

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php

He leadeſt me, O bleſſed thought !
 Oh words with heavenly comfort fraught.
 What'er I do, wher'er I be,
 Still 'tis God's hand, He leadeth me.

Sometimes 'mid ſcenes of deepeſt gloom,
 Sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,
 By waters ſtill o'er troubled ſea,
 Still 'tis His hand that leadeth me.

Lord, I would place my hand in Thine,
 And never murmur or repine—
 Content, whatever lot I ſee,
 Since, 'tis my God that leadeth me,

THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL

A. NAISMITH, M.A.

I. The Great Image of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Having conſidered the Book of Daniel and its writer, we proceed to an examination of the great prophecies that this remarkable volume unfolds. Already we have obſerved that they deal chiefly with 'the times of the Gentiles' referred to by our Lord in Luke 21:24, which were inaugurated by the withdrawal of the viſible token of the Divine preſence, the Shechinah, from the temple and the city of Jeruſalem, and the deſtruction of the temple and the city by the Babylonian deſpot, Nebuchadnezzar. The majority of the prophecies of the book include this period and predict alſo its termination in the perſonal advent of Chriſt to the earth and His judgment of the Gentile nations. The kingdoms of the world will then become 'the kingdom of our God and His Chriſt.' The kingdom of God is ſeen in Scripture in a three-fold aſpect: in Miniature, during Iſrael's Theocracy antecedent to the nation's choice of a king from among themſelves, in Mystery during the preſent diſpenſation of grace between the firſt and ſecond advents of the 'Lord from Heaven', and in Maniſtation during Chriſt's Millennial reign on earth and ſubſequentially in the eternal ſtate. The parables of the Kingdom, recounted in Matt. 13, preſent the kingdom in Mystery, that is, in its preſent ſtate during the times of the Gentiles.

It has also been already noted that the chapters in the Book of Daniel that record the despotic acts of the kings of Babylon and Persia, particularly with reference to Daniel and his companions, and the great predictions that deal with the course and overthrow of the Gentile world-empires, were written in the Chaldean language while the remainder of the book is in Hebrew. The Chaldean portion, commencing with 2:4 and ending with the closing verse of Chapter 7, comprises almost six complete Chapters. The subjects of those chapters might be set out as follows:

A.	Ch. 2.—World Empires	... A Glittering Image	... God Rules
B.	Ch. 3.—Men of Principles	... Daniel's Companions	... God Delivers
C.	Ch. 4.—Pride Humbled	... A King living among beasts	... God Judges
C-1.	Ch. 5.—Pride Humbled	... A King living as a beast	... God Judges
B-1.	Ch. 6.—Men of Principles...	Daniel	... God Delivers
A-1.	Ch. 7.—World Empires	... Wild Beasts	... God Rules

When, in answer to the prayers of His saints, God gave Daniel knowledge of the monarch's dream and its interpretation, thus fitting him to enter Nebuchadnezzar's presence fearlessly and to witness boldly concerning the God of Heaven, He revealed to His servant the vision of the colossal image, with an interpretation that no human ingenuity could possibly have discovered. In this Divine revelation Daniel recognized that three realms of knowledge transcending all human erudition or discovery had been unveiled before him (Dan. 2:27-30). The first of those consisted of mystic truths hidden from mankind, which could be learnt only by special revelation from Heaven. These Daniel called 'secrets'. Dispensational teaching of deep significance to rulers of nations—described as 'what shall be in the latter days'—was also contained in the Divine communication to Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel. But the unmistakable and unimpeachable evidence that the king's dream was from God was its third quality of prediction. God made known to the king 'what should come to pass' in the future. The colossal image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is described in five verses (2:31-35), and twice as many verses are given to the unfolding of its interpretation (2:36-45). Thus fifteen verses in the second chapter

of Daniel's prophecy are occupied with the consideration of the apparition and its interpretation.

(1) *The Shape* of the image is the first detail that commands attention. Unlike the ferocious and rapacious animals that appeared in Daniel's vision of Ch. 7, the object seen by the Babylonian monarch had a gigantic human form, which Daniel described as 'terrible'. It was doubtless awe-inspiring and majestic, for in those days majesty was synonymous with despotism, and even with cruelty. Various parts of the human anatomy—head, breast, arms, belly, thighs, legs and feet, are specifically mentioned as corresponding to the different empires that were to rise and fall, but the idea of unity takes precedence of all other details. The figure was one, not many. This indicates that man's dominion, in spite of the many vicissitudes through which it has passed, is in its nature and essence one in God's sight, and stands in decided contrast to the Kingdom which the God of Heaven is going to establish (2:44). The several parts have very significant connection with the kingdoms they represent. Babylon is fittingly represented by the head. The dual nature of the Medo-Persian Empire, with its one centre of authority and activity, suits well the two shoulders and arms of the human form united in one broad chest, with one heart circulating life-blood to the furthestmost digits on either side. In the belly and thighs the spread of the Grecian Empire beyond the limits of Babylonian and Persian dominion is prefigured. That part of the image appropriately illustrates the enormous capacity of Alexander the Great who devoured nations and incorporated them in his kingdom, then wept, in his gluttonous avarice, because there were no more worlds to conquer. Rome's twin Empire, with its Eastern and Western kingdoms, is represented by the two legs of the image. The ten toes of the feet prefigure the revived world empire that will come into being prior to the glorious appearing of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

(2) *The Sequence* is also remarkable. The succession of kingdoms with universal dominion in the interpretation and in subsequent history is as natural as the order from head to foot, from top to toe, in the human form. Here we have, revealed

beforehand, a philosophy of history, the history of 'the times of the Gentiles', and, just as the eye of the dreamer would travel downward from head to foot in a survey of the huge image, so the mind of the student takes in at a glance the great empires of history in chronological sequence—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.

(3) *The Splendour* of this brilliant image so dazzled the monarch's senses, even in his dream, that he retained not even a confused recollection of it when he awoke. In the main it was composed of shining metals, some of them the most precious then known and extensively used for personal adornment, and others, when shaped, polished and sharpened, employed as weapons of war. To the man of the world human dominion is wrapped in magnificence and splendour, but its violence and brutality, as depicted in the wild beasts of the seventh chapter, do not escape the eye of the man of God. To Nebuchadnezzar, as representative of the Babylonian empire, Daniel addressed his first word of interpretation: 'Thou, O king, art a king of kings: thou art this head of gold' (2:37-38). Before Babylon became a world empire, Isaiah prophetically called its capital 'the golden city' (Is. 14:4), and Jeremiah described its dominion as 'a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken' (Jer. 51:7). The wealth of Babylon, both the city and the kingdom, was proverbial, and its hanging gardens were considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Inferior in wealth and power was the empire that succeeded Babylon—the kingdom of Medo-Persia, represented in the image by the silver breast and arms. The next metal, not so costly as the precious metals, prefigured the rise of the Grecian power under Alexander the Great, the martial monarch of the 'brazen-coated Greeks'. This appellation had reference to the coats of armour worn by Alexander's warriors. Subjugated by the victorious Romans, the Grecian kingdom was swallowed up by 'the iron might of Rome', the thighs of brass giving place to the legs of iron.

(4) *The Proportionate Sizes* of the several parts of the image, each composed of a different metal and symbolizing a different empire, correspond roughly to the proportionate longevity of

the kingdoms they represent. Though highest and mightiest in many respects, the head is the smallest part specified, with the exception of the feet and toes which are merely a continuation of the legs and figuratively part of the fourth kingdom; and history declares the Babylonian empire to have been the shortest-lived of the four. The legs which represent the Roman Empire are the longest, though the final state, frequently called 'the revived Roman Empire', and indicated by the iron-clay mixture in the toes, will be of brief duration because of its essential weakness.

