingdoms

	Critical Scholars	Evangelicals
Head of fine gold	Babylon	Babylon
Breast & arms of silver	Media	Medo-Persia
Belly & thighs of bronze	Persia	Greece
Legs of iron	Greece	Rome

Note: Critical scholars interpret the fourth kingdom as Greece, because to admit that Rome is the fourth would be to concede that the Bible records true prophecy.

Fallacies of the Critical Interpretation:

- 1) Historically, there was no independent kingdom of Media which followed Babylon. Instead, Babylon was conquered by the Persian king Cyrus the Great who ruled over the joint empire of the Medes and Persians.
- 2) In Dan 5:28, the handwriting on the wall declared that Babylon would be given over to the Medes and Persians.
- 3) Dan 6:8 refers to “the law of the Medes and Persians.”
- 4) In Daniel 8, two animals are used to symbolize Gentile kingdoms, a ram with two horns and a shaggy goat. The latter is identified by the text itself as Greece (8:21), while the ram (one entity) represents Media and Persia (v 20).<sup>1</sup>

## c. Details on the First Four Kingdoms (vv 37-40)

- 1) 1st Kingdom = Babylon (vv 37-38)  
“head of gold” - not only does gold reflect the “quality” of Nebuchadnezzar’s rule in comparison to the rulers which followed, but Nebuchadnezzar had a special taste for gold. In the temple to Marduk in Babylon, the inner shrine was embellished with gold.

---

<sup>1</sup>Observe that the shaggy goat (Greece) in Daniel 8 is characterized by four horns (8:8), which is parallel to the leopard in chapter 7 which has four heads (representing the four generals of Alexander the Great). Since the first beast in Dan 7 is Babylon and the third is Greece, the second must be Medo-Persia (a perfect correlation with Dan 8 in which the ram precedes Greece).

"Of this inner cella Nebuchadnezzar says that he 'covered its wall with sparkling gold, I caused it to shine like the sun.' Here, according to Herodotus, was the great sitting figure of Marduk, all of gold on a golden throne, supported on a base of gold, with a golden table standing beside it. I was told by the Chaldeans that to make all this more than 22 tons of gold were used. Outside the temple is a golden altar."<sup>2</sup>

- 2) 2nd Kingdom = Medo-Persia (v 39a)
  - a) 539 BC - Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon (Isa 45:1-4)
  - b) "inferior" - Not in terms of geographical extent, but in terms of absolute monarchial power. Nebuchadnezzar had unfettered power, but with Medo-Persia the king was restricted in his authority, for he could not annul a law once he had made it (cf. Dan 6:8).
  
- 3) 3rd Kingdom = Greece (v 39b)
 

Note that virtually no detail is given on the 2nd and 3rd kingdoms, although these two will be highlighted in ch. 8.
  
- 4) 4th Kingdom = Rome (v 40)
 

Iron is a fitting metaphor for Rome, as the Roman legions were noted for their ability to crush all resistance with an iron heel.
  
- d. Details on the Iron/Clay Kingdom (vv 41-43)
  - 1) Possibilities of Fulfilment Chronologically
    - a) This kingdom exists during the life of the Roman Empire and is merely an extension of it.
    - b) This kingdom immediately follows the Roman Empire, and thus we must look for an historical fulfilment in the past:
      - Western Empire - AD 476
      - Eastern Empire - AD 1453
    - c) This kingdom does not immediately follow the 4th kingdom of Rome, and thus an unspecified time gap must be understood between the demise of the 4th kingdom (Rome) and the "toes of the feet."
  
  - 2) Principles of Interpretation
    - a) Interpretation provided by the text itself

---

<sup>2</sup>Joan Oates, *Babylon*, rev. ed., 157.

- b) Hints from the immediate context
  - c) Broader biblical context
  - d) Historical context (is there an historical correlation?)
- 3) Solution
- a) Hints from the immediate context
    - (i) The element of iron suggests some connection to the fourth kingdom, although the mixed components of iron & clay suggest that this kingdom is distinct from the fourth kingdom of Rome.
    - (ii) This kingdom must be a confederacy of nations/kings that exist simultaneously, because they are destroyed together according to Dan 2:44.
    - (iii) These kings are destroyed by Messiah (Dan 2:44), and there will be no more Gentile kingdoms ("it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms") when His kingdom is established.

Note: This would effectively eliminate possibilities "a" and "b" above.
  - b) Hints from the broader biblical context
    - (i) This confederacy is apparently composed of ten kings
      - aa*) The mention of "toes" in v 42 allows for this.
      - bb*) Dan 7 is a parallel vision on these kingdoms, with ten kings arising out of the fourth (7:23-24).
    - (ii) The Scriptures do predict a ten-king confederacy that will rise up in the end times (Rev 17:12).
  - c) Historical Evaluation
 

There is no satisfactory explanation historically for a ten nation confederacy either during the time of the Roman Empire or subsequent to it.
  - d) Conclusions
    - (i) The iron/clay kingdom is distinct from the previous kingdoms.
    - (ii) It does not follow them in chronological succession. Apparently we must allow for a gap of time between the 4th kingdom and this one.
    - (iii) This will be a confederacy of ten kings/nations.
    - (iv) It will emerge in the end times out of the nations that composed the Roman Empire.

- (v) It will be crushed by Jesus Christ Himself at His Second Coming, and this will be an end to Gentile powers.

4) Further Insights on the Final Kingdom

- a) "it will have in it the toughness of iron" (v 41)

As was the Roman Empire, this final kingdom will be established and rule by brute strength (compare v 40).

- b) Yet the kingdom is also characterized as "baked clay pottery" (v 42)

Some of the component nations will be strong (iron), while other parts are brittle (weak/easily shattered).

