

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream Of The Great Image: Part 2

Daniel 2:36-45

Intro: This morning we return to King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel chapter 2. As we noted last Sunday, Nebuchadnezzar had a reoccurring dream that troubled him so deeply, that his sleep left him. Noted Bible teacher H. A. Ironside writes, "This dream contains the most complete, and yet most simple, prophetic picture that we have in all the Word of God" (*Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, 25). David Jeremiah suggests that Nebuchadnezzar's dream recorded in Daniel 2 is the most awe-inspiring dream in the Bible" (*Agents of Babylon*, 40). King Nebuchadnezzar's dream provides a "blue-print of four successive Gentile world powers: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. It also predicts the reformation of the Roman Empire at the end of time, and the return of Christ (the Stone), who will defeat all the Gentile powers and establish His Kingdom and rule on earth.

Daniel 2 is divided into three distinct sections. Verses 1-16 tell the story of King Nebuchadnezzar's Dream; in verses 17-23 God provides Daniel with the dream and its interpretation; verses 24-49 record Daniel's presenting the dream and its interpretation to King Nebuchadnezzar.

As we saw last week, Nebuchadnezzar's terrifying dream of the colossal image disturbed him and he was unable to sleep. The king called for the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans, to tell him his dream. The wise men asked the king to tell them the dream, and they would declare the interpretation to him."

5 The king became angry with the Chaldeans, and demanded that they make known to him the dream and its interpretation, or they would be torn limb from limb, and their houses would be made a rubbish heap. **7** The wise men again tried to get Nebuchadnezzar to reveal his dream to them, but he refused. **8** The king said, "I know for certain that you are stalling for time. "And that you have agreed together to speak lying and deceptive words before me." **9** However, the command from me is firm; **tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation."**

10 The Chaldeans complained that there was not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, and reminded him that no great king or ruler

had ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. They concluded in verse 11 that no one could declare it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh.”

12 Nebuchadnezzar became furious at this point, and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. Perhaps the king came to realize that his trusted counselors couldn't really predict the future, or anything else for that matter. In any event, the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them too (v. **13**).

16 When Daniel learned of the king's decree, he requested an audience with the king to ask for time that he might interpret the king's dream. The king granted Daniel's request for time to interpret his dream.

17 Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, **18** in order that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ***The pagan magicians, soothsayers, sorcerers, and wise men of Babylon prayed to the sun, moon, and stars; Daniel and his friends prayed to the God of heaven.***

19 God answered Daniel's request by revealing the mystery to him in a night vision. Daniel praised God for His answer to prayer (vv. 19b-23). He acknowledged that God is a God of **wisdom**, knowing the end from the beginning, and a God of **power**, for whatever He determines, He brings to pass.

III. The Dream Revealed And Interpreted For Nebuchadnezzar 2:24-49

24 After praising God for His goodness in revealing the dream to him, Daniel informed Arioch that he could interpret the king's dream. Daniel was hurriedly ushered into the king's presence. **26** The king asked Daniel: “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have dreamed and its interpretation?”

27 Daniel let's King Nebuchadnezzar know right up front that no man on earth could declare the mystery or its interpretation unto the king. **28** “However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that God was making known, revealing to him, events that would take place in *the latter day*.

Dr. Dwight Pentecost explains: “Nebuchadnezzar's dream covered the

prophetic panorama of Gentile history from his time till the forth-coming subjugation of Gentile powers to Israel's Messiah. This time period is called "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). This dream was given to Nebuchadnezzar, the first of many Gentile rulers who would exert power by divine appointment during the times of the Gentiles" ("Daniel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*).

Look with me at:

A. Daniel's revelation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (vv. 31-35)

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, **33** its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

Daniel reported that the king had seen a colossal statue, whose appearance was both awesome and frightening. The statue was dazzling because of the various metals of which it was made. The head of the statue was fashioned of pure gold, the chest and arms were of silver, the belly and thighs of bronze, and the legs were of iron, giving way to its feet and ten toes, which were a mixture partly of iron and partly of baked clay. **CHART**

34 Nebuchadnezzar continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them. **35** "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and 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.

Nebuchadnezzar witnessed the destruction of the colossal statue by a Stone, that was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet, which crushed the whole statue at the same time. The Stone that destroyed the statue grew into a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

B. Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:36-49)

36 "This was the dream; now we shall tell its interpretation before the king.

Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's colossal statue reveals the chronological succession of four Gentile kingdoms that would rule the world during the course of human history from his day up to the establishment of God's Kingdom on this earth. This period of human history is commonly referred to as *"the times of the Gentiles."*

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonian Empire, was represented by the **head of gold (vv. 37-38).**

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; **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.***

Daniel informs King Nebuchadnezzar that he had been made king of kings by God's sovereign decree. The God of heaven, who rules over all, had given Nebuchadnezzar the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory. Nebuchadnezzar's rule was viewed as a worldwide empire, in which he ruled over all mankind, as well as over the beasts and birds.

39a "And after you (Nebuchadnezzar) there will arise another kingdom inferior to you,

The second part of the statue, the chest and arms of silver, represented the Medes and Persians. The two arms of silver represented the two nations of Media and Persia that together defeated Babylon in 539 B.C. Even though the Medo-Persian Empire lasted over 200 years (539-330 B.C.), the Medo-Persian Empire was inferior to Babylon, as silver compared with gold.

39b then another third kingdom of bronze, will rule over all the earth. The belly and thighs **of bronze** represented the third kingdom the Grecian Empire. Alexander the Great conquered the Medo-Persians between 334 and 330 B.C., and assumed authority over its peoples and territory. Alexander controlled more territory than any other kingdom in history. His conquests extended the Greek Empire as far East as India.

40 "Then 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.

The legs of iron represent the Roman Empire. The Romans conquered the Greek Empire in 63 B.C. Though the Roman Empire was divided into two legs and culminated in a mixture of iron and clay, it was one empire. This empire was characterized by its strength, as iron is stronger than bronze, silver, and gold. The Roman Empire was stronger than any of the previous empires. In fact, it crushed all the empires that had preceded it. Rome in its cruel conquest swallowed up the lands and peoples that had been part of the three previous empires and assimilated those lands and peoples into itself.

Final form of the Roman Empire: A ten nation federation (vv. 41-43)

41 “And 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. **42** “And 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. **43** “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.

The Roman Empire that began as iron regressed to a state of clay mixed with iron. This mixture speaks of progressive weakness and deterioration. Many Bible teachers believe that Rome, comprised of a ten-nation federation, will rise to power in the end days. Antichrist will rise to power through this ten-nation federation.

Christ’s overthrow of all Gentile Kingdoms

44 “And in the days of those kings 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. **45** “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.”

2:44-45a. Daniel then focused on the overthrow of those kingdoms. The time of those kings refers to the time of the 10 toes (v. 42). Nebuchadnezzar had seen a stone hit and smash the image (2:34). The statue was destroyed by the

Stone, not by human hands. In Scripture a rock often refers to Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah (e.g., Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14; 28:16; 1 Pet. 2:6-8). God, who had enthroned Nebuchadnezzar and would transfer authority from Babylon to Medo-Persia, then to Greece, and ultimately to Rome, will one day invest political power in a King who will rule over all the earth, subduing it to His authority, thus culminating God's original destiny for man (Gen. 1:27).

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream the Stone became a mountain that filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:35). In Scripture a mountain is often a symbol for a kingdom. So Daniel explained that the four empires which would rule over the land and the people of Israel would not be destroyed by human means, but rather by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the striking Stone. When He comes He will establish the Messianic Kingdom promised to Israel through David (2 Sam. 7:16). At His return He will subjugate all Gentile kingdoms to Himself, thus bringing them to an end (cf. Rev. 11:15; 19:11-20). Then He will rule forever in the Millennium and in the eternal state.

Amillennialists hold that this kingdom was established by Christ at His First Advent and that the church is now that kingdom. They argue that: (a) Christianity, like the growing mountain, began to grow and spread geographically and is still doing so; (b) Christ came in the days of the Roman Empire; (c) the Roman Empire fell into the hands of 10 kingdoms (10 toes); (d) Christ is the chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20).

Premillenarians, however, hold that the kingdom to be established by Christ on earth is yet future. At least six points favor that view: **(1)** The Stone will become a mountain suddenly, not gradually. Christianity did not suddenly fill "the whole earth" (Dan. 2:35) at Christ's First Advent. **(2)** Though Christ came in the days of the Roman Empire, He did not destroy it. **(3)** During Christ's time on earth the Roman Empire did not have 10 kings at once. Yet Nebuchadnezzar's statue suggests that when Christ comes to establish His kingdom, 10 rulers will be in existence and will be destroyed by Him. **(4)** Though Christ is now the chief Cornerstone to the church (Eph. 2:20) and "a stone that causes [unbelievers] to stumble" (1 Peter 2:8), He is not yet a smiting Stone as He will be when He comes again. **(5)** The Stone (Messiah) will crush and end all the Gentile kingdoms of the world. But the church has not and will not conquer the world's kingdoms. **(6)** The church is not a kingdom with a political realm, but the future Millennium will be. Thus Nebuchadnezzar's dream clearly teaches premillennialism, that Christ will return to earth to establish His rule on the earth, thereby subduing all nations. The church is not that kingdom.

Applications:

1. Daniel teaches us that God is in control of all human history. He raises up and deposes nations and rulers according to His divine plan.
2. When you are discouraged because of rising crime, corruption, and world-wide instability, take courage and remember that our God rules over all the affairs of men. The God of heaven is going to establish a Kingdom on this earth that will never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44).
3. When you feel like all is lost, remember that “the dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure” (Daniel 2:45). Jesus admonishes us to pray: “Thy Kingdom come!”

Closing song: *You Raise Me Up by Selah*