

CONCERNING THE WAY

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LESSON 41: PROPHECY SERIES — THE BOOK OF DANIEL



The book of Daniel is a key book in the overall study of Bible prophecy. But frankly, this reality does not seem to motivate many believers to study this book. For them, it seems, time is not well spent trying to figure out the meaning of a goat with one big horn or a terrible looking beast that had ten horns. It is all so incomprehensible to them that many have marginalized Bible prophecy suggesting that it is not that important and relevant. Others have taken the stance of “eschatological agnosticism” indicating that we really cannot know for sure so many of these things that have not yet happened, and so, focused investigation on prophecy will prove to be fruitless.

But one absolutely critical answer of scripture is that prophecy is designed to change the way we think and the way we live *at the present time*. It is not to satisfy our curiosities but to alter our priorities and our decision-making right now. It is to develop and mature a “two world view” in our lives. A “two world view” can be described as living well in this world because there is a clear focus on the world to come. This is THE biblical approach to living life right now here on earth and it is the way in which the Apostles lived, and how they exhorted other believers to live. (Philippians 3:14,20 1 Peter 1:7 1 Peter 4:7,17 2 Peter 3:10-14 James 5:7-9)

Having this “two world view” assists us in establishing proper priorities in this life. It helps to remind us daily of what is truly important and what we should give our lives to. The choices we make are better and the focus of our lives dramatically improve when a vibrant “two world view” is in our thinking. (James 1:12, Hebrews 11:13-16, 35)

Having a “two world view” aids us in our lifelong struggle with personal purity. Focusing on our Lord's return which could occur at any moment, is a great help in dealing with personal sinning (1 John 2:28-3:3) We can say “no” to a lot of things in this world when we live with an eye on the world to come.

Having the “two world view” helps us obey the Word that tells us to live life with diligence, alertness, and seriousness (1 Thessalonians 5:4-8). Of course, all of this serious work does not mean that the child of God cannot enjoy the good gifts that come down from our Heavenly Father (James 1:17, 1 Timothy 4:4-5). But it does mean that the believer remembers that Satan remains for now as the “god of this world”. It is unwise to view this world as a playground forgetting that it really is a battleground.

Paul Benware

Daniel 2:1-3 Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. (2) Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. (3) The king said to them, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream."

Notice Nebuchadnezzar had many dreams, we're only told of this one. Also notice the four categories of men that the king summoned. These were not exactly Bible-believing people! This was an occultic empire. You look at this and think, wow, what primitive pagans these people were. But during the Reagan administration in this country Nancy Reagan consulted astrological charts to make scheduling decisions for her husband, and during the Clinton administration, Hillary Clinton claimed she had conversations with Eleanor Roosevelt. So, obviously things are not that different in this day and age, we still use soothsayers

in our society.

So who are these people? First, the word “magician.” The word translated “magician” comes from a word that means stylus, and so comparing how this word occurs at other places, we believe that that word refers to the men who had control over writing. They were the men that worked with the cuneiform, a little stylus, it looks like a little piece of bamboo and you take a piece of soft clay and you make marks in it. Then they bake the tablets. And that’s why we have so many cuneiform finds in archeology because it’s very enduring. The magicians, then, are the custodians of the written language. They are the professors who teach it because the average person on the street did not know how to write in those days; cuneiform was like advanced mathematics; very few people knew how to write.

They did have mysticism in the sense that they began to mystify the relationship of numbers and words. They are the people that started arithmetic, yes, but they are also the people that said two has a magical effect, three has a magical effect, four is a magic number, and they’d devise all this mythology based on the numbers. It’s a poor translation because they are not magicians in the sense that we think of the word magician. These are the masters of literature and it would correspond to the professors of literature today.

The word “conjurer” is also translated “astrologer” in some translations. The etymology is dubious; we’re not sure what that word refers to, but we assume it meant they studied the stars and tried to foretell the future. The next word, “sorcerers,” that we do know what it refers to. It is used for the deepest kind of demonic involvement mentioned in Scripture. The sorcerers are involved in what is known as black magic, the cursing. You’ve seen pictures of the people in the Jamaican Islands, voodoo, that kind of thing, they take a little doll and put pins in it and so on, the person dies. Deuteronomy 18:10 prohibits these practices.

“the Chaldeans” is a word for the general cultural group. They would correspond to the advisors of people in high places, the experts of society. You cannot get any more sophisticated advice than the king has.

Daniel 2:4-12 Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation." (5) The king replied to the Chaldeans, "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap. (6) "But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation." (7) They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation." (8) The king replied, "I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm, (9) that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation." (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. (11) "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." (12) Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

Apparently the normal procedure is that the king would tell these guys his dream, and they would give him probably a positive interpretation, one that would make him happy. The king seems to be angry and harsh, here, he may have reason from past incidents to not trust the men. But they even repeat themselves, thinking that the king must have forgotten the rules. “No, this is how it goes - you tell us the dream, and we’ll tell you what it means!” The king sees their stalling, and basically tells them to tell the truth or else. This dream is so important to the king, he wants to take no chances, he wants to be sure that he gets the meaning of it. So this is a new situation, and this is the work of God, to bring Daniel into it.