- c) *NASB* on verse 43: "they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another." This probably looks not at intermarriage, but that the confederacy will be composed of mixed people-groups.

Suggestion:

This confederacy of kings/nations will have significant strength and rule by merciless power, but it will be a fragile union since it is composed of diverse groups of people. As we will see in chapter 7, however, this confederacy will be the springboard for the Antichrist (the world dictator of the end times), and he will see this as a perfect opportunity for his rise to power. By taking advantage of the weak nations (the brittle pottery), he will catapult himself into power by subduing some of these and gaining the authority from the others to rule (cf. Rev 17:16-17).

3. Interpretation of the Smiting Stone (vv 44-45)

- a. Old Testament Revelation of Messiah's Kingdom Prior to Daniel

- 1) The promise to David of a king (2 Sam 7:12-13)
- 2) David's reflection on the Messiah as world ruler (Psalm 2)
- 3) Messiah's Kingdom of the "last days" compared to a mountain (Isa 2:1-4)
- 4) The Messiah will govern the earth with a righteous rule (Isa 9:6-7)

- b. Interpretation of Dan 2:44-45

- 1) Christ is the "stone" who smites the image and brings it to an end. ["cut out of the mountain without hands" - there is no human role in this victory; it is entirely of God's doing].
- 2) The smashing of the image will be followed by the establishment of Christ's kingdom which will never be destroyed (v 44).
- 3) Recall Dan 2:35 - the stone will become a great mountain and fill the whole earth - that is, the kingdom of Jesus Christ will be worldwide (universal; cf. Ps 72:8-11).

- 4) The mountain out of which the stone (Christ) is cut probably refers to Israel (see Dan 2:45).
- c. Comments on the Kingdom
- 1) Misconceptions:
- Some teachers feel that the Kingdom was introduced by Christ at His 1st Coming, and that with the Church He is conquering the kingdoms of this world.<sup>3</sup>
- Response: The crushing of the statue was not fulfilled by Christ at His First Coming, nor is this prophecy being fulfilled in any way by the Church.
- a) Christ came in the middle of the Roman Empire, and the Roman Empire continued on past His crucifixion.
- b) You cannot say that the Church broke the power of pagan Rome either. Christianity was not the decisive factor that broke up the Roman Empire; rather it was internal decay and political conditions.
- c) Messiah's kingdom will put an end to Gentile kingdoms (Dan 2:44).
- 2) The Kingdom of Messiah Jesus is still future, and will be inaugurated at the Second Coming.
- a) Dan 2:44 says that it will not come until "the days of those kings," i.e., when the final ten-nation confederacy arises.
- b) Isa 2:1-4 predicts that there will be no more warfare after Messiah's kingdom is established.
- c) Jesus clearly predicted that the Kingdom would not come until after His return (Luke 21:25-31).
- d) Dan 2:44-45 finds its fulfilment in Revelation 19--20 where a devastating defeat of Gentile powers is recorded.
- (i) Rev 19:11-21 - The Second Coming of Jesus Christ when He conquers the Antichrist and the nations in confederacy with him.
- (ii) Rev 20:1-6 - The reign of Christ on earth

---

<sup>3</sup>Some teachers try to defend the notion that the kingdom has already come by saying that the kingdom is internal & mystical. They base this on Christ's statement "For the Kingdom of God is within you" (*KJV*). A closer look at this passage (Luke 17:20-21), however, reveals that Christ is not saying that at all. For one, this is a poor translation, and the words are better translated "among you" or as the *NASB* puts it "the kingdom of God is in your midst." Secondly, Christ is not referring to the inner spiritual realm of the disciples but to Himself! He was in the midst of the nation of Israel at that time. This is obviously clear by the verses which follow in which He predicts that the time is coming when He will not be with them.

### C. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S RESPONSE TO DANIEL'S INTERPRETATION (Dan 2:46-49)

"your God is a God of gods" - this was a humbling admission for a pagan king that served Marduk and other deities of the Babylonian pantheon, but it is still deficient. He had come to see Daniel's God as supreme, but not as the only God.

Concluding Thoughts
---------------------

1. There must be a time gap between the fourth kingdom (Rome) and the ten nation confederacy depicted in 2:41-43.

- a. Confirmation: A time gap is clearly involved in Dan 9:24-27.
- b. What purpose does the time gap serve?

According to the New Testament (Eph 3:4), the Church was a mystery. The gap of time allows for the formation of the Church composed of Gentiles and Jews throughout the whole world - until the time that God is ready to lift Israel's hardening and bring her (as a nation) into the bond of the New Covenant.

2. How close are we to the fulfilment of Dan 2:41-45?

Observations (cf. 1 Thess 5:4):

- a. There is a nation of Israel in the land today.

In 1948, Israel became a nation again after nearly 2000 years of being dispersed among the nations. Although we as Christians believe that they are back in the land in unbelief and still under God's discipline, the fact is that the Scriptures clearly reveal that there must be *an Israel* in the land prior to the start of the Tribulation. [This does not mean, however, that they have a *biblical right* to the land, as the regathering promises of the OT apply to a yet future generation that turns to Messiah Jesus in faith at the close of the Tribulation].

- b. There is an attempt being made today to rebuild the ancient Jewish Temple in Jerusalem today (cf. 2 Thess 2:4). Even though this Temple may be built in unbelief (and there is no reason for Christians to give approval to such a project), this is nevertheless interesting, since the Scriptures lead us to expect the rebuilding of a temple prior to Christ's return.
- c. There is a trend in the current political situation for nations to unite in a confederacy.  
A key example: European Union
- d. Some people would claim that there has been an increase in the number of earthquakes over the past century, but this assertion has recently been challenged (and may not be accurate).