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B0944 – November 1, 2009 – The Rise Of Gentile Imperialism

With the temporary loss of Israel's kingdom of God from visible history we have the Ascent of the Imperial Gentile Kingdom of Man. Paganism at this point rears its ugly head again becoming the dominant force in world politics, economics and religion. And so what we're interested in here is what happened when Israel went into Exile and the Gentiles took center stage, the period Christ called "the times of the Gentiles."

Something occurs here at this point in history. Here's Noah, the scattering of the nations, the Call of Abraham, the Exodus, David, the Kingdom Divided, the Kingdoms in Decline and the Exile. In here we have the age of Israel, actually the age of Israel goes on but I mean the age of Israel in the sense that she was a visible geopolitical kingdom. What were the Gentiles doing? All this time that we have spent from Genesis 12 through 2 Kings 24, we have looked again and again at Israel but we haven't looked much at what's going on in the nations round about. So we want to catch up on what the Gentiles have been doing all during this time, this is a lot of time.

What has happened to these sons of Noah? After the Flood, which is a forgotten period of world history, all nations, all races, sprung out of one family. We all got off the same boat. All of us can trace our genes back to someone on that boat. All the people in the world; red and yellow, black and white come from these men and these men were geniuses. I showed you evidences of their cartography and navigation. These guys could measure longitude, they drew very accurate maps and to do that requires you have some kind of clock, we still don't know how they did it, but they had knowledge of spherical geometry and very accurate clocks and they literally mapped the entire world including Antarctica, *before* it was covered in ice. So these guys had already, within 100-200 years of the Flood mapped the world,

and established all the major trade routes. So by the time of Abraham you have basically modern civilization in the sense of architecture, technology, medicine and all the rest; all of that was rapidly established out of Noah's and his son's genius.

But we also noted that the last picture we have of Noah isn't a pretty one. It is not a nice picture, something's wrong. The very first family of civilization, the Bible depicts as genius' but as fallen genius'. There's something wrong in the family. Noah grew a vineyard but he didn't subdue the vineyard properly and he got drunk. So arises the picture of men's flesh subduing but subduing improperly. We observe that man is still depraved and he rebels against God, apostasy grows and men begin to worship the creation rather than the Creator. So you have the rise of pagan religion which focuses all thought on one plane, one level of reality, the Continuity of Being, all is one. There are differences in how it's manifested but that's what's going on in the background. For example, the Babylonians express it in political terms in their creation story *Enuma elish* which is a political treatise for their god's supremacy. The story is the justification for Marduk's rise to supremacy cast in terms of origins. The Canaanites manifest it in sexual terms; they generate all kinds of abominations including bestiality, homosexuality and heterosexual distortions. And this goes on for centuries but it's all the same thing, the Continuity of Being.

That's a brief review of Gentile civilization at the time of Noah and how it rose very rapidly after the Flood. It's a largely forgotten history. Modern man has tremendous difficulty accepting the advanced achievements of early civilization. Yet it's all in the record, a record that is so embarrassing to modern man that it's carefully hidden away, carefully re-interpreted. So as the great men who had extreme longevity passed from the scene a curtain fell over that history. That's the first point, the early Ascent of the Imperial Kingdom of Man.

Second we come to another period of history. It begins with the Call of Abraham. God called Abraham out to form the nation Israel. The nation's role was to be a counter-culture that gave testimony to the one true God, the Creator of heavens and earth. At key junctures in Israel's history God raised up Jewish men to serve in high positions in foreign governments. Joseph rose to prominence as the grand vizier of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself

(Gen 41:37-45). Joseph's wisdom was attained by access to the one true God of Creation that brought blessing to Egypt by saving the nation and much of the world from agricultural devastation. Moses was raised in the house of Pharaoh and his connection with the God of Israel brought blessing during his stay (Exod 2:5-10). By the time of Solomon the Kingdom of God had reached golden proportions; every branch of learning in Israel far exceeded anything produced by pagan nations. The greatness of Solomon was such that the Queen of Sheba came and visited in person proclaiming she hadn't been told half the story. Art, literature, music, botany, agriculture, zoology, flourished in Israel. And with Israel positioned at the center of the earth all major trade routes passed directly through her. Foreign contact by wealthy businessmen and political emissaries passing through Israel was inevitable. And there they could observe the righteousness of the only Law code given by God, a code that stands by comparison far above contemporary pagan law codes as the Code of Hammurabi. Returning to their lands they could divest the wisdom of the God of Israel to their respective nations. Through all this God's purpose for Israel to be a channel of worldwide blessing was well underway (Gen 12:3).

