**Daniel 2:24-45**

**Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream**

**and its Interpretation, 2:24-45**

**INTRODUCTION: Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream and its Interpretation**

Once the Lord reveals the content of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream to Daniel, he wastes no time. Without delay, he seeks out Arioch to present him before Nebuchadnezzar. Continuing to demonstrate deep humility and devotion to God, he fully credits God with the revelation of things future in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Daniel first recounts the dream (2:31-35) and then retells it while giving the interpretation of it (2:36-45).

Everyone is happy. The wise men of Babylon survive, Arioch does not have to kill anyone, and Nebuchadnezzar can relax because he will not be overthrown (this was his big fear from the contents of the dream).

However, the dream and its interpretation continue to trouble many readers and scholars today. Its fourfold division of history starting with Nebuchadnezzar has caused much discussion. We will review this in an upcoming lesson.

**V 24-25:** Daniel, now armed with unprecedented knowledge from the

God of Heaven, and in full command of the situation, instructs Arioch not to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He goes to him and asks him to take him into the presence of the king. Arioch hurriedly rushes into the king’s presence and announces Daniel.

Arioch, it seems, tries to take some credit for finding Daniel when he says “I have found a man of the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king.” Arioch seems to imply that he was obscure, hard to find, since he was among the exiles of Judah. Arioch leaves out the fact that Daniel was seeking him to help. Nonetheless, Daniel feels no slight as we’ll see in 2:26-30. Neither does he resent the fact that Arioch highlights his Jewish roots since he has not been ashamed of his fathers’ God, nor of their religion since he came to Babylon.

NOTE: The confidence of Daniel to tell Arioch not to carry out the command of the king, reveals that he fully understood that God’s hand was upon him and that he anticipated being received by the king for the information he would give him.

V 26: After Arioch tells the king there is an exile from Judah who can interpret the dream, the king sounds doubtful of Daniel and seems to ask him, “Are you (really) able to make known to me the dream I have seen and its interpretation?” The emphasis of the question is on the knowledge Daniel supposedly possesses. In other words, “Do you really have knowledge of the dream?” Although Daniel was very young compared to the other wise men (still a teenager), the king listens to him since he has nothing to lose and no one else has stepped forward with any type of interpretation. Daniel, still in the process of his training and being hustled in at the last minute, will get a chance to speak.

V 27-28: Daniel does not fail in his God-given accuracy restating the dream. He first exonerates his fellow wise men telling the king that no “wise men, conjurer, magicians, nor diviners are able to declare it to the king (2:27)”. At first, his answer seems to sound like the other wise men, but he is building up in his speech to a very different and strong conclusion.

As in 2:20-23, he gives God all possible credit. He didn’t say one thing to God (in his prayer of thanksgiving) and then something else to Nebuchadnezzar (he takes no credit for the dream or its interpretation).

He is like Joseph in Gen 41:16 who said to Pharaoh, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.” He says, “As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians, or diviners (astrologers) are able to declare it to the king. 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.”

He asserts that no man can discern the mystery, but emphasizes “there is a God in Heaven who reveals mysteries (v28).” Daniel leaves himself out of the situation entirely. He emphasizes God’s kindness for making known to the king “what will take place in the latter days” through dreams and visions. However, Nebuchadnezzar was more concerned about his own time and kingdom, not with the times and future kingdoms after his death.

God revealed more to him than expected, so he should begin to feel some relief (God’s common grace and comforting hand at work).

NOTE: By using the word astrologer or “diviner” in v 27, he is referring to the fact that astrologers considered various parts of the heavens as having particular significance. By using this particular word, Daniel is preparing the way to introduce his God as the God of the whole heavens.

In stating that the wise men could not be expected to reveal the secret, Daniel is defending them somewhat from the king’s wrath while at the same time affirming their impotence.

Having disposed of any possible solution of the problem on the part of the wise men, Daniel now seizes the opportunity to glorify God and, at the same time, disavow that the interpretation of the dream is from any innate powers he might have. Daniel declares, “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.”