The method of execution for these “wise men” would be being torn limb from limb, and their families and their houses would have been destroyed. Now that’s motivation! You see in this passage the emphasis on the fact that these so-called wise men are powerless, with all their tricks, to tell the king the dream or interpret it. The Jewish reader of this would be comforted by the fact that God is more powerful than Babylon and any Babylonian god.

Daniel 2:13-16 So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them. (14) Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon; (15) he said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter. (16) So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.

Unfortunately for Daniel and his friends, they are included in this group of wise men. They are in danger of being executed. But God is at work. Notice Daniel has faith in God and confidence in the power of prayer. He didn't react with anger or panic, but with calm and wisdom. Daniel must have already had the respect of this captain, and the king, because he was able to get the order of execution put on hold.

Daniel 2:17-18 Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, (18) so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel does not try to solve this problem on his own, but informed his friends and they all went right to God in prayer. This is a lesson to Jewish people in exile in pagan lands, and for us as well, that we are to seek God in prayer, and expect Him to answer. (James 4:2)

The name for God is unique here, this is not a referral to the God of Israel (He is gone from Israel, the Shekinah glory has departed). This is referring to the God of Heaven. He no longer resides in Israel. We see this title being used in Ezekiel 8-11, Ezra and Nehemiah.

Daniel 2:19-23 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; (20) 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."

Daniel gets a replay of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in a vision. Daniel is always blessing God, no matter what. After he receives the answer to his prayer. He takes the time to praise God. Too many times we get our answer and we just move on to the next problem. God wants us to take time to thank Him, no matter what the answer is or the situation.

Read verse 21-22 again, this is the main point of the whole book of Daniel!

Daniel 2:24-28 Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king's presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king." (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!" (26) The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?" (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. (28) "However, 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.

Notice he intercedes for the wise men in verse 27, saying they're right, they couldn't possibly be able to reveal this dream to you. Daniel tells the king that only God in heaven can do so. He takes no credit for himself, but gives all the glory to God. The Hebrew translated "times to come" in verse 28 is literally "the latter days". This is a prophetic phrase used 13 times in the Old Testament, and it always refers to some event in the future, sometimes the near future, sometimes the distant future. All of these references ultimately point to the times of the Messiah; his return.

Daniel 2:29-30 "As 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. (30) "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, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

Why did God give this dream to Nebuchadnezzar? Because this dream will unpack what we call the "Times of the Gentiles". He is the first king of the first empire during the Times of the Gentiles, so God reveals it to him. Daniel not only tells the king what the dream was, but what Nebuchadnezzar had been thinking, what was in his mind. He was thinking of what would happen in the future. Daniel does not claim to be wiser than other men, but gives credit to God. Our wisdom comes from God, not ourselves.

THE DREAM

Daniel 2:31-33 "You, O king, were watching as a great statue — one of impressive size and extraordinary brightness — was standing before you. Its appearance caused alarm. (32) As for that statue, its head was of fine gold, its chest and arms were of silver, its belly and thighs were of bronze. (33) Its legs were of iron; its feet were partly of iron and partly of clay.

One of the most important things to understand about Bible prophecy is that it is interpreted for us. The Bible is a self-interpreting instrument. It will not leave us in darkness as to what these things mean, because the text itself will interpret the prophecy for us. Now what happens sometimes to interpreters is that our imaginations take over, where we attach our own interpretation to the text. We should be patient and allow the text to explain itself. So, next we have the interpretation, and those things that are not interpreted here will be interpreted in other chapters.

As we go through this take it the way Daniel saw it and don't read history into it, just look at it and observe it, because this is precisely the position we're in with respect to the Second Advent of Christ. Don't read the Second Advent prophecies of Christ in the Bible as though you're going to write a newspaper about every little thing that's going to happen tomorrow. That is a fast way of getting in trouble with prophecy. People used to say the European Common Market was the Revived Roman Empire. Two centuries ago people were saying the Roman Catholic Church was the Revived Roman Empire. Today they say the the European Union is the revived Roman Empire. Maybe it is, but we don't know that. Ninety years ago they said Kaiser Wilhelm was the anti-Christ, then it was Hitler, then it was Henry Kissinger, today you hear different speculations. So this is the danger you have. Prophecy, when it is fulfilled, will be very clearly fulfilled. And we can talk about fulfillment but let's not read all these things in.

Now we have to discipline ourselves to stay with the interpretation of the vision given there, and not add on our interpretation of the vision. That's going a third step further; we can speculate, that's fine, that's fun to do, but don't call that the Word of God. Only what's right here is the Word of God, the rest of it is interesting, but it's not the Word of God.

The very fact that he observed many details and that Daniel only interprets some of the details should be sufficient reason for going slowly, just taking it easy and going through very slowly. Everybody says this statue is a man. Well, where does it say it's a man? Nowhere in this vision does it say it's a man so don't jump to conclusions. It just says it's a statue. It has arms and legs, it has a head and so on, so presumably it is a man, but just be careful about reading things into what the text says.

You saw "this great statue," it's an immense thing, it frightened Nebuchadnezzar by the very size of this thing. Now the word "brightness" in verse 31 is the word for "face," and this is very interesting because he's saying the facial expression caught Nebuchadnezzar's attention, and interestingly nowhere else in the vision are we told what precisely it was about the face. It may be that as Nebuchadnezzar looked at this he began to see himself in the face.

The whole statue is handmade, there's a tremendous contrast at this point; the head of gold; gold has to be refined by people. It's an expression of the works of man. Silver has to be refined; steel has to certainly be refined; bronze has to be refined, clay is made by man on the potter's wheel and then fired. The whole statue from top to bottom represents one hand-made operation. In spite of the diversity of the metals there's some common theme that runs through the whole thing. It's man-made, the kingdom of man.

Daniel 2:34 "You 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."

And now the stone that comes and smashes it is not hand-made. The stone that comes and smashes it, Daniel apparently is telling Nebuchadnezzar, because later on in verse 45 he says it's cut out of a mountain, apparently as Nebuchadnezzar looks, the stone is actually cut out of a mountainside.

What is a stone that's cut without hands? That means God cuts the stone. Notice where the stone strikes the statue. It strikes it at its weakest point, at the feet. So this divine event occurs in relation to the bottom of the statue.

Daniel 2:35-36 "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. (36) "This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king."

As we follow the interpretation notice what elements of the statue Daniel interprets and notice what elements of the statue Daniel refuses to interpret. Daniel is not going to interpret the ears, it's not part of the interpretation. When you interpret visions in apocalyptic literature every detail of the vision is not necessarily to be interpreted. Daniel doesn't interpret the legs, toes, ears, arms, eyes or anything else, he's only talking about two things. He's talking about the sequence, which he interprets as a chronological sequences of succession, and the second thing that Daniel points out is the quality of metal, it's deteriorating. So, we can speculate on how it's fulfilled, but in the Word of God there are only these two things interpreted in this vision.

As great as these empires were, they can be blown away as if they were nothing by God. Notice that the mountain didn't fill the whole earth until the entire statue was crushed and obliterated without a trace.

Daniel 2:37-38 "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.

So the head represents Nebuchadnezzar, and by extension of his rule, the kingdom of Babylon. The king has been given authority, by God, over the whole earth. Amazingly, he is called the "king of kings", and is given rule over even the animals and birds of the world! However, he is told that he is ruling only at God's pleasure. It was given by God and can be taken away by God. Even though he never conquered the whole world, he was given the ability to do so. This interpretation is very precise, not some abstraction. This was said also by the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 27:6-7 "Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him. (7) "All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant.

Jeremiah 28:14 'For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "I have put a yoke of iron on the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they will serve him. And I have also given him the beasts of the field."

Then Daniel says that the other parts of the statue represent other kingdoms that will come after Babylon:

Daniel 2:39 "After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

That confirms the fact that Daniel is taking the sequence of metals chronologically. So that fixes one part of our interpretation. We now can be sure that when we read these four metals we're talking about four eras of history and they are sequential in time, so in the statue time goes from his head to his feet. Now the question is, what does inferior mean? Commentators have had all sorts of ideas, inferior by way of government, inferior by way of culture, inferior by way of moral fiber, what is the inferiority mentioned in verse 39? Whatever the inferiority is it's something connected with the metal, and it continues because all four metals are smashed at the end. At least we can say this, that the statement "inferior" in verse 39 proves that the Biblical philosophy of history is anti-evolutionary. It proves that the human race is not getting better, it's deteriorating. And this is a Biblical view of history: devolution not evolution. Things are going down, they are not going up.

It doesn't tell us explicitly, but we know from history that the chest and arms of silver represent the Persian empire, which conquered Babylon in 539 BC. And, we see this happen later on in Daniel. This kingdom, while the conquests and achievements by Persia were greater than Babylon, they were not as united as Babylon. This kingdom was made up of two different peoples, the Medes and the Persians, and this caused contention, they were never one culture.

The third empire, we know from history, is the Greek or Hellenistic empire of Alexander the Great. This empire controlled both the east and western territories of the known world, as represented by the belly and thighs of bronze. The empire started out united, but became splintered into four separate empires upon the death of Alexander. This empire was also given authority to rule over the entire world, but they also failed to conquer the entire world. Alexander's generals stopped him from going further than India to the east. There will be more detail given on these two kingdoms in later chapters.

Daniel 2:40-43 "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. (41) "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) "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 fourth kingdom is the Roman Empire, everyone is agreed it starts out with the Roman Empire, everyone except the liberals and that's their problem, they don't believe any of this is literal. Everyone is agreed that's what it starts out as. But where the disagreement enters in is what does it shade off into.

We know that this fourth kingdom is the Roman Empire, because it followed and supplanted the Greek empire. There is a different view of this prophecy, generally put forth by those who don't believe in predictive prophecy. Those people interpret the kingdoms as Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. This is an attempt to put these events before their "made-up" date of 165 BC, so that all these predicted kingdoms become history instead of prophecy. Rome is left out because they just cannot admit that such a thing could be predicted.

