

Daniel 2:40-49

Today we will try to finish chapter 2 and complete our discussion of Neb's dream and its interpretation. Remember the chapter can be divided as follows:

- a. The Challenge and Failure of the Wise Men, vs 1-13.
- b. Daniel's Plea, vs 14-16.
- c. Daniel's Prayer, vs 17-18.
- d. Daniel's Praise, vs 19-23.
- e. Daniel's Testimony, vs 24-30.
- f. The Dream, vs 31-35.
- g. The Interpretation, vs 36-45.
- h. Daniel's Rewards, vs 46-49.

The Fourth Empire, vs 40-43.

Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. ⁴¹ Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. ⁴² As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

Note Daniel uses only half a verse to describe the 2nd and 3rd Empires but three verses to describe the fourth. This empire corresponds to the legs and feet of the statue. As we shall see, there are five stages to this kingdom and three of the stages are addressed in these verses.

The United Stage, vs 40.

Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.

The first part of the Fourth Empire, the United Stage, is referred to in verse 40. Historically this stage corresponds to the united Roman Empire. Roman history can be divided into major sections. The period of Kings from its founding in 625-510 BC. Then the Republican period which extended from 510 BC to 31 BC, when Octavian defeated Antony at the battle of Actium ushering in the Imperial Period which extended to the fall of Rome in the West in 486 AD. One could use several dates to mark the beginning of the United stage as during the republican period Rome extended its Empire over the entire Mediterranean and into what is now France and Spain. By 31 BC Rome had extended its rule over the remains of Alexander's empire save for those parts east of the Levant. United Rome is described as iron, as iron has the strength to break other metals. The word for *breaks and smashes* is also translated as *shatter* as by the

blow of a hammer. This is a great description of Rome and the method in which it extended its reach across the Mediterranean world. For Israel, this period started in 63 BC when the Roman general Pompey invaded Syria and defeated the remnants of the Seleucid Empire, then marched south into Judea, taking Jerusalem and then claimed the area for Rome, thus ending Maccabean rule over the area. Roman control resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem after the first Jewish revolt (66-70AD), and the dispersion, near annihilation, and renaming of the area to Palestine after the second Jewish revolt (132-135AD). It remained under Roman control till 636 when the Arab Muslims conquered the region.

The Divided Stage, vs 41.

Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay.

Note in vs 33 Dan describes the *legs of iron and its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay*. In vs 41 he notes that like the feet, the toes will also be a mix of iron and clay. Then he draws a parallel, just as the feet and toes are made of two materials, so the second stage of this kingdom will be characterized by division. It will be a divided kingdom.

The two-division stage initially began in 285 AD when the Roman Emperor Diocletian partitioned the Empire into an East and West section. This trial separation was reversed by Constantine in 324 but was reinstituted in 364 AD by Valentinian. As we know, Constantinople became the capital in the East while Rome remained the capital of the western provinces until its final fall in 486. To some degree, Roman control remained over the Eastern provinces until the fall of Constantinople in 1453. In Daniel 7 we will see we are still in this stage as the division is geographical in nature. Note the presence of iron and clay means a decrease in strength.

The Ten-Division Stage, vs 42-43.

As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

Now Daniel focuses on the toes. As the kingdom was initially united, then divided into two, it now enters a third stage characterized by the ten toes. Just like the feet, the toes are made of a mix of iron and clay. This means they *will be partly strong and partly brittle*. Note there will be a mixture of people but they will not be united. Just as iron and clay do not mix, there will be an attempt to unite people, but it will fail as the diverse nature and mixture of the people will not allow it. Many commentators have attempted to understand what these differences may be: race, forms of government, various economic interests, have all been given as possible explanations. The bottom line is we do not know.

Summary of the first three stages

Verses 40-43 describe the fourth kingdom and its first three stages. First, there is an united stage characterized by the strength of iron. We then see a divided stage which still has iron, but the added clay makes it weaker than the previous stage. We then have a third stage as noted by the ten toes made of iron and clay. Part of this ten-division stage will be strong and some of it will be weak. There will be an attempt at unity, but it will be impossible due to the diverse nature of the peoples it will rule.

The Fourth Kingdom differs greatly from the previous three. We will see from Dan 7 that the world today operates under the second stage. The 3rd and 4th stages will be further discussed in Dan 7.

The Kingdom of God, vs 44.

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

After the Fourth Kingdom, there will be a Fifth Kingdom, the Kingdom of God. Daniel introduces us to this Kingdom in verse 44. Note it will occur in the time of the ten kings previously described: a time of weakness and disunity. We will see from Dan 7 that we live in the second stage of this Fourth Kingdom hence these events are yet future. It will be a kingdom established by God himself. Note the context of this kingdom. All the previously described kingdoms were literal kingdoms (or empires). They existed in a literal time with physical borders, capital cities, and were ruled by known men. There is no reason the kingdom of God will be any different. Scripture states the kingdom of God will reign for a literal time (1000 years Rev 20:1-10). It will occupy a specific land with identifiable borders (Gen 15:18-21) and will have a capital (Is 2:2-3) and will be ruled by the LJC, therefore it will be a theocracy.

Note it will never be destroyed nor will any other kingdom or power rise against it and therefore be left to another people. This means the times of the Gentiles will end for no longer will they have dominion over Israel for Christ himself will be its ruler.

Note too, God's Kingdom will destroy the ten kingdoms and bring them to an end, but God's Kingdom will live forever. The word forever in Aramaic means in perpetuity and corresponds to the Hebrew word Olam which can refer to an indefinite future or an age. This Kingdom will endure for an age.

Conclusion

45a, This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

Daniel now connects verse 44 to 45. The Bible often uses symbolic language, and it is usually consistent with its meaning. Whenever the word *rock* is used it means the LJC (see Mt 16:18, 1

Cor 10:4, Eph 2:20, 1 P 2:4, 2:8). In scripture the word *mountain* symbolically refers to a king, kingdom, or throne (see Ps 15:1). Thus, we may paraphrase *“the rock cut out of a mountain but not by human hands”* as Christ (the *rock*) bringing his Kingdom or throne (*cut out of a mountain*), and by his divine power (*not by human hands*), and He will break all the gentile kingdoms to dust (*the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and gold to pieces*).

45b, *“The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”*

Daniel now concludes his testimony. Note Daniel gives all the credit and glory to God (the great God has shown the king). Daniel was given a two-part revelation, the dream, and the interpretation. He now states both are true and trustworthy.

The Dispensational view of the Kingdom of God.

Now for a small but important diversion. All forms of replacement theology (Covenant Theology, Amillennialism, Post Millennialism) view this fifth Kingdom as the Church. This view started with Augustine and his claim in The City of God that “Therefore, the Church even now is the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of heaven. Even now His saints reign with Him.” This view is incompatible with a plain reading of Daniel’s text. Daniel states God’s kingdom will clearly begin with the destruction of the previous Gentile kingdoms, not with the beginning of the Church. Daniel also intimates God’s Kingdom will be ruled by the rock—it is a theocracy with Christ politically and physically ruling on earth. The church does not fit this description, nor has the church defeated Gentile nations and established total political control over the earth.

Daniel’s Rewards, vs 46-49.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. ⁴⁷ The king said to Daniel, “Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.” ⁴⁸ Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. ⁴⁹ Moreover, at Daniel’s request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

Now we come to the end of the chapter and Nebs response to Daniel’s words.

Vs 46, Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him.

This is an incredible verse. Note, Neb fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor. Some translations have “worshipped.” The word used here is *segid* and means to do homage. It is a mark of deep respect and is used in reference to a deity. The idea is not so much that Neb is worshipping Daniel (as some have argued) but he is worshipping the god whom Daniel represents. This is emphasized in verse 47.

Vs 47, Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.

Neb acknowledges that the God of Daniel is superior to his gods and a revealer of mysteries. This does not mean Neb became a believer here. Rather it indicates he is aware of another god—superior to the gods in his Babylonian pantheon. It is also noteworthy that Neb, as the ruler of the Golden Gentile Kingdom bows before Daniel. This is a foreshadowing of Phil 2:10: *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*

Vs 48, Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men.

Now Neb rewards Daniel with two important positional changes: First he made him ruler over the province of Babylon. The empire was divided into multiple provinces, much like the US is divided into states. Neb made Daniel the ruler or administrator over the most important province –Babylon. This would have profound importance for the Jewish people as now Daniel, a Jew, will now oversee the settling of two more Jewish deportations, one in 597 and the other in 586 BC.

The other position Daniel will assume is the leader of all the wise men. This will also have a profound effect in the years to come, as no doubt, Daniel related the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah to these men and 600 years later, their descendants would come to Judea seeking the King whose star they had seen in the East.

Vs 49, Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

Lastly, Daniel requests promotions for his prayer team. Daniel's three friends will assume positions of leadership within the province. Their story will unfold next week when we start chapter 3.