(5) *Deterioration* in commercial value and chemical properties characterizes each successive metal, and deterioration in constitutional authority has been apparent in each successive kingdom. After Babylon fell, the succeeding kingdoms have undergone an ever-increasing diminution in earthly glory and a deterioration in the quality of their governmental administration. That is the significance of Daniel's words in the interpretation of the dream: 'after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee'. The Babylonian ruler was a despot: 'whom he would he slew and whom he would he kept alive' (Dan. 5:19). All authority was then vested in the reigning monarch. The first world empire was a complete whole, but a synthetic kingdom succeeded it, and the blending of the Medes and the Persians into one empire introduced a legislative system from which there was no appeal and to which the king himself must defer, namely—'the laws of the Medes and the Persians'. The government of the Medo-Persian kingdom was an autocracy, not an absolute monarchy. With the power of the nobles ever in the ascendant, dominion in the third empire developed into a government by the aristocracy, the weakness of which was patent when, on Alexander's death, four of his nobles who had commanded his armies ruled over a divided kingdom. Various forms of popular government were introduced into the Roman Empire, but military rule and dictatorship proved to be the strongest and most powerful. We may expect to see in the not-too-distant future the rise of ten kingdoms—corresponding to the ten toes—that may possibly coincide with the territorial boundaries of Imperial Rome at the zenith of its power, or may even stretch beyond those limits to include domains since dis-

covered in the Western Hemisphere. But the singular and unnatural amalgam of iron and clay will render those kingdoms more vulnerable than any of the preceding empires. Even now the revived empire may be taking shape, as the frail clay of democracy is introduced in increasing quantities into the iron might of dictatorial power.

(6) *The Stone* is seen as absolutely distinct and separate from the image, and Daniel interprets it as symbolic of a kingdom that will be indestructible, final, universal and everlasting (2:44). Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, is Himself the Stone. The mountain which grows out of the stone when it has fulfilled its purpose prefigures the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. In Dan. 2 three things are predicated of the Stone: it was cut out of the mountain: it hurled itself toward the image without the direction of human hands: and it smote the image on the feet. These three statements are all significant, and indicate the eternal deity, the sovereign power, and the prerogative of judgment that belong to the Son of God. He will destroy every masterpiece of Satan 'with the brightness of His coming'. Our Lord Jesus is called 'the Stone of Israel' (Gen. 49:24), because He came as the rightful heir to Israel's throne. But He was 'disallowed indeed of men' (1 Pet. 2:4), the stone which the builders refused' (Ps. 118:22), and we read that when He came 'His own received Him not'. A story is narrated in connection with the building of Solomon's temple for which all stones had to be prepared at the quarry. One stone was required for a special place of honour. Many were tried but none would fit, and when the right stone was brought to the builders, they simply looked at it and rejected it without lifting it into the vacant place to see if it was suitable. In the end it was found to be the only stone that would fit the place of honour. The rejection of Jesus Christ culminated in His crucifixion in suffering and ignominy on Golgotha's hill, where Christ, the tried and precious stone, became by virtue of His atoning sacrifice, 'a sure foundation' for all who believe on Him (Is. 28:16). God has highly exalted Him to His right hand and made Him the 'keystone', 'the Head of the corner' (Acts 4:11). To His church He is 'the chief corner stone'

(Eph. 2:20), but to His earthly people Israel He is still 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence' (Is. 8:14). Yet those who fall as penitents on the Rock of Ages shall be broken (Matt. 21:44), and 'a broken and a contrite spirit' God will not despise. Those peoples on whom the smiting stone will fall are to be ground to powder, like the clay and metals of the colossal image (Matt. 21:44; Dan. 2:34-35).

(7) *The Destruction* of the image predicts the overthrow of merely human dominion on earth and the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ in power and glory. Then 'a King shall reign in righteousness', as Isaiah foretold, when the existing kingdoms of this world have been dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel (Ps. 2:9).

The confirmation of this prophetic revelation to Nebuchadnezzar is contained in Daniel's final words to the Babylonian monarch—"The dream is certain and the interpretation is sure". Some of those predictions have been fulfilled and passed into history, but the consummation of the prophecy still awaits fulfilment at the second advent of Christ, which many Bible students believe to be imminent. In light of the teaching of our Lord and His apostles, it is clear that each responsible rational being belongs to one or other of two groups, the world system or the Kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus, praying for His own who lived in the world, said, 'They are not of the world even as I am not of the world', and Paul the apostle spoke of God's new creation as composed of those who are 'in Christ'. (2 Cor. 5:14). Thus each individual is either part of the image destined to be destroyed, or part of the Stone and certain of a place in Christ's Kingdom and glory. To which does the reader belong?

(To be continued)