There are major problems with this view. First of all, it goes against accepted history. There was no independent kingdom of the Medes during the time of the demise of Babylon, they were clearly part of the Persian empire. And, the prophecy of the 4th empire doesn't fit what we know of the empire of Greece, so it just doesn't work. Also, there are other prophecies in Daniel that relate to events well after the 165 BC date, so it doesn't really help to leave out Rome. And, if you force this interpretation, it really muddles the interpretations of symbols in later prophecies in Daniel. At this point these people usually retreat into saying that these prophecies are allegories, and not really meant to be chronological history. The kicker, to me, is in Daniel 8:20, in speaking of these four kingdom in terms of animal symbols, it is made clear that the Medo-Persian empire is one kingdom with two kings, which fits well with known history. This combined kingdom with two peoples is seen as the kingdom that conquers Babylon. We'll study that in more detail when we get there.

As we've said, the best way to interpret these prophecies is to let the text speak for itself. The view that these kingdoms are Babylonian, Medio-Persian, Greek, and Roman is a better interpretation because it allows us to read the scripture in a normal sense, not reading into the text something that isn't there, and it's much easier to relate it to actual history.

So, the 4th kingdom is Rome. It should be noted that the Jews living in the time of the Roman occupation interpreted this iron part of the statue as Rome, and they expected the Messiah to come and conquer the Romans and liberate them.

The main objection to the Roman view is, where does this put us in the present time? Are we currently living in the Iron phase of the statue? Didn't the Roman empire come to an end in the past? Verse 41-43 seem a little unclear. How do we interpret these verses?

Well, we seem to have two possibilities.

1. There are different phases of this prophesied kingdom – the Iron phase, and the Iron mixed with clay stage. The Iron phase came to an end in history, as we know the Roman empire did, there is a gap of time, and the iron and clay phase is yet to come. A gap of time is not unusual in Bible prophecy. For example, the prophets who spoke of the coming of the Messiah certainly did not see that there were two comings, with a gap of time in between the two. They spoke as if all the prophesied events would happen when the Messiah came back, with no gap, no delay between the events. Also, as we'll study later in Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks, there appears to be a gap in this prophesied

period of time between the 69th and 70th week which is the church age, the time between Pentecost and the 2nd coming of the Messiah. So there are gaps of time in Bible prophecy.

2. The other possibility is that there is no gap; the Roman empire never really did go out of existence. What, you say? Well, in a very real sense, Western or European civilization is a continuation of the old Roman world. The "Holy Roman Empire" continued in name in the western part of the empire until Napoleon abolished it in 1806. The West, though, continues to be Roman. Many aspects of our society and cultures in the West are borrowed from the Roman empire. Also, if you consider that the Roman Catholic church became the dominating force in Europe since Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion in the 4th century, and still continues to be a force in European affairs, this adds more weight to this argument.

Something very important to remember is the reality that these prophecies all lead to the coming of the kingdom of the Messiah, which we'll see in the next verses. When the Messiah did come, if the nation of Israel would have accepted Him, there would have been no gap at all. The Iron phase would have somehow quickly flowed into the iron/clay phase, and then into the kingdom of the Messiah which crushed that kingdom. But since Israel rejected their Messiah, there had to be a length of time between the two phases. He Himself declared judgment on that generation of Israel who rejected Him and declared that they would not see Him again until they repented.

Matthew 23:37-39 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. (38) "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! (39) "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

This required that at least one generation to die off and then the next generation become believers in Him. But this hasn't happened yet, but we know that it will someday, the prophet Zechariah says so. So we know a length of time had to pass, a gap.

In any case, this prophesied kingdom appears to be in at least two stages.

1. Verse 40 is the united stage – this is the Roman Empire stage. Just as Iron can break other metals and minerals, the Romans crushed all that preceded it. They conquered and occupied Israel from 63 BC to 364 AD.
2. Verse 41 appears to be speaking of the period where the Roman Empire was divided between east and west in 285 AD by the emperor Diocletian, reunited again under Constantine, and divided again under Valentinian in 364 AD. Notice that even though the kingdom is divided, it will still have great strength. In many ways, this division continues even today. The world is basically split along the same lines between east and west.
3. Daniel 7:23-24 indicates that this kingdom will develop into ten divisions, ten kings, represented by the ten toes. **This has not happened yet in history.** The mixture of iron and clay shows that you'll have two different elements trying to unite, but there will not be a strong bond, no cohesiveness. Authority will be found in subgroups (the iron), which will lead to division. This may be different ethnic groups that will be trying to unite into one identity, but this will not succeed, and will lead to this ten-division stage.

SPECULATION:

We appear to be moving towards this last stage. The nations of Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire have constantly been at war with each other, right up through World War II. Hitler himself thought he was forging a remaking of the Roman Empire. But now, with the formation of the EU, they have peace, they are trying to unify all the ethnic groups in the old Roman Empire. But history shows and the Bible says that it will not last. The apparent problem with the feet and toes is that the various nationalities, cultures,

philosophies, forms of governments, and races are not going to mix well together in the final phase of man's rule. You can see at least the possibility of this in the current European Union. Much of the unification has been forced on the various peoples by their leaders, and, although it appears to be working in many ways, you can see how it could potentially have problems in the future. The large amount of diversity in this kingdom may prevent it from having real unity.

Daniel 2:44-45 "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."

This is the 5th and final kingdom. Now let's look further in verse 44, "in the days of these kings," so even though it's going to be in the time of the Roman Empire or its successive states in history when this smashing occurs, whenever this smashing occurs it is going to do away not only with Rome, but it's going to do away with the cultural residues that have been passed on from these previous kingdoms. So, "in the days of those kings the God of heaven" notice, "the God of heaven" that He is called, there in verse 44 is the origin of the New Testament expression, "the kingdom of heaven." "The kingdom of heaven" literally means the kingdom from heaven.

To see how effective Daniel 2 was in the thinking of people for centuries and centuries, turn to Matthew 3:2, John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness, and in verse 2 he says, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Notice the title that John uses, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Now where and why did John use that title, why didn't he just simply call it the kingdom of God? Well, they are synonyms in spite of what people like to draw between them. The kingdom of heaven is used in Matthew 4:17, Matthew 5:3, Matthew 5:10. So the "kingdom of heaven" is the New Testament call sign for that fifth kingdom. **The fifth kingdom of Daniel comes over into the New Testament as "the kingdom of heaven."**

What about this kingdom of heaven? Here's a basic decision that we're going to have to make. Let me outline the two ways this is handled, the amillennial and the premillennial, in the details of the kingdom of heaven, then we'll go back to Daniel and try to decide between the two. In the amill, and postmill for that matter, they interpret it this way, that the kingdom of heaven is the Church, and therefore the kingdom of heaven smashed the fourth empire from the time of Jesus Christ, on up to say about 500 AD, when finally Christianity triumphed over the Roman Empire. And that's their interpretation of the smashing, that the smashing occurred over a long, long time period, gradually and brought Rome to her knees. That is, the preaching of the gospel destroyed the Roman Empire. That is the amill and the postmill interpretation.

The premill interpretation is something else; it says since the kingdom of heaven is not the Church, we say that Jesus Christ offered the kingdom. When John the Baptist came and he said "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" he was saying you Jews, to whom this kingdom was promised, if you will accept the Messiah now, the kingdom will come to pass. And Jesus would say the same thing, "the kingdom of heaven is here," why? Because the King is here, and if you will accept the King, then you can have the kingdom. So we say that the fifth kingdom could have come in the days of Jesus and John the Baptist, but in fact when the people rejected both John and Jesus the kingdom of heaven was postponed; the kingdom of heaven was put off and was reserved for a future time when Christ will return and set up His thousand year reign; that is the kingdom of heaven, that is the kingdom of God. The Church is an intermediate link to that time, but the Church itself cannot in any way be identified with the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. That was put off because of the nation's rejection of Jesus Christ. It was a legitimate bona fide offer being made, but it never did happen because the people rejected their Messiah.

Those are the two ways of handling this breaking and the crushing. How are we going to tell which of these views are right? Perhaps the best way is to ask a question. What does the symbolism of Daniel 2 describe; does it look like something gradual or something sudden brings in the 5th kingdom? Is it the Roman Empire gradually going down and the Church gradually picking it up? Is it that kind of a transition, or is it a sudden collision between one kingdom ending and the fifth kingdom beginning? If the amill and the postmill is correct, this crushing has already happened, it happened in the age of Constantine, when the Church was declared as the kingdom on earth. Is that or is it something yet to come? We have to go back to Daniel and look further.

Read verse 44 again, now that tells you how the kingdoms were destroyed; the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and the 4th kingdoms were all destroyed by the next kingdom. They were all destroyed militarily, they collapsed internally, they had economic problems, they had social problems, the kingdoms all fell and all of these kingdoms were social, political and physical entities. They weren't just spiritual entities, they were actual living political things; you could take pictures of them and see it.

So he says God's kingdom, when it is "set up", it says it will "never be destroyed," or "left to another people." So the fifth kingdom will be the last kingdom in history, there will be no supplanting of this kingdom, once it has been established it will never be removed. The question is, has the Church so thoroughly established itself in history that it can never be removed? Now the amills to some degree comes back on us and says yeah, but your millennial kingdom isn't permanent either, it's only a thousand years long, how can you claim the thousand years fulfills the fifth kingdom? Because the thousand year millennium is the first stage of this fifth kingdom and then finally it goes into the eternal state. We consider the millennium and the eternal state together as fulfillment of this fifth kingdom, it goes on and on and it will not be left to another people.

Now notice the rest of verse 44, "it" that's the fifth kingdom, the kingdom from heaven, "it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms." and "it will endure forever." Now the question: has the Church ended all of Roman culture? Has the Church ended all of Greek thought? Has the Church ended all of the superstitious religion and the cultic rites of Babylon? And we premills would say not at all, not at all! The smashing is yet future because when the smashing occurs it will end all these kingdoms. And we still see the kingdoms influencing us today. There's not one systematic theology that you can pick up that isn't influenced by Plato's thoughts. So these kingdoms have not yet been smashed.

Now we have a further control. The word "crush" is the Hebrew word, *daqaq*, and it means to pulverize. Now this word it turns out is used in some very interesting contexts in the Old Testament, contexts which appear to decide the issue quite clearly. Turn to Isaiah 41:15-16, you'll see the word used exactly in the same kind of context. Here in the imagery of Isaiah the mountains are the kingdoms of the world, and how are they smashed? By and through Israel.

Now read Jeremiah 51:20-24, another use of the word *daqaq*. Remember Isaiah and Jeremiah were read by Daniel, Daniel studied Jeremiah for years, he was familiar with Jeremiah's vocabulary in particular, as well as Isaiah, so when Daniel uses the word *daqaq* we would expect him to be using it the same way that his teachers used the word.

Turn to Micah 4:13, here's another context for the word *daqaq*, and again, when did Micah live? He lived before Daniel; Daniel read Micah, Daniel studied Micah, so it would appear logical that Daniel would be using the word *daqaq* in the same way, with the same flavor that his teacher used the word.

Now what does this tell us? How does this support this whole concept of *daqaq*? It tells us that this fifth kingdom, the stone cut without hands that obliterates the other kingdoms, that smashing is visualized as a

military conquest. It is violent, it is sudden, it is not gradual and it is not spiritual. It is a violent sudden smashing of the kingdoms of the world.

Now there are some more elements to this whole thing. There's another problem, what do we do about this expression, the "stone cut without hands?" What does the stone cut without hands mean? To see this we have to go to Exodus 20:25, that is a technical word, it just didn't happen in Daniel, it has a lot of meaning and all you have to do is know your Bible to see where that expression was used before; test it, see we make sure that we understand what's happening. Here's the context for that clause, "a stone cut without hands."

Exodus 20:25 'If you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it.'

After the Ten Commandments were given there was an instruction to build a special kind of an altar; in the ancient world the religions would cut stones, they would quarry granite or some of the other valuable stones and after they'd cut them they'd arrange them into a very, very elegant altar. God's people, in a great contrast, were told don't cut the stone, don't make Me an altar like that. Whenever the Hebrews were to make an altar they were to just to take the rock as they found it in the field, they were never to tamper with it; leave it the way God created it and then build it. God cannot be worshiped with man's works; he must be worshiped out of his own creation. And to get that point across when they had the instructions on how to build an altar, it had to be made of natural stone, unhewn, uncut.

So the same imagery in Daniel 2; what is Daniel talking about? A kingdom that is represented by a stone cut without hands; it can only mean one thing, that the stone cut without hands is a work that is supernatural, that it is a result of God alone doing the doing. **Now if you take all these characteristics and add them up together, I think we're going to have to argue that this has not been seen in history.**

Now, the Church has been able to eradicate some of what Rome gave us and some of what Greece gave us, but it is still incomplete. The Church has never entered into a violent military confrontation with Rome, and besides, all these references of *daqaq* somehow involve the nation Israel. And Israel wasn't even in existence in the fourth and fifth century, unless you want to make the church "spiritual Israel." But then you allegorize the whole thing. And if you do that, we might as well throw out everything.

So how are we going to pull this together? Well, in 400 AD or thereabouts, when Rome gradually broke apart, you have the dividing of the statue, and you have Western culture begin to become more and more diverse, until you have what we now call the western community of nations that somehow have held together. Rome is still a very significant player in the world, for many reasons. And, basically, the United States is considered scripturally as an appendage of the western community of nations. And this western community of nations, Daniel foresees... remember, he is looking a long time ahead in the future, from Daniel's point of view this western community of nations becomes gradually culturally heterogeneous. Isn't that what we see? Culturally it's very diverse. The western world isn't made of one racial group; there are all sorts of racial groups mixed, lots of cultural groups mixed and so on.

Now what is going to happen in the future is that this will go on until, at some given time in the future, according to Daniel 2, a "stone without hands" will violently destroy the western community of nations, or the western community of nations will be violently destroyed. Now other prophecies tell us more detail, but this prophecy just tells us the simple fact that it will be destroyed and somehow Israel will have something to do with it; the nation Israel will have something to do with the destruction of the latter day heirs of the

Roman Empire. And that includes all nations that are culturally linked with Rome.

THE FIFTH KINGDOM

And after this 4th kingdom breaks in pieces, if you recall back in verse 35 was that stone that smashed into the statue became a great mountain and it says the “mountain filled the whole earth.” That's the 5th kingdom, God's kingdom. Now if the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th kingdoms are political entities, what does that argue about the fifth kingdom? That it too will be a political entity on earth. And that entity will be the millennial kingdom under the reign of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ will function as a world ruler, and under his leadership mankind will have a perfect thousand year government before the eternal state continues it. But during this thousand years, which is sort of a preview to the main eternal state, during these thousand years the human race will experience certain things that are radically different.

We'll cover the millennial kingdom in much more depth in a later lesson, but since this is the first time some of you are working with prophecy, let's go to four areas where the millennial kingdom will be radically different from anything that you see today. Bible prophecy should not cause pessimism. A lot of evangelicals who are premill sit around and give the whole school a bad name because they say well, I'm not going to do anything, the rapture is coming tomorrow; that is NOT the proper attitude. Jesus Christ, when He sets up the millennial kingdom, is not going to write music for men, He is not going to make art work, He is not going to do the engineering, men are going to do it. And when this millennial kingdom begins it begins with a certain amount of assets. Where do those assets come from? The assets come from past history. Therefore, anything that you do that is productive in history can become something of an asset to begin the millennial kingdom with.

Illustration: take some of the great composers of the past; do you think seriously that in the millennial kingdom, just because Jesus is here, that Bach is going to be forgotten, that Beethoven is going to be forgotten? I don't think so at all. New and great exciting pieces of music will be composed, the like of which man has never seen, but it will be built upon a foundation of the past. The same with art, the same with technology. Do you seriously think that the technology of air travel, and space travel are going to be removed when Christ comes here? I don't think so, I believe they are going to be extended. Technology of the millennium will build on the technology of the present. So anything that man contributes that is a positive, solid contribution in this history, will not be lost. This is not a pessimism, it's an optimism. You can produce knowing that your work will survive. What is good about your work will survive forever, not only on your record but also in human history. It will survive and be used.

Now turn to Revelation 20:1. Why will this 5th kingdom be so different; why will it be able to do what the other kingdoms were not able to do?

Revelation 20:1-3 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. (2) And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; (3) and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

The first thing about the millennial kingdom will be no principalities and powers of darkness. There will be no demonic activity in the millennium. There will be sin in the millennium from man's own flesh, but there will be a great diminishing of evil because you won't have the amplifying factor due to these demonic powers operating in history. It will be amazing to see what happens and what man can do when he is not constantly hindered, bound and deceived by seducing spirits. And human culture will grow miraculously. That's one characteristic.

Another characteristic is a worldwide climate of divine viewpoint thought. Today the basic way of thinking is human viewpoint, except when we are walking in the Holy Spirit. In the millennium the basic way of thinking will be divine viewpoint and the exceptions will be those who stubbornly rebel against God's authority. The world will be saturated with divine viewpoint. How do we know this? Isaiah 11:9; Jeremiah 31:24. Culture will be controlled by divine viewpoint; it will bear fruit in the areas of art, science, music, technology and so on, and obviously philosophy.

A third point about the millennial kingdom, that there will be radical geophysical changes in the climate of the earth, the physical climate. Read Isaiah 11; Isaiah 65, there will be radical changes in and on the earth. More crops will be able to be grown, there will be enough grain for the people to eat on all the continents of the world. There will be prosperity. On a side note, there will no longer be any environmental problems. Any damage we have done to the earth up to that point, any damage caused by the destruction of the 4th kingdom, will be restored by Christ, will be healed. This doesn't mean we shouldn't be good stewards of the earth today, but we know that God will restore the earth in the 5th kingdom.

And finally a fourth category, we could go on with more but these are just to give some of you who are new a picture of what the Bible says about the millennium. A fourth concept is that there will be world government with world law based on the Word of God, Isaiah 2:1-4. That's the fifth kingdom. In one of those verses if you look them up it says that the world will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the oceans are filled with water—fantastic situation.

Daniel 2:46-47 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. (47) The 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."

Nebuchadnezzar has not become a believer here. He has only added Daniel's God to his collection of gods. He realizes the power of Daniel's God, but doesn't reject his other gods, he just puts Him at the top of the list. There is no confession of faith that would lead to salvation in these verses.

Daniel 2:48-49 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. (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.

Daniel is made ruler of the province of Babylon. This is not the whole kingdom, but just the home province. God has now put Daniel in a position to help the Jews who arrive in 597 and 586 BC. His high position of chief of the wise men influences that culture to the point that we see the wise men in Matthew 2, referred to as the Magi, come to worship the Messiah who has come. This was over 500 years later. This could have been from the influence of Daniel.

Daniel promotes his three friends, which will ultimately mean danger for them in chapter 3. Of the four friends, only Daniel had direct access to the king. The king did not know the others personally.

So Daniel and his friends are promoted. The lesson to the Jewish exiles is to follow the example of Daniel:

- Commit yourself to God
- Trust the Lord from crises to crises
- Put God first in your priorities
- He will take care of you, now that you're outside the land

To summarize the statue in the dream and kingdoms it represents:

The decreasing value and heaviness of the metals may relate to the decreasing unity of these kingdoms. The metals, though, increase in hardness and strength, which may speak to each kingdom's increase in military strength.

- **Head of Gold** – Babylon (vs. 38) – trampled down the Holy people from 605-539 BC. Daniel 5 describes how the Babylonian empire ended. Babylon was an absolute monarchy. The rulers of Babylon made the law, and they were above the law.
- **Breast & Arms of Silver** – Media-Persian empire (Dan. 5:28, 8:20, 10:13,20) – 539 – 331 BC. Their rulers were subject to the law, not as powerful as the Babylonian empire. The book of Esther, which took place during the Persian empire, relates how Xerxes the king could not change the laws.
- **Belly and Thighs of Bronze** – Greece (Daniel 8:21, 10:20) – 331 – 63 BC. Alexander the Great ruled this empire, but left no dynasty, no royal rule. The rulers ruled by force.
- **Legs of Iron** – Rome (Phase 1) Rome is not mentioned in Daniel, but any secular historian will tell you that the world empire that followed Greece was the ancient Roman Empire – 63 BC – 70 AD. Rome kicked the Jews out of their land again in AD 70. Some would see the two legs as being the division which happened in history in the Roman Empire between the West and East. Verse 40 says this kingdom will crush people, and this is basically what they did to the Jews, and other nations. However, this was a republican form of government that degenerated into mob rule and ultimately an imperial government.
- **Feet of Iron and Clay** – Rome (Phase 2) – This is the phase of this kingdom that is yet to come, this Roman Empire is on it's way, and it will trample down the chosen people for the final seven years of the Times of the Gentiles, which Daniel will develop more in chapter 9, under the Antichrist. This assumes a gap between verse 40 and 41, of undisclosed duration, which has been going on for over 2000 years. Matthew 13 gives us God's program for this period of time, what we call the 8 Kingdom Parables of Jesus. Ephesians 1-3 also explains what is going on during this gap period. This period is the age of the church, and it started at Pentecost, and will end with the Rapture. Paul calls it a mystery, not formerly revealed. Paul explains what the Church is all about in all of his epistles, and this was new revelation.
- **The Stone that crushed the statue** – this is the Kingdom of God, which will end the Times of the Gentiles. At this time Israel will be elevated again to a prominent position, and God will fulfill His covenant promises to Israel. This kingdom is divine in origin (not cut with human hands). There is no Kingdom of God in existence on earth today, because the stone has not crushed these kingdoms yet. Amillennialism and some Postmillennialists believe that the kingdom is in existence. They believe that it started on the cross, and the kingdom exists in a spiritual state and is crushing the kingdoms of the world right now. The main problem with this view is that all of the kingdoms represented by the statue are real, political kingdoms that existed on earth. You can't just switch to a spiritual kingdom for the last kingdom to come, that makes no sense. That's a dual hermeneutic, using two different methods of interpretation for the same passage of scripture.

Also, the “stone cut without hands” has nothing to do with man. Man will have nothing to do with the establishing of the kingdom of God. There are some Christians who think it is our responsibility to “build the kingdom of God”. This prophecy makes it clear that it is God alone who will establish His Kingdom.

Some allegorize this verse, and say that it was fulfilled when the church was established in the 1st century, that there is no future literal kingdom, they are called amillennialists. They say that we are now in the Messianic kingdom. Look around, what do you think?

Besides the fact that there is no way you could say we're really living in the kingdom of God now, there are

other problems with this view.

1. All of these kingdoms are real, political kingdoms, there are no spiritual kingdoms in view.
2. Christianity has never suddenly filled the earth.
3. The church has never ruled the entire world. In fact, the church is losing influence in the world today, not gaining it.
4. The church has never crushed the Gentiles kingdoms of the world. And this could never be, because we are commanded to subject ourselves to the nations in which we live. The church is not supposed to work this way, unfortunately in the past some have thought so and tried to evangelize the world by the sword. The amillennial view is that the kingdom of God will gradually replace the kingdoms of man, but that is not in any way how Daniel says it will happen. It will be a sudden, violent end.
5. According to the vision, the kingdom of God does not come until the kingdoms of man are completely obliterated. They cannot exist at the same time.
6. The kingdom of iron was not destroyed by Christ at His 1st coming. He did not destroy Rome.
7. We could not be in this kingdom yet, because the iron-clay phase of the kingdom did not exist in the time of Christ, and the ten-division nature of this kingdom has not happened yet in history!

The stone in verse 45 is the Messiah, who ends the Times of the Gentiles. The stone is a reference to Messiah in many places in scripture. (Psalm 118:22, Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10, and others). It is this stone, not the church, that brings an end to the Times of the Gentiles. We know this is the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ, which will be developed further as we go through this series.

The stone becomes a great mountain. Throughout the Bible, a mountain is symbolic of a king, a kingdom, or a throne, and in this case it's all three. Verse 35 says it will fill the whole world.

What do we learn from this chapter?

- God is sovereign. All of these empires of man are temporary, but God is eternal, and He will restore Israel and set up His eternal kingdom.
- Follow the example of Daniel.

Questions from this chapter:

- How can we as believers today have same boldness that Daniel displayed in this chapter?
- How can a person become truly wise?
- In a democratic society, how does the idea of God raising up and taking down leaders fit in. What significance does the voter have, if any?
- What caused Daniel and his friends to not fall apart but confidently pray in a time of crises? How can we mature in our own lives to come to a place of that much confidence?
- How can we receive praise in our lives and courteously deflect the praise to God?