Third, we come to Israel's decline into apostasy and resulting Exile. And with this another collective curtain falls over her supernatural history. History has forgotten. Today historians and historical records have largely forgotten the super-naturalness of the centuries prior to 600BC. Collectively historians have re-written Israel's history to conform to naturalistic models that abhor God's interference. This has occurred to the extent that Islamic scholars deny that Israel ever had a historic connection with Jerusalem, deny there ever was a Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount, and deny there ever was a Jewish civilization in Jerusalem. This is the revisionist history that floods the political propaganda today, a revisionist history that erases Israel's period of supernatural history.

So beginning in the 6th century BC Israel is in dispersion and the worldwide blessing is going to continue but in a different way. There is one positive contribution of the Exile so we want to pay close attention to how God worked. The promise to Abraham included the worldwide blessing to the nations which we've already described as underway during the time Israel was a visible geopolitical kingdom. Yet the Exile disintegrated Israel as a visible kingdom and she was dispersed into Gentile kingdoms. This

dispersion would provide the final preparation for the coming global Messiah: a finished canon of Scripture that painted a prophetic panorama of future human history. The Exile would mean that the Jews who held this prophetic panorama canonized in Scripture would now be among the citizens of the Gentile world, spreading this panorama and the rest of the Scriptures among men everywhere.¹

Early “church fathers...recognized this function of the exile. Augustine wrote: ‘That same nation ... was afterwards dispersed through the nations in order to testify to the Scriptures in which eternal salvation in Christ had been declared.’ The brilliant French mathematician, Blaise Pascal (whom secular historians treat with great embarrassment because of his Biblical beliefs)” commented: ‘As His Gospel was to be believed by all the world, it was not only necessary that there should be prophecies to make it believed, but that these prophecies should exist throughout the whole world, in order to make it embraced by the whole world.’”

So one of the strange after-effects of the Exile is that it is through the Exile that the Jews begin to move out with the word of God. They had been clustered and kept inside the Land, now they were dispersed outside the Land in Gentile nations. It’s interesting they stay out in Gentile nations but they never lose their identity. They can never be absorbed in pagan culture. There’s always the Jewish ghetto. We want to think about that. Why, despite all their attempts to amalgamate with Gentiles, can they never amalgamate? Obviously they never do. In the future Tribulation when God wants to evangelize the human race quickly, which group does He call upon to do the evangelizing? The 144,000. 12,000 from each tribe. Why do you suppose He reverts to Jews to do evangelism? A Hebrew Christian, Arnold Fruchtenbaum made it perfectly clear when he said, it’s a simple answer, we Jews are in every country on earth and we already know the culture and the language and we have all the business connections. You don’t have to send Gentile missionaries. In the seven years of the Tribulation there isn’t any time to send Gentile missionaries; they don’t have time to learn Hebrew, they don’t have time to learn the OT. The time is short and the gospel must go out very rapidly. There’s only one group on earth that are already in place to do that, that have a Biblical background, that know the OT, that know the languages, that know the cultures and that have the connections, all they have to do is learn the NT, a very simple task, comparatively. That’s what’s ultimately

going to happen. That's why in the Book of Acts you read Paul going out on these missionary journeys and no matter what town he goes to where does he go first? The synagogue. Why? Because these people are already established in those communities, they know the language, they have a biblical background, and everything's in place, so they're Paul's linkage to that region. And the same thing will happen again in the Tribulation.

So what we're saying is that in 586BC God began to seed the Gentile cultures with the word of God. Now the Jews are moving out into the nations, before they were staying in, the nations were coming to them, now they're out so they're within Gentile nations. That's why you can go to every continent and you will find Jewish families, Jewish businessmen, Jewish bankers. You can go to Europe, Australia, and you can even go to the Orient. This is the after-effect, the planting of Jewish citizens who carry the Torah with them. And now we'll watch what happens as these Jewish citizens begin to interact with the growing Gentile kingdoms.

Just to review, we're at that point in the Exile in history when the kingdom of God is no longer visible in a national sense and so there's a shift in the power structure of the nations. Now the Gentile nations are rising and the kingdom of man begins to take shape, a totalitarian shape. It's a shape I call Imperial. Turn to Dan 2. Dan 2 clearly reveals four successive Gentile kingdoms that take center stage and there are three things that need to be noted about these kingdoms. The first one we've said is the transfer of power itself. Now we're going to have Gentile kingdoms unchecked, so to speak, by Israel's kingdom. And so we want to see some of the structure of Gentile kingdoms. It's important that we understand the structure because we live under this same structure that started in the Exile; it hasn't changed.

In Dan 2 the grand announcement was made, and I want to show you the scope of this dream. The king dreamed the dream and he looked around for somebody to interpret the dream. In Dan 2:12-13 he got rather angry that no one in the kingdom could interpret this for him and he started killing people. Of course, this was divinely planned. The book of Daniel is like the book of Esther, in that the way God works through the historical events is providential, you kind of have to sit back and ask what's going on here. It's written in a style that conveys its accidental things go on, like I dreamed a dream just like any other night. But this was a special dream. This was a

dream that is analogous to the dream of what other Gentile ruler at the beginning of Israel's history? Before the nation went down to Egypt someone went ahead of them. Who was it? Joseph. Who had the dream in the days of Joseph? Pharaoh. Notice the analogy. There's a subtlety to it. Think about this, this is a detail of Scripture and we don't want to miss it. Why do you suppose the Scripture reports these two Gentile dreams, one at the start and one at the end of Israel's historical period? And in between that period we have God speaking on Mt Sinai so directly that the people are afraid. You have a direct revelation to the Jewish nation; you have indirect revelation to the Gentile nations. This is in and of itself a commentary.

First, it's a commentary that the God of the Bible is the God of the nations. He's not just a Jewish God; He speaks to everyone, ALL the human race, not some cultural subset off to the side. This is not a culturally relative thing. God is an absolute God. But notice the subtlety of how He speaks. There's a difference in the way He speaks to His people and the way He speaks to the world. He still speaks to both, but the speaking to the world is indirect and it has to be interpreted. The point here in Dan 2 is that there has to be a Jewish interpreter there. The Jewish interpreter isn't found in verses 11-12, "Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh."

In verse 10 "The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has *ever* asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean." Quite clearly, the Chaldeans who are saying this, who had the reputation in history for being profoundly demonic, who are the people that conjure up the dead from the grave, who are the people that move stuff by telekinesis across rooms, who had all kinds of weird contact with the underworld. So here are these people, much like who from way back in Pharaoh's day? The sorcerers of Pharaoh who when Moses did the first few sign miracles they mimicked and counterfeited the sign miracles. It was Pharaoh's magicians. Even that observation tells us something. It suggests, in both cases, these guys are intimate with the political leaders of the time. It's a commentary that in pagan culture political leaders attract to themselves people who are deeply demonic. Their closest advisors are often

very satanic people. I believe that that's how Satan runs the world. All it takes is a good ruler with crummy advisors to spoil the whole thing.

We see this throughout Gentile history that the rulers always have these guys that are deep into the satanic. You see one in Rome that Paul has to encounter in Acts 13. The Roman ruler there is genuinely interested in hearing the word of God and Paul is in town, he calls him up to his courts and here comes this advisor and he's constantly diverting the Roman ruler away from the gospel and Paul's seeing all this and he says, aha, I get what's going on, I give the gospel, the advisor takes him behind the scenes and diverts, he manipulates. That Roman ruler was Satan's link to getting his program going through the Roman system and he used this advisor to do it. It speaks volumes of what's going on behind closed doors on the political scene and it's an example of the close intimacy demonic people have to Gentile rulers.

Pharaoh had the same thing, Nebuchadnezzar had the same thing. And here comes Daniel, verse 14, "Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to..." one of the king's soldiers, give me some time here. He goes, verse 17, he calls a prayer meeting with his three friends, who are called by their proper Hebrew names, not by the Gentile names. In v 19 he gets the answer in a night vision. Then in verse 20 he blesses God "Daniel said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. ²¹"It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. ²²"It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him. ²³"To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, For You have made known to us the king's matter."

After that, he goes and tells the soldier, I've got it, don't kill any more people. So he saves the wise men of Babylon. Talk about grace, that's grace, and he's brought before the king and in verse 27 we have a classic reference of a wise believer in a pagan society. The book of Daniel is tremendous to read to establish model behavior for living as a lone isolated group of Christians in a society dominated by pagans. It's just loaded with stuff. Here is how Daniel talks to a pagan ruler, the most powerful man in history at the time. Daniel

has his ear, not because Daniel got a lot of votes, not because he manipulated his way into the king, but because circumstances under the providence of God brought him to the king.

Verse 27, “Daniel answered before the king and said, “As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians *nor* diviners are able to declare *it* to the king.” He reiterates, king you understand this! This dream, whatever it was you had is a supernatural thing; it’s not just one of your normal dreams. The king probably dreamed thousands of dreams, but this one had a unique quality to it and Daniel said it’s obvious that the best guys around here can’t solve it. Verse 28, “However, there is a God in heaven” - now he begins to witness to King Nebuchadnezzar, he starts out with the Creator-creature distinction, and this is an actual evangelistic encounter between a believer who’s got an audience with a pagan king, “there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed.”²⁹As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future, and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place.” Verse 30, “But as for me,” notice Daniel’s humility here, it’d be very easy for Daniel to walk in there and say, I’m so brilliant, look what I can do, I can get behind the obvious, I’ve got access to secret counsels. It’d be very easy for Daniel to exploit this. But Daniel has humility before God. “But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man,” he attributes the whole skill to God; this is the godly believer. That’s part of his witness. What made a difference in his life is not his own assets, is not his own flesh, it is something God is doing through him. So God has done this “...for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.”

Verse 31, “You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome.”³²“The head of that statue *was made* of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze,³³its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.³⁴“You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands,” notice the stone without hands, does that ring a bell? A stone cut without

hands? Do you remember in the Law what it says about building altars? What was prohibited in the stones that were part of the altar? They could not be cut stones like the Gentiles built their altars with; they had to be natural rock. Again in worshiping God it can't be the works of man's hands. God made it such a point that when you went to make an altar you had to take the rocks like God left them and don't mess with them, just leave them. He did it that way, now you just build with that. This is full of meaning, "a stone cut without hands," and it implies that this is the way God is working, "the stone was cut without hands and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay," not on the head, but on the feet, "and crushed them."

Verse 35, "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and because like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This is the dream; now we shall tell its interpretation before the king." Immediately Daniel has done something here. The king never told Daniel what the dream was. So Daniel told him both his dream and now the interpretation. This gives legitimacy to the whole thing. He does the same thing Joseph did. Both of them follow a law of evidence in the Bible, by the mouth of two or three witnesses truth shall be established. So Daniel's doing two things, he's not just telling the interpretation, he's telling the dream and the interpretation, showing two evidences of the origins of this.

Verse 37, "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory." Notice the words in verse 37; they parallel exactly the words applied to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation. We ought to take note of those; those are similar expressions— say wait a minute, what is going on? In verse 37 you're attributing things that are attributed to Jesus. Consider for a moment, Nebuchadnezzar is placed in a position potentially of ruling the world. The description of those adjectives and nouns to him in verse 37 is another way of declaring His sovereignty. So in the book of Revelation when you see the same attributes applied to Jesus Christ it's a claim; it's a claim not that He's just a religious figure, it's a claim that He has ultimate sovereignty. This is why you get so many weird interpretations in Revelation. People come racing through it at sixty miles an hour, no background in the OT, and they start arbitrarily making these interpretations. Wait a minute, hold it! All those

qualities are attributed to Jesus in the book of Revelation, all power, all glory is given to You, it is not just religious. The context here isn't religious. The context here is political and physical. Therefore, the content in the book of Revelation includes more than just the religious; it is physical and political power. It's talking about Jesus Christ physically and politically ruling the world someday, not a popular concept.

Notice the dominion of this king: to you O king, are given these, verse 38, "and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold." That's Nebuchadnezzar's place in the dream. Verse 39, "And after you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you," That's the Medo-Persian Empire. "then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth." The third is the kingdom of bronze, which would be the Greek Empire. Verse 40, "Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron," this is the Roman Empire, "inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all things in pieces. ⁴¹And in that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. ⁴²And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle."

It goes on to describe this fourth kingdom; notice what happens in the dream, v 44, "In the days of those kings," plural, "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever." The problem in prophetic interpretation, (this is not a course in prophecy) is that what's given is often compressed in time. For example, the gospel came to Eve in the Garden of Eden, and she took the prophecy that she would be the mother of all living and thought her first son Cain was the Messiah. Eve didn't realize there was going to be thousands of years before Messiah is going to come. The prophecy was true, she just got the timing wrong. What happens in prophecy is that God often compresses prophecy but He has ways of expanding it out in history. This vision of the fourth kingdom is a good example of this because the fourth kingdom arose in the days of Rome and according to this prophecy continues until it is destroyed by God's kingdom, a kingdom created without hands.

So Rome is still with us today but will be cut off. We already know ancient Rome went down in one sense: the barbarians came in and broke it to pieces, but the culture, the military, law and ethics, the economics, the globalism have all basically carried on through civilization. The picture is that it's expanding through history, even in our own time, and will one day rise again with a new vigor. Some people call it the revived Roman Empire. At that point, a plurality of kings arises, sort of a confederacy, and upon that comes the Lord Jesus Christ. So the kingdom of God comes in at the end of history.

Notice how v 44 reads. You'll notice there's a little phrase in the middle of the verse, "and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms," What that saying? Is that saying that one kingdom will rise and fall, then another kingdom will rise and fall, and so forth? Or is it saying that the four Gentile kingdoms exist all at the same time and will be destroyed by one stroke? Apparently what happens is each kingdom accumulates the previous kingdom's contribution and adds their own contribution. The four kingdoms are not mutually exclusive. So you have the Babylonian kingdom, they contribute something, then you have the Medo-Persian kingdom, they accept the prior contribution and add their own, then you have the Greeks, they inherit the prior contributions and add their own, and then finally the Romans and they inherit all prior contributions and add their flavor. So you're building a Gentile system here, one contribution upon another until it reaches its final form. And so it's building, its refining and we'll go into the contributions next week but today I just want you to see that there's a big statue here and basically what Daniel has told Nebuchadnezzar is that as the father of an imperial paganism, he has been granted a view of the entire history of the world, down to the end, a magnificent panorama of future history.

In verse 46 Nebuchadnezzar responds to this witness, "Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. ⁴⁷The king answered Daniel and said, Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery." The king promoted Daniel; compare what happened to Joseph. Joseph interpreted a dream, in a providential set of circumstances he was able to show God

working in his life and he was promoted. Joseph became next in command to Pharaoh.

Look what happens here. Verse 48, “Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.” Look at the end of that verse, notice his position. Later we’ll make mention of the six or seven world religions that grew up in this period and what’s going on with all this religious revival in the 6th century BC. Where did they get the ethical influence? And we’re going to make the claim that it came from the Jews. How did it come from the Jews? Who is it in verse 48 that is ruling over the men who are the wise leaders of the most powerful nation on earth? People don’t read the text carefully. If we just read that one sentence in verse 48 it’d save a lot of speculation. That one sentence basically sets up a mechanism through which the OT goes into all of pagan culture. You think these guys didn’t have foreign relations? Sure they did. They were the world superpower. Daniel was known. The problem is because men were called by many different names in ancient history it’s hard to find out...if we had the Alexandrian library we probably could find out. But we don’t and these are very hard historical questions.

Verse 49, “And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king’s court.” Now what’s happening? These Jewish men are getting injected into high places of political influence. And what do they carry with them? Torah, biblical wisdom. Now, I don’t want to get too far into this, I want to reserve a lot of this for next week. We’re not quite through looking at the structure of the kingdom of man so we’ll save it for next week because we’re already bordering on the second thing, and that is how Gentile kingdoms and their leadership willfully defy God’s revelation.

Alright, today I think we’ll just stay with the line of thought that the Exile brought the nation Israel into and under Gentile power structure and the Book of Daniel is describing elements of the Gentile imperialism. And hopefully by now we’ve observed the statue enough that we can start drawing some conclusions about the structure of Gentile kingdoms that we live in, that continues today in ever embellished form.

For next time read Daniel 3 for more of the structure of Gentile imperialism and also read Esther 3-8 if you want to see how God moves providentially Bible-believing people into Gentile kingdoms.

ⁱ Josephus notes that by his day in the first century it could be said that Jews lived in every part of the earth since very early times.

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