NOTE: The phrase “latter days” is more literally “after days” as e.g., in the phrase “after the current days” or after Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (see 2:39). This phrase recently has come to mean “at the end of time” in many people’s minds. But its definition here and in the rest of the OT is broad; it can refer to future historical times or dates in Israel’s history or it can jump all the way to the end of time or the end of world history based on context (Is 2:2; Ezek 38:16; Hos 3;5; Mic 4:1). Here it refers both to the future for Daniel and the children of Israel in their lifetime and to the future latter days involving all 4 kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision. It eventually “bleeds” into the far distant latter days even as far as the end times and the Millennial Kingdom in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (2:44-45).

V 29-30: Once more, Daniel emphasizes what God has done for Nebuchadnezzar (2:29). He actually gives God a new name, “He who reveals mysteries.” Bearing witness to God’s greatness remains Daniel’s highest priority.

As for Daniel, God has given him wisdom (2:30a; 1:17) to help the king (1:3-7), through whom God has revealed marvelous things (2:30b). Normal human wisdom would not have sufficed to learn these things.

NOTE: In chapters 2-4 God reaches out to Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel and his friends. They give unselfish and loving counsel to someone they could easily despise. Wisdom from God does not allow them to love God and hate their neighbor. It also does not allow Daniel to take credit for being a great dream interpreter or to give credit to his friends as great prayer warriors. He keeps God’s concerns primary and emphasizes what God has done for him.

V 31: Finally, readers learn what only God, Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel have known. Daniel says the king had an intense vision that greatly startled him, which explains the king’s irritation in the beginning when the wise men could not tell him his dream.

Daniel describes what the king saw and what it felt like to encounter it, which no one could have known. Nebuchadnezzar saw a “single great statue … large and of extraordinary splendor … standing in front of (him) and its appearance was awesome.” It was great in the sense of being immense or large in form, and by its very size the image was overwhelming in its implication of power.

Nebuchadnezzar recognized in the image something greater than himself. Daniel described it as having “extraordinary splendor,” which may mean it reflected light and its brightness was extraordinarily bright. The image was very near, “standing in front of” Nebuchadnezzar. The total effect was awesome with the sense of being terrible or terrifying.

V. 32-33: Specific details of the statue now follow. Descending from head to toe, the statue had 5 different substances in descending order of value. The head was made of gold, the chest and arms of silver, the waist and thighs of bronze, the legs of iron, and the feet a mixture of iron and clay. The strongest metal is iron; however, combined with clay in the feet, it will not remain strong but the whole statue is unsteady and easy to topple.

V 34-35: While the king watched, he saw a “stone cut out without hands and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.” “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.”

The stone strikes the image at its weakest point, the feet of iron and clay, with the result that the feet are broken. Then in rapid succession, the disintegration of the entire image occurs and it breaks into pieces. Then, like chaff, the wind blows the pieces away until the image totally disappears. Then the stone that destroyed the image grows into a great mountain (kingdom) that fills the whole earth.

The contrast here is between “the stone cut out without hands” and Nebuchadnezzar’s image: the stone that toppled the statue became a great mountain (representing the King and His Millennial Kingdom) and filled the whole earth. The stone destroys the image and all that Nebuchadnezzar ruled and possessed.

No wonder the king wanted to know the interpretation. He worried that the statue represented him and his imminent fall. No wonder he wanted someone to recite the dream to him first. Otherwise, how could he trust the honesty and loyalty of the interpreter and his interpretation?

Nebuchadnezzar is so fascinated by Daniel’s recitation of the dream that he does not interject one word into it, allowing Daniel to immediately and smoothly move into the interpretation of the vision.

**III. Daniel Reveals Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream and its Interpretation, 2:24-45 (cont’d)**

**V 36-38:** *This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king.****37****Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory;****38****in your hands he has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.*

V 36: Daniel correctly described the dream in v 31-35 and in v 36 he announces that “*we*” (he and the Lord) are going to reveal its interpretation. This is similar to what Joseph did in Gen 41:16: He gave all the honor to the Lord when he said, “*It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.”*

In v 37-38, Daniel begins by revealing to the king that the head of the statue symbolizes the Babylonian empire and that he is its great king.

NOTE: in this dream each part of the statue represents a kingdom. The exception, though, is Nebuchadnezzar. In v 38, Daniel says to him, “*You are the head of gold.*” In a way he was the Babylonian Empire with all that he accomplished. At the time, he was the prominent ruler of Babylon and reigned a total of 46 years. After him, four other kings ruled briefly for a combined total of 23 years before the kingdom was defeated by Medo-Persia.

He uses the phrase “*we will interpret*” which refers to God and himself as God’s servant. Again, he is humbly emphasizing the fact that the interpretation is from God.

Daniel explains the dream as a panorama of successive gentile kingdoms. Virtually all scholars agree that the different parts of the statue represent at least 4 if not 5 empires or kingdoms, although there is disagreement concerning their specific identification.

Daniel begins by calling Nebuchadnezzar the “*king of kings*”, honoring him as one of the greatest kings on earth. Ezekiel said the same thing about him (Ezek 26:7). He conquered Syria and Palestine, destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, initiated the Babylonian captivity of the Jewish people, and made Babylon a wondrous and beautiful city.

Although Nebuchadnezzar was not the first Babylonian king (his father Nabopolassar preceded him, 627-605 BC), he was by virtue of his 43-year reign the greatest of the Babylonian kings. Also, he was the king at the time of the exile of Judah, and for that reason might be considered the “head of gold” or the beginning (i.e., the “head” or the first) of the world-wide empires that would dominate Israel in his dream. In a representative sense, Nebuchadnezzar was the Babylonian Empire because after his 43-year reign, the kingdom only endured another 23 years.

It was common in the ancient Near East for kings to claim that their god had given them their kingship. Archaeologists have unearthed an inscription written by Nebuchadnezzar himself that attributed his kingship to Marduk. It says, “from the upper sea to the lower sea… which Marduk, my lord has entrusted to me, I have made … the city of Babylon to the foremost among all the countries and every human habitation.” This was a true statement by Nebuchadnezzar. He worked at beautifying the city of and as a result, it was considered one of the 7 wonders of the world.

Although Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest and most eminent of the Babylonian kings, Daniel spoke boldly to him confronting him with the truth that it was not Marduk that gave him his kingship but it was the “*God of Heaven*.” His kingdom and power and honor he received from the people of Babylon had been given to him by the God that Daniel worshipped.

Nebuchadnezzar was going to learn that the privilege of being God’s representative ruler, even though he was a pagan king did not excuse him from being humbly accountable to the ultimate God and sovereign of the universe (see chapter 4).

**V 39a:***“After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours.*

Daniel disclosed that another kingdom would arise after Babylon. History identifies the next great kingdom to appear on the world’s scene as the Medo-Persian Empire headed by Cyrus the Great. This kingdom is symbolized by the silver chest and arms of the great statue (the 2 arms conceivably representing the two divisions of the empire). Medo-Persia dominated the world scene for approximately 208 years (539-331 BC).

In contrast to the Babylonian Empire, the kingdom of Medo-Persia is discussed in a space less than one verse. The brevity of this treatment is made up by the fact that it receives much more attention in chapters 7 and 8. It is symbolized as a bear in 7:5 and it is designated as a two-horned ram in chapter 8:3-4, 20. Nebuchadnezzar did not know how his kingdom would end, but he knew that it would not last forever but would be replaced by another kingdom. istorically, Nebuchadnezzar was

Historically, Nebuchadnezzar ruled from 605 to 562 BC (43 years) and was followed by his son, Evil-Merodach, then 2 sons-in-law, and by his grandson, Belshazzar. Finally, when Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon in 539 BC with the army of the Medes and Persians, the Babylonian Empire made famous by Nebuchadnezzar came to an end.

Daniel described the 2nd kingdom as “inferior” to Nebuchadnezzar’s empire. The inferiority of each successive kingdom appears to be expressed by the decreasing value of the materials at each level of the statue. E.g., the silver of the Medo-Persian Empire is inferior being less valuable than gold in the Babylonian Empire.

However, in what sense was the Medo-Persian Empire inferior to the Babylonian Empire? Medo-Persia controlled far greater territory than Babylon and was in existence for > 200 years, twice as long as the Babylonian Empire.

Two explanations have been offered. First, John Calvin understood this inferiority in a moral sense. He said, “We see … that his kingdom is not called inferior through … less splendor or opulence … but because the (moral) condition of the world was worse under the second (empire), as men’s vices … increased more and more.” Through the portrayal of each subsequent empire as inferior … (through the decreasing value of the metal), Daniel … (was) suggesting that the sinfulness of the world would continue to increase until the last empire. We know the final phase of the 4th empire ruled by the antichrist (described later in Daniel 7), reaches the height of immorality, cruelty, pride, evil, and blasphemy. According to Calvin, the world’s empires are not moving towards morality and righteousness, but in the opposite direction.

Another option suggested by Tanner is that an “inferior” kingdom refers to the reduced authority of the subsequent kings in their respective kingdoms. E.g., Nebuchadnezzar had unlimited power and authority, but the Persian kings were restricted in their authority and power, since they could not annul a law once it was made (i.e., see Dan 6:15: “*the law of the Medes and Persians*”).

**V 39b:** *Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.*

The 3rd kingdom represented by the bronze belly and thighs on the statue is Greece or the Hellenistic Empire. This 3rd kingdom led by Alexander the Great in 332 BC defeated the Medo-Persian Empire led by Darius III after a series of battles. The Greek Empire was larger than the Medo-Persian and dominated the world for approximately 185 years (331-146 BC). In fact, the territory conquered by Alexander the Great was the most extensive land area ever under the power of one king, as Alexander ruled “*over the whole earth*.”

**V 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.*

This is a very important verse. The image’s legs of iron represent the empire after Greece, considered by many scholars to be ancient Rome (i.e., European paradigm). Five terms are utilized in this verse (“*breaks”, “smashes”, “breaks to pieces”, “crush”,* and *“breaks*”) to emphasize the unrivaled power of this kingdom. “Iron” is a fitting metal to be associated with Rome, since the Roman legions were known for crushing resistance to their rule. The Roman Empire dominated the world for more than 500 years from the defeat of Carthage in the Punic Wars in 146 BC to the division of the East and West Empires in AD 395. However, liberal scholars who accept the Maccabean date (165 BC) for the authorship of Daniel identify Greece as the 4th kingdom. They argue that since the book was written in the Maccabean period (167-160 BC), the four kingdoms would conclude at that time with Greece being the final kingdom.

NOTE: The text says that the 4th empire *“breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.”* This presents a problem for identifying Rome as the 4th kingdom since other than when there was resistance to Rome and Rome had to stop uprisings, when Rome conquered countries and peoples, their purpose was NOT to be a destructive force. Rome defeated armies but did not destroy kingdoms; it was not a destructive force as the 5 verbs in v 40 (“breaks”, “smashes”, “breaks to pieces”, “crush”, and “breaks [destroy]”) (see 7:23) require but was considered a constructive force among the peoples it conquered. Its purpose was constructive as it built roads (52,000 miles) and aqueducts, and supported the transportation of cargo and trade along many trade routes. In general, great prosperity under the Roman *Pax Romana* occurred. It generally allowed religious, cultural, economic, and linguistic freedoms to continue, unlike other empires. Its purpose was to allow industry and freedom and the people to thrive and prosper so it could collect taxes for itself to support prosperity back in the capital Rome. This challenge to identifying Rome as the 4th empire is important as other empires were much more destructive and crushing and expansive than the Roman Empire. We will consider one of them in our next study.

**41-43:** 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.*

Up to this point, scholars following the traditional European paradigm are in substantial unity. Nearly everyone equates the 4th kingdom with Rome, however there is a difference of opinion concerning the feet and toes of the statue. Some scholars construe the feet and toes of iron and clay to be a contemporary extension of the 4th kingdom of ancient Rome (meaning that the feet and toes represent nations or kings in existence at the SAME time as ancient Rome) at the time of Christ’s 1st coming. Whereas others consider the feet and toes to represent a future final empire related to the ancient Roman Empire that will arise in the latter days (at the END of the age) at the time of the 2nd coming.

The key to understanding the passage (whether it unfolds at the time of the 1st coming or the 2nd coming) rests on the interpretation of the rock that fills the earth. That the rock symbolizes the kingdom of God is specifically mentioned in the text (2:44-45). While the rock is referred to as the kingdom of God, there is disagreement as to the nature of the kingdom. Critical scholars (Leupold, Young) contend that v 44-45 refer to Christ’s spiritual kingdom in the hearts of believers established at his first coming. Most other authors (Walvoord, Wood, Whitcomb, Archer, Richardson) maintain that the kingdom in view is Christ’s physical reign on earth at his 2nd coming.

Since the feet and toes of iron and clay emanate from the iron legs that symbolize the old Roman Empire, many scholars say there must be a connection between the two. Those who associate the kingdom of God with Christ’s first coming believe that the feet and toes continue to describe the old Roman Empire since that kingdom was in power at the first coming of Christ. Those who understand the kingdom of God as referring to Christ’s 2nd advent, maintain this future world empire will still be related to Rome through the iron legs that represent the ancient Roman Empire.

In v 41-43 several important characteristics of the final kingdom (“*feet and toes*”) are emphasized relating to the divided nature of it as well as the continuing division of the “mixture” of people within it.

1. The number of the statue’s toes is assumed to be ten since the image is of a human and the parallel vision of chapter 7 confirms this number and even identifies what they are. In chapter 7 ten horns grow out of the 4th beast (7: 7, 24) and they correspond to 10 toes in the statue in chapter 2. In addition, Daniel 7:24 specifically states that the 10 horns coming out of the 4th beast represent 10 kings (kingdoms or nations) and thus, the 10 toes of the statue may be assumed to represent 10 kings (or nations or kingdoms) as well. Thus, the final empire will consist of 10 kingdoms (or kings or nations) ruling as one kingdom at the time of Christ’s return.

2. Daniel explained it will be a divided kingdom just as potter’s clay does not mix with iron (“*In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom*”, 41a). This means that the kingdom is defined as a divided kingdom from its beginning and that a major division will continue throughout the empire. It suggests there could be much in-fighting for power to control the confederation.

a. The European paradigm explains this division as the splitting of the Roman Empire into the western and eastern divisions in 330 AD when Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Byzantium (Constantinople) in modern-day Turkey and it became the Eastern Roman Empire. However, there was no division in the Empire for its first 476 years (146 BC to 330 AD).

b. The Mid-East paradigm (to be explained at a future study) explains this division as the continual differences between Shia and Sunni Muslims. When Muhammad died in 632 AD, his followers immediately began fighting about who should succeed him. His family, obviously, wanted his descendants to succeed him and were known as “partisans” and the “party of Ali” (referring to his son-in-law) and were called Shia. They constitute the minority of Muslims today and represent 12-15% of Arabs. Another group did not want Muhammad’s successors to be his family but to be devout friends and followers. They are called the Sahaba and became known as the Sunnis and constitute about 85-88% of all Arabs. This difference in philosophy has deeply divided the Arab world since the death of Muhammad and has led to the death of millions of Arabs over the nearly 15 centuries since Muhammad’s death. Today, their killing of each other occurs frequently and is reported in the news simply as “sectarian violence” between various Muslim groups. However, it represents the deep hatred of the Shias and the Sunnis against each other.

3. The kingdom, though, as a whole still will be very powerful since it retains iron from the ancient 4th kingdom (41b).

4. Some of the statue’s toes were made of iron and others of clay, seemingly meaning that some countries or peoples will be strong militarily while others are made of clay and will be relatively weak militarily and easier to defeat.

5. The 10 toes of iron and clay will constitute one final kingdom although they “*will not adhere to one another”*,43b. The meaning is in spite of the fact that these groups compose one empire, they will never truly become united into one people because of their mutual animosity and hatred and thus will maintain separate cultures, separate ethnic identities, and religious differences.

In summary, shortly before the 2nd coming of Christ, 10 kingdoms (kings or nations) of unequal strength will rise up out of the peoples and lands of the former ancient Roman Empire (European Paradigm) and unite together to form a coalition of nations that will battle the Lord at his 2nd coming. In Daniel 7 the prophet indicates that from this 10-nation coalition will come the evil world leader of the last days known as the antichrist. Since Rome is a part of Europe it is reasonable to assume that if this European Paradigm is correct, this area of the world will play a leading role in this future 10-nation confederation and its battle with the Lord at Armageddon.

NOTE: The European paradigm presented here that argues that the antichrist (whether pagan Rome, the pope [Reformers], or someone from the European Union, e.g., Nicholae Carpathia, fictional president of Romania [Tim LaHaye, “Left Behind” Series]), his kingdom (armies of European Union), and his religion (Roman Catholicism or ?) come out of Europe faces strong opposition from those who argue from multiple scriptures for a Mid-East antichrist, Mid-East kingdom (armies), and Mid-East religion.

**44-45:** 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.*45: *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. “The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”*

**KEY: Daniel now reaches the climax of the dream revelation, i.e., the coming kingdom of God symbolized by the great rock crushing the feet and toes of the dream image.**

1. The kingdom will be of divine origin. God himself (“*the God of Heaven*”) will establish it. V 45 (and v 34) together emphasize the supernatural origin of the kingdom (“*the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands*”).

2. It is revealed that this kingdom will be established “*in the time of those kings*.” “*The time of those kings*” refers to either the 4 kings of v 34-35 or it can refer to 10 kings of 41-45. In v 34-35, the context refers to 4 kings that are destroyed by the “*stone cut out without hands*”. However, from v 41-44, the number of kingdoms destroyed is inferred to increase to a total of 10 with the first 4 kings being included in the total. So, in v 34-35, the context refers to only 4 kingdoms destroyed by “*the stone cut out without hands”* but when we come to v 41-44, the number of kings that will be destroyed has expanded to 10 which includes the previous 4.

NOTE: The European paradigm maintains that the ancient Roman Empire is the 4th kingdom and that it conquered all 3 of the previous kingdoms, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece, v 40 (cf. 7:7). However, this view has been challenged on several fronts including the fact that the Roman Empire NEVER conquered the land mass of the Medo-Persian or Greek Empires (see map). Rome only conquered ~ 1/3 of the land mass of the Medo-Persian Empire (and even less of the land mass of the Greek Empire) and the eastern edge of its Empire only reached unto the western bank of the Euphrates River and it never conquered the capitals of the Medo-Persian Empire. It was primarily a European Empire that reached into a small portion of the Middle East.

We have to consider that this was Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of 4 successive empires that would replace his own BABYLONIAN Mid-East Empire. A European Empire does not make any sense in the context in light of what Nebuchadnezzar’s dream requires.

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream requires a 4th beast empire that would have replaced his own and conquered the COMBINED territories of the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek Empires (2:40, 34-35; Rev 13:1-2). Rome never did that (see map). It was never considered a Mid-East Empire as the context requires.

Ultimately, in the European paradigm, the meaning of the rock striking the statue on its feet and toes requires the destruction of the entire 10-nation coalition comprised of nations supposedly coming out of the non-European portion of the ancient Roman Empire. This actually increases the pressure against Rome as the 4th kingdom since all the nations comprising the 10-nation coalition are identified biblically as Mid-Eastern and Rome did not conquer them. So, Rome could not be the head of a composite Mid-Eastern 10-nation coalition that is destroyed by “*the rock cut out without hands.*”

3. The kingdom will be eternal. “*It will never be destroyed nor will it be left to another people”. “Left to another people*” refers to the fact that when each of the previous kingdoms is destroyed (conquered and taken over militarily and politically by the next kingdom), its peoples, culture, language and religion generally remained intact and was left over to be incorporated into the conquering kingdom, i.e., “left to another people.” (The idea is akin to leftovers from a meal that are not discarded but are carried over into the next day). In other words, the conquering nation would allow the conquered peoples generally to continue their language, religion, and cultural traditions. However, in the Lord’s eternal kingdom this will not happen because it will never be conquered and taken over by another kingdom. It will never be “*left to another people.”*

4. The kingdom is best understood to be the earthly reign of Christ inaugurated at his 2nd coming (Walvoord, Archer, Wood, Whitcomb, Richardson). Some scholars (Leupold, Young) interpret this kingdom as Christ’s invisible spiritual reign in the hearts of believers established at his first advent and evident in the present church; and, we are in the kingdom now (amillennialism). Rushdoony (a postmillennial scholar) has a similar view but is more optimistic. He argues that the present kingdom of the church will become stronger and have a greater positive spiritual influence in the world. It eventually will overcome evil and bring in a golden age upon the earth with Christ returning at the end. However, it is best to accept the premillennial view of the kingdom with an earthly, future 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth for the following reasons:

a. In the context, v 44 is quite naturally understood to refer to Christ’s 2nd coming to the earth.

b. The 4 kingdoms of the statue were all earthly and physical in nature and Christ’s kingdom in context will be a continuation of the same type of kingdom, i.e., earthly and physical like the others. Christ’s kingdom replaces the first four in the dream and is, in the idea of the dream, spatially bound to earth just like its predecessors. The mountain fills the whole earth and is not simply a spiritual kingdom.

(Some try to defend the idea that the kingdom has already come [at Christ’s first coming] by saying that the kingdom is mystical and spiritual and in the heart of every believer. They base this on Christ’s statement in Luke 17:20-21, “*For the kingdom of God is within you”* (KJV). A closer look, though, at the passage reveals that Christ was not saying this. “*Within you*” is a poor translation, and the words are better translated as “among you,” or as the NASB puts it, “*the kingdom of God is in your midst.*” By saying this, Christ was not referring to the inner spiritual realm of the disciples (saying the kingdom of God was in their hearts) but to himself. He was in the midst of them at that time and the kingdom was immediately available through him to Israel if they would repent and believe in him. This is made clear by the verses that follow in which he predicts the time is coming when he will not be with them.)

c. The text says a coalition of 10 kingdoms (nations, kings, “horns”) will be ruling at the time Christ sets up his kingdom (see Rev 11:15-18). No such coalition of kingdoms was ruling the Roman Empire at Christ’s first advent. Thus, it cannot be a spiritual kingdom that began at the time of his 1st coming but it is a reference to his 2nd coming when this 10-nation cooalition will be in existence and be conquered by him.

d. The “*rock*” destroys the earthly kingdoms. Christ did not destroy the world’s kingdoms at his first coming but will put an end to them at his 2nd coming. The text requires a sudden and simultaneous destruction of all 4 kingdoms but this did not happen at his 1st coming. E.g., the western Roman Empire continued until 476 AD and the eastern Roman Empire continued until 1453. This destruction is very similar to that found in other scriptures (e.g., Gen 3:15; Is 63:1-3; Hab 3:3-19; Deut 33:2-3; Micah 5:1-5; Ps 110; Ps 2; Mat 24:29-31; Rev 6:12-17; 19:11-21) that portray Christ’s coming in catastrophic terms. The gracious, “gentle victory of the gospel which makes its gracious influence felt and conquers” men’s souls (Leupold), has been a reality in the experience of the church up until now but does not occur here. Christ comes in wrath against his enemies.

e. Revelation 2:26-27 tell us that when Christ returns, he will rule the world with a “rod of iron” and the extent of his rule is pictured as filling the earth (Dan 2:35). When one looks at the crime, atrocities, terrorism, abortion, riots, murders, persecution and many other injustices, it is difficult to think that the kingdom of God has filled the earth and Christ is ruling now with a rod of iron. All persons have not entered Christ’s kingdom, nor do they submit to his authority (the vast majority do not). Yet when Christ returns, all will acknowledge him as Lord (Phil 2:10-11). So, this can’t be the so-called spiritual kingdom of God ruling in our hearts. See Is 11:6-9.

f. The vast majority of commentators agree that the dream statue of chapter 2 parallels the beast vision of chapter 7. Scholars generally have interpreted the coming of the kingdom of God during the time of the 10 horns in Daniel 7 to denote the 2nd coming of Christ to overcome his enemies, destroy the antichrist, and establish his kingdom. Since the latter part of the beast vision (i.e., the ten horns in chapter 7) corresponds to the latter part of the statue vision (i.e., the ten toes in chapter 2), it is logical to understand that the rock (in chapter 2) destroying the feet and toes of the statue represents Christ crushing and destroying his enemies and establishing the kingdom of God on earth at the time of his 2nd coming.

5. Christ’s coming is really a triumphant occasion. V 44 reveals that the kingdom “*will crush*” (*deqaq*, “shatter”, “break in pieces”) all earthly kingdoms, and in v 45 the rock “*broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces*”, i.e., the world’s kingdoms represented by the statue are annihilated. In other words, when Christ arrives with his holy angels, all the evil empires of the earth will be swept away and the Lord will rule in holiness on the earth.

6. Christ’s kingdom will certainly come. In the latter part of v 45, Daniel concludes the interpretation of his dream revelation by telling Nebuchadnezzar that “*the great God has shown the king what will take place in the future”* and emphasizes the certainty of the revelