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**C1228 – August 22, 2012 – Daniel 2:24-49**

**The Five Kingdoms**

If you'd turn with me to Daniel 2, we're near the end of Daniel's three years in the University of Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar had dreams, plural, notice in 2:1 it's not dream singular but "dreams," plural. As we look at the dream tonight there's only one actual dream so the plural "dreams" implies it was a recurring dream this man had and that's what bothered him and made him lose sleep. So the king in verse 2 called in those who professed to be able to interpret dreams. Nebuchadnezzar was not asking the magicians, conjurers, sorcerers and Chaldeans to do something that they did not claim they could do. That's what they were there for. So he was asking them to function according to their profession.

Nebuchadnezzar tells them in verse 3, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to know the dream," and they responded in verse 4, well, "Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation." Now this is where the sly fox Nebuchadnezzar stonewalled. "If you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you'll be torn limb from limb." That's rather drastic, but it's an indication of how serious he was about learning the proper interpretation of the dream. "But" verse 6, "if you declare the dream and its interpretation you will receive from me gifts." Now I think Nebuchadnezzar was too smart to accept the interpretation of these men. He knew what was going on and so he took his dream as an opportunity to put them to the test by demanding that first they tell him what he dreamed. Men cannot by nature know the thoughts in another person's mind, that's not natural, that's supernatural. So he's calling on them to prove they have access to the supernatural.

Well, they finally cave in and say, this is humanly impossible, nobody can do that and they were right. There is no man on earth that could declare the

matter to the king. In verse 11 they say, “there is no one else who could declare to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh.” So at this point Nebuchadnezzar’s suspicions are confirmed, these professions are a sham and so in verse 12 he becomes very angry and gives “orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.” and you’ll notice that includes “Daniel and his friends.” I’m suggesting the reason it includes them is they were in training for these professions. These professions were a sham and so anyone involved in these professions is to be eliminated.

Now in verse 14 when Arioch announces to Daniel you are going to be torn limb from limb that’s pretty disconcerting news when you don’t have the faintest idea why. So Daniel inquired as to why “with discretion and discernment,” which we pointed out refers to the counsel his parents gave him, according to counsel and in a suitable manner. And I want to emphasize the other side of what I emphasized last week. Last week I analyzed this from the point of view of Daniel’s character. Daniel wasn’t your typical teenager who suddenly became a know it all and rejected his parent’s training. He applied his parent’s training with great skill. This week I want to emphasize the parental training itself. Daniel’s parents had to be tremendously godly parents. They personally trained Daniel in the word of God, they didn’t leave the training up to some rabbi in a synagogue and they didn’t even have synagogues until after the Exile. And they didn’t send him to Public School. The point I’m making is they didn’t abdicate their parental responsibility to some government run organization to train their child. And the reason they didn’t is because the government isn’t assigned these functions in the plan of God, the parents are. And if the parents abdicate this responsibility over to some state organization it’s going to be a disaster because the government can never do what private individuals can do. And so Daniel’s parents personally trained Daniel in the word of God as it applied to every area of life and this response in verse 14 is a testimony to the parents of Daniel.

Now it surprised Arioch; he never saw any of the wise men of Babylon reply in a calm, collected manner when he came with the words, you are going to be torn limb from limb. And through this in verse 16 Daniel went in to the king “and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.” So he gets the time and what is the first thing Daniel does with the time? Goes to his buddies, alerts them to

the situation and they get on their knees; a fantastic response in a crisis situation. They didn't fall apart, they didn't have a big woe is me session, they didn't even try to solve the problem themselves, they went straight to the Lord who is sovereign over the problem. Now as an aside do you know why he didn't go to the other classmates from Judah? Because they went apostate. They defiled themselves with the king's choicest food and wine and so there is no use asking them to pray. By this time Nebuchadnezzar's re-indoctrination program was thoroughly entrenched in their lives. It was only these four and they're praying. And while Daniel was still awake in verse 19, I envision he's lying there praying, "the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision."

God showed him the dream demonstrated and Daniel was confident this was the dream so he goes ahead and praises God as the one who knows all things and reveals the future of kings and kingdoms. God is in charge of all of history and his praise gives a sneak preview of the content of the dream. It deals with the course of Gentile kingdoms. So now that Daniel has the dream and the interpretation of the dream let's pick up with verse 24. **Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon;** who was Arioch? The king's chief executioner. Daniel had success with him before so he's the logical guy to go to - he goes in, and it's kind of shocking the first thing Daniel says. If you observe it has nothing to do with Daniel. Daniel's not concerned with Daniel. Daniel is concerned with **the wise men of Babylon. Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon!** Now it sounds to me like the executions were put on standby until Daniel's allotted time was over and Arioch is just waiting for the go ahead. He's got the first guy on the chopping block and Daniel rushes in, **Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon!** So his concern is them and this gives more insight into this amazing figure in the OT. It's all the more amazing in that he probably doesn't know most of these men, as far as he is concerned they're strangers. And notice the contrast with the beginning of the verse. Arioch was under the king's orders to destroy the wise men of Babylon. Daniel gives a command contrary to the king's; do not destroy. This takes guts. Daniel was a natural born leader.

Then he issues another command, **Take me into the king's presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king.** Now Arioch was an opportunist. Arioch now has himself a golden ticket. So he's going to turn this

into an opportunity for Arioch. And watch the wide, wide difference in character between Daniel and Arioch. These two men are as different as night and day. Arioch is in it all for himself and he's going to maximize himself, going to make his name great. Daniel, on the other hand is in it for the wise men of Babylon, he's in it for the God of heaven but he's not in it for himself. Daniel is a humble young man, remarkably humble for his age; he doesn't take credit for anything.

But watch Arioch, verse 25, **Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!"** Now, had Arioch found Daniel? No. Daniel had found Arioch. Daniel sought him out for the sake of the wise men of Babylon. But Arioch turns it around, Oh king, look what I found, I found your prize wise man, I found the guy who can actually declare the interpretation to you. So he's all in it for himself and what he can get out of finding this man who can satisfy **the king**.

Verse 26, **The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar,** remember Daniel was renamed on the first day of school? Here we see both names in order to tip us off to the fact you can look at this from two points of view. You can look at this from the human view point as **Belteshazzar**, the way Nebuchadnezzar was looking at him, from his vantage point he's just another wise man of Babylon, a man who supposedly has some kind of supernatural insight. But we are also invited to look at this from another point of view, from the divine view point, by the name **Daniel**, and from this point of view we see him as a prophet of God. As one not acting on his own impulses, but one who receives revelation from the one true God of heaven. So when Nebuchadnezzar asks, **Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?"** understand that he's not expecting much here. From the human view point this is impossible but since the human view point always posits possibility then there's always chance in the pagan way of thinking, anything can happen and that's why Nebuchadnezzar gave him some time to do it, Nebuchadnezzar believed in chance and so there's a chance he can do it, but in Nebuchadnezzar's mind it's a slim chance.

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.**

In other words, the first thing Daniel does is agree with the **wise men**, **wise men** is appositional and gives the general category of these professions, **conjurers** we’ve seen, **magicians** we’ve seen, **diviners** is a Hebrew word we have not seen, the title means “to cut” and then “to decide,” so I take it that they offer sacrifice at the temple, they cut it and offer it to the pagan gods and goddesses and then make a decision as to some counsel, that was their technique. But in any case, Daniel agrees with the analysis of the **wise men** offered earlier in verses 10-11 that nobody can do this, it’s impossible. And what Daniel is doing is setting up a contrast. You are right Nebuchadnezzar, this is humanly impossible, I know and you know no man is able to do this, these professions are bankrupt. So up to this point Nebuchadnezzar is getting the same answer he got before.

**However, verse 28, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.**

Notice there is but one God, singular, who Daniel says can do this, the **God in heaven**. Now the noun **heaven** is called a “dual noun,” Aramaic has dual nouns and they refer to precisely two things, so God in heaven refers to precisely two heavens. And I’d suggest that Daniel knows Babylonian concepts of the gods and they hover in the atmospheric heavens above the earth, they monitor the rain, the fertility, the economy, all the things that are important to human life, that was the way Babylonians conceived of the gods. So when Daniel uses a dual noun **in heaven** he’s referring to a God above all these gods and goddesses of Babylon. He’s referring to a superior God. And this will be his stock way of referring to the God of Israel. And he claims this **God reveals mysteries**.

Now notice, he’s focusing Nebuchadnezzar’s attention not on himself, that’s what Arioch did, hey, look at me Nebuchadnezzar, I found this guy, Daniel, aren’t you going to give me a prize? No, Daniel is saying look at God Nebuchadnezzar, look at the **God in heaven who reveals mysteries**, don’t look at me, your attention should be on Him. And he’s doing what here? He’s starting to evangelize this man; right there in the throne room of Babylon he’s going to evangelize this man. And the first thing in any evangelistic encounter is to get their eyes focused on the God with whom they have to deal.

So at this point Daniel is doing superbly. He's rejected the Babylonian point of view, a very gutsy move, and now he's pushing the Biblical point of view. Now an interesting thing is Nebuchadnezzar already suspected something was wrong with the Babylonian point of view so Daniel affirms that in verse 27 and moves in for the kill in verse 28, **There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.** And with that said, just think of how many divine attributes are loaded into that statement. The **God in heaven** indicates He's sovereign over all, he **reveals** things, so He's a personal God, He actually speaks and Daniel's going to reveal what He spoke in a moment, and third He reveals **mysteries**, things hidden, inaccessible, so He's got to be omniscient. Daniel is proclaiming the God of the Bible to the king and then he says, **he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days** and in verse 29 **your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future.** These two statements are very, very important. And they're interesting because at least a part of what's given in this dream doesn't have to do with the future; it has to do with the present because the head of gold will represent Nebuchadnezzar, which was not future but present. Nebuchadnezzar had already assumed the reign. And what I want to suggest is that what is represented by this statue in gold, silver, bronze and iron is only incidental, that it is all leading up to the end of the vision, that is the stone that smites the image and becomes a great kingdom that fills the whole earth. You see, that's how you get **latter days** into this vision. The focus in Daniel's mind is on the stone at the end of the vision.

Now why would the end of the vision be of interest to a Jew like Daniel? I think this is an important theological concept for Israel to learn at this point in their history, because it will only be a few years before Nebuchadnezzar will return to Jerusalem and deport the large percentage of the population, and only a few more years until Jerusalem is totally destroyed. What is Israel going to need when they are in Exile and their city and temple are destroyed? Comfort. Where will the comfort come from? The promise of God in the Abrahamic Covenant to restore them to their Land in their Kingdom. And Daniel is looking at that. So the nation needs to come to the place where they have confidence that God will preserve a remnant, God will keep His promises, we have to go through these four Gentile kingdoms but in the end God is going to restore us, **in the latter days.** So I take it this is an

important part of this incident, to teach Israel theology. One difficulty that we all have is that we don't or can't interpret history theologically. But God is continually seeking to reveal Himself, encourage believers, and so forth through history and that's one thing we have here.

So we have the **latter days** in verse 28, in verse 29 we have the beginning of the revelation made known to Daniel, **As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future.** The idea I get from this is not the dreams Nebuchadnezzar was having but prior to the dreams he was just lying on his bed thinking about his kingdom, what the future held for his kingdom, then he fell asleep and the dream came multiple times, it relates to the future.

**But as for me,** verse 30, **this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man,** put me beside any other man in the world and left to myself, I have no more wisdom than any of them. This is Daniel's humility. Daniel doesn't take credit for this knowledge. And just think of all the credit he could have taken; I am so wise, nobody is like me in the entire kingdom of Babylon, I have such supernatural powers, Daniel could have given Daniel all kinds of accolades, but Daniel wasn't like that. Daniel wasn't an opportunist, Daniel was a young man of humility who knew the principle that he who humbles himself will be exalted in due time by God. And so once again Daniel's example is there to teach Jews who will live among Gentile nations how to live and receive God's blessing.

So having removed attention from himself Daniel proceeds in verse 31 to make known the dream.<sup>i</sup> Let's make a couple of preparatory remarks. First of all, the statue is a prophecy of the time Jesus referred to as "the times of the Gentiles." Remember, this time began in 586BC when the Davidic throne was empty, so technically it hadn't even begun yet because this was in 603BC. But God is giving this revelation before the time so that Jews in that time will understand the course of Gentile history and so that the Gentiles will understand they got their sovereignty from God and it's a temporary sovereignty so don't get arrogant. When it's all said and done Gentile kingdoms will be obliterated, Israel will be restored and Messiah's kingdom will fill the whole earth.



Another remark is that later in Dan 7 we'll see many similarities. Dan 2 and Dan 7 go together and I'll try not to bring too much of Dan 7 back into Dan 2 at this time but later Dan 7 will fill in some of the details missing in Dan 2. But both look at the same four Gentile kingdoms. A difference that has been observed is that Dan 2 is looking at the four kingdoms from the human view point as an awesome human accomplishment, but Dan 7 is looking at the same four kingdoms from the divine view point as an utter human abomination. So the two chapters give you a comparison of what man thinks about these kingdoms vs what God thinks and it's a very different picture.

So let's pick up with verse 31 - this verse emphasizes the unity of the statue. There's not four statues, there's only one statue. **You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue;** the fact of one statue shows you all four kingdoms are a unified system, there's one world system and all the various kingdoms and kings that govern this world system are together on this way of thinking. So the **king was looking and behold, there was a single great statue which was large and of extraordinary splendor,** so the sight of it was a magnificent thing and Nebuchadnezzar saw it **standing in front of him.** Daniel says **and its appearance was awesome,** meaning it induced fear. That verb **awesome** means fearful and this answers to verse 2 earlier in the chapter, explaining why Nebuchadnezzar became anxious and couldn't sleep, it was a disturbing sight.

Verse 32, and the emphasis shifts to the four distinct parts of the statue. **The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.** There are your four parts and notice verse 34, **You continued looking,** indicating a time element to the dream, he would look at this great statue for a period of time, **until** Daniel says, **until a stone was cut out without hands,** signifying no human involvement, but something supernatural formed, **a stone cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.** It didn't strike the head of gold or the breast and arms of silver, it just struck at the base of the statue, at the **feet of iron and clay.** Verse 35, **Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time,** so the entire statue was destroyed simultaneously by this stone and then the after effects are noted, the entire statue **became 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. So, if we could summarize what Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dreams; a great statue of gold, silver, bronze, iron and iron with clay would appear, it would be there for awhile, then suddenly a stone, apparently large, cut out of the side of a mountain without hands, would fly at the image, apparently with great speed, strike it on the feet and the entire statue would be obliterated. Then the stone grew and grew until it filled the whole earth. That's the dream and that's an outline of the future from Daniel's day.

Verse 36 we come to the interpretation of the dream. **This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king.** Now we must evidently be Daniel and God or rather as Daniel has said it, God through Daniel. 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; <sup>38</sup>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.** Now what's the big lesson in vv 37-38? What is said twice in these verses that conveys the dominating thought of the head of gold? The **God of heaven** gave you your kingdom Nebuchadnezzar. God is sovereign over the Gentile kingdoms. And God reveals this to Nebuchadnezzar to keep him humble. Gentile rulers tend to blow up like a balloon thinking they are so great, so he's cutting him down to size. Gentile rulers constantly need the message of Dan 2, they didn't build their kingdom or establish their power, the God of heaven gave them their kingdom, they did nothing.

Now in verse 38 **the sons of men, the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky** are all being given into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, those are symbols too and we'll see them again in chapter 4, but the meaning is not literal beasts and birds but the smaller kingdoms that Nebuchadnezzar had conquered and now ruled over and was receiving annual tribute from. He ruled over all these smaller kingdoms and that's what the beasts of the field and birds of the sky refer to, all these smaller empires now inside his empire. Nebuchadnezzar had a huge empire and God gave it all to him. Daniel concludes verse 38, **You Nebuchadnezzar are the head of gold.** Now this is interesting because Nebuchadnezzar is the only king who is identified as a part of the statue. The other parts are identified as whole kingdoms. But Nebuchadnezzar was such

a great king that the kingdom itself was really less than him. In one sense Babylon was King Nebuchadnezzar and the rulers that followed him were nothing compared to him, Evil-Merodach, Neriglissar and the other kings that follow him were weak and inconsequential. And notice the confirmation of this interpretation at the beginning of verse 37 where he's referred to as **the king of kings**, that means Nebuchadnezzar is the greatest Gentile king in the entire times of the Gentiles, the **king of kings**, greater than Cyrus, greater than Alexander the Great, greater than Augustus Caesar, greater than any Gentile ruler including the future Antichrist. Nebuchadnezzar is the greatest. And he was a brilliant king. So we have the **head of gold**, the most important part of the statue identified as Nebuchadnezzar himself.

Verse 39, "**After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.**"<sup>40</sup>"**Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron;** these are successive kingdoms, not contemporary. Verse 39 begins with **after you** so Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom will fall, another kingdom Daniel says, **inferior to you will arise**, we're not told the name of the kingdom but it can be none other than the Medo-Persia kingdom. Daniel says it's **inferior to Nebuchadnezzar, then another third kingdom**, it's composed of **bronze and will rule over all the earth**. This third kingdom can be none other than Greece, especially in light of the note that it **will rule over all the earth**. Alexander the Great conquered a territory far larger than any kingdom in history. From age 21-33 he conquered and conquered and conquered. Plutarch writes that "when" Alexander "heard Anaxarchus talk about the infinite number of worlds in the universe" he cried. When "One of Alexander's friends asked him what was the matter...he replied: "There are so many worlds, and I have not yet conquered even one."<sup>ii</sup> So we have the **third kingdom of bronze**, Greece. And then, verse 40, **there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.**<sup>41</sup>"**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.** Now here we have a kingdom of iron and iron mixed with clay, so notice we've declined in value from the head of the statue which was gold, to the breast and arms of silver, to the waist and thighs of bronze and now the feet of iron which **crushes and shatters all**

**things.** And the fourth kingdom can be none other than who - Rome. So there are your four kingdoms; Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom of Babylon, Medo-Persia the kingdom inferior, Greece the kingdom rule over all the earth and Rome the divided kingdom.

Now of course the liberals reject these four identifications splitting Media and Persia into two separate kingdoms thus making Greece the fourth. The reason they do this is because they disbelieve in predictive prophecy. So they argue Daniel was written late, around 165BC, that way Daniel is writing history and not prophecy. But the problem is that the description of Greece as a kingdom of iron with ten toes does not fit Greece, Greece never had ten contemporary kings which the toes represent, but future Rome will and this is confirmed by the depiction of the fourth kingdom in the Dan 7 prophecy. So there are your four kingdoms predicted by Daniel in 603BC; Babylon the united head of gold, Medo-Persia represented as the two arms and breast of silver, Greece as the waist and thighs of bronze and Rome as the feet of iron and feet and toes partly of clay and iron.

Now observe there is much more attention given to the fourth kingdom than the first, second or third. Simply observe the number of verses allotted to the fourth kingdom comparatively. A lot more information. Why is this? Because there is a complexity to the fourth kingdom, the kingdom of Rome. It does not come and go off the scene in the way that Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece will do. Rome comes on the scene, fades into the background and then is revived in a new form. So there are actually two phases or forms of the Kingdom of Rome. And verse 42 confirms this in the Hebrew with an indication of a long gap of time between these two forms. I believe we are living right now in that gap.

So let's look in vv 40-41 at historic Rome. This kingdom is said to be **as strong as iron** and iron is far and away the strongest of the four metals in the statue. So it will have the strongest military, the strongest government and strongest rule. And indeed Rome was so strong that no power could defeat her for more than half a millennium, far longer than the three prior kingdoms. So during this half millennium it is proper to describe Rome as **iron that crushes and shatters all things, so like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.** These meaning the prior kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia and Rome, not in the sense that

Babylon and Medo-Persia would still be on the scene for Rome to militarily defeat because only Greece stood in her way, but elements of Babylon and Medo-Persia had been inherited by Greece and would now be inherited by Rome so that it becomes an amalgam of the three prior kingdoms. In that sense Rome would **crush and break all these prior kingdoms in pieces** and that it did.

Verse 41, **In that you saw the feet and toes**, the focus is on the lower part of the image, since Greece only comes down to the thighs at the kneecap, I take it that the legs are historic Rome and the feet and toes are future Rome. So now we're looking at the **feet and toes**. And he says it's not iron only but **partly of potter's clay and partly of iron**. So historic Rome is iron only, it's the legs from the knee caps down. Future Rome is partly of clay and partly of iron, and that's why the middle of verse 41 clarifies with the words, **it will be a divided kingdom**. That is, it will have one phase that is iron only, only strong, and then a second phase that will be iron and clay, both strong and weak. So here we are introduced to the fact that the fourth empire of Rome will have two phases or forms. I'm referring to these as historic Rome and future Rome but of course in Daniel's day they were both future.

So a **divided kingdom** refers to the two forms of Rome, one now historic and the other yet future. The historic one is verse 40, the future one is verse 41, 42 and 43. And in between these two forms of Rome is a gap, and we are living somewhere in the gap.

Let's continue with verse 42, this depicting the future Rome that is not iron only but iron mixed with clay. **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.** <sup>43</sup>**And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.** What in the world does that mean? Combine with one another in the seed of men? It's a very obscure, confusing, puzzling statement. Let me paraphrase what I think this is saying. You've got the ten toes on the feet and this is a brittle combination, they refer to ten rulers, some strong and some weak and they're going to attempt to combine to form a unified strong kingdom, a global kingdom but it's a failed attempt according to the text, Daniel says, **they will not adhere to one another, even as**

**iron does not combine with pottery.** So it's the attempt among the ten kingdoms in the last days to combine the weaker and stronger kingdoms into a single kingdom but it will fail.

Now in that failed vacuum will come one, an eleventh king mentioned in Dan 7 will arise and subdue three of these kings and take over and rule as world dictator, but his kingdom will also be partly strong and partly weak.

Verse 44, **"In the days of those kings referring to the ten, 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.**

<sup>45</sup>**"Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."** So finally, a fifth kingdom and this one is eternal. The **stone** that crushes these kingdoms is the Messiah in His kingdom. He strikes the base of the statue, the feet which is future Rome. But it destroys all four kingdoms simultaneously because future Rome has inherited contributions of each prior kingdom and is an amalgam of them so that when the final form of Rome is destroyed they are all destroyed at the same time.

Okay, just briefly verses 46-49. Not only Daniels' declaring the dream but the revealing of the interpretation was so obviously supernatural that Nebuchadnezzar is compelled to make a decree and make this pronouncement, **Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries...** He recognized the one true God, this is a new theological stance, he's contradicting his belief in the gods of Babylon being greater than the God of Israel. And he's admitting he got his authority from the God of Israel and that God is sovereign over him and God is going to set up other kings, in Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, that the God of heaven is sovereign over kings. And Daniel at this time in verse 48 is promoted to a position of prominence in central province of the Empire as well as being made chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. It means Daniel is head of all the wise men, and realize, this man is just 17 years old and he's the senior ruler of this class of men. It's at this point you finally see the answer to Daniel's prayer in vv 17-18. Daniel and his friends had prayed they would not

be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. God has answered exceedingly abundantly beyond all they could ask or think saving all of their lives! Now can you imagine how appreciative these wise men and their families are of Daniel? They were scheduled to be torn limb from limb. Now little boys are going to have their fathers, young wives are going to have their husbands. And Daniel is going to stand in a position of prominence and influence over all of them. Do you think he used his influence to evangelize them as he had Nebuchadnezzar? I think he did. I think this event was remembered in the annals of Babylon among this class of wise men all the way to the birth of Jesus Christ. I believe when the wise men come from the east in Matt 2 claiming to have followed the Messiah's star they are coming because Daniel exposed them to the Hebrew God and the Hebrew Scriptures. And they had for generations studied the Hebrew Scriptures just waiting for the star to appear as described in Num 24:17, "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel." He became their God through the testimony of Daniel and Daniel's friends, because notice, they didn't get left behind, in verse 49 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.**

In summary what's the lesson? The first lesson is that Daniel learned humility at a young age, he did not take credit where credit was not due. He gave all credit to God and was therefore exalted by God to a very high position. We do not get exalted by our own devices but by God's devices. He who humbles himself under the mighty hand of God will be exalted in due time. Where are you in the humility department? Second lesson, God is sovereign over the future, God is the one who establishes kings and removes kings, God is the one who raises kingdoms and destroys kingdoms. And God will eventually establish His kingdom on the earth, the stone cut out without hands, an eternal kingdom. Do you marvel at the sovereign hand of God? Third lesson, and this one is for Gentile rulers, do you recognize God as the one who gave you your position? Or are you arrogantly imposing upon yourself greatness due to yourself? God will bring down the arrogant. Fourth lesson, and this one is for Jews living during this time of the Gentiles, be encouraged, there is hope for your nation, God is faithful to His promises and preserves a remnant that will one day be restored in the kingdom of God. Fifth, and this is for you and me, be realistic about where we live, the times



we live in. We live in the times of the Gentiles and we are a unique people in the world, the Church of God, a mystery organism, but don't get too confident that things will turn around in this country. Rather be a Daniel and learn how to live in this world by prayer, humility and courage in evangelism. And finally, never forget your friends; bring them with you as God exalts you as Daniel brought his. Don't forget them like so many do when they get exalted, leaving them behind.

But let's go back to historic Rome briefly. Gibbon, the famous 18<sup>th</sup> century historian who wrote *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, lists several contributing factors to the fall of Rome. Why did Rome fall? Reason number one, rampant immorality that led to divorce and disruption of the family. Reason number two, the Roman's preoccupation with sports, circuses and games, the way they devoted their whole time to the pursuit of those things. Reason number three, dependence on the state for support rather than working, so that they had time to devote to leisure and pleasure.<sup>iii</sup> Now those reasons are crucial to grasp, Rome crumbled from the inside, not from military invasion. As Francis Schaeffer put it, "Rome did not fall because of external forces such as the invasion by the barbarians. Rome had no sufficient inward base; the barbarians only completed the breakdown—and Rome gradually became a ruin." Since that time we have lived in the gap of time prior to the future revitalized form of Rome

Let's make some observations. First of all, observe the great disproportion between the amount of space given to the stone cut out without hands (vv 34-35) over and against the amount of space given to the statue (vv 32-33). Daniel just whips right by the statue and comes to spend most of his time on the stone. That may be important in the grand scheme of things. It appears the statue is of relatively small importance compared to the stone cut out without hands.

Second, there is just one statue, not four, one statue. That may be important to interpreting the dream. The single statue points to a solidarity of the four parts.

Third, there are four parts of the one statue. That signals there are marked distinctions, the whole statue is not just one thing, while there is solidarity there are also distinctions.



Fourth, as far as these four distinctions are concerned we observe that they all decline in value as we go from the top of the statue to the bottom; gold has the greatest value, then silver is less valuable, bronze is still less valuable and lastly iron and iron mixed with clay are the least valuable. So declining value of materials may be important to the interpretation of the dream. There is going to be some decline in value.

Fifth, observe that these four distinctions also increase in hardness as we go from the top of the statue to the bottom; gold is the softest metal, silver is still soft but harder than gold, brass is harder and finally iron and iron mixed with clay, iron is the hardest of all and there seems to be some ambiguity in the final condition because of the mixture of iron and clay. So the material hardness increases from top to bottom, that may be important to the interpretation of the dream. There is going to be some increase in hardness.

Lastly, Daniel has now revealed the dream to Nebuchadnezzar. This is what Nebuchadnezzar required, he may be in a state of shock at this point but he doesn't interrupt because Daniel has met the requirement of the king, if he could tell the king the dream then he could declare its interpretation. So Daniel proceeds to give the interpretation.

And I take it that's an important part of this incident, teach Israel theology. One difficulty that we all have is that we don't or can't interpret history theologically. God is continually seeking to reveal Himself, encourage believers, and so forth through history.

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<sup>i</sup> And here the type of literature shifts from narrative which tells a story, to apocalyptic. We said there were two types of literature employed in the Book of Daniel and now we come to an apocalyptic section interweaved in the narrative. And apocalyptic literature means an unveiling of something hidden, a bringing out into the open something previously concealed, namely the dream. And you can identify apocalyptic literature by certain characteristics used by the author, for one it's highly symbolic and we'll find several symbols in this section, the statue, the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, etc...for two, there are often, though not always, angelic interpreters, in this dream their none, but often they are, for three, an interpretation of the symbols is given and that we do find in this section, it was revealed to Daniel the prophet what these symbols meant, and fourth, the purpose of apocalyptic literature is the main idea you want to catch, whenever this kind of literature is employed it is done so to encourage the believers and warn the unbelievers. You've got to have hope

if you are a believer that is going to face tremendous Gentile powers and even before most of the Jew are deported God is giving this revelation so that when they arrive they have this revelation that will encourage them, give them hope that God will ultimately restore them. So watch for that purpose as we work through the statue. As for the unbelievers, this kind of literature is a warning to Gentile powers against arrogant. They do have a time of sovereignty but it's a sovereignty that has been granted to them by God and it's temporary, so don't get arrogant. And the revelation Daniel gives accomplishes both of those important goals.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.pothos.org/content/index.php?page=quotes>

<sup>iii</sup> Dwight Pentecost, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel*, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1988 class notes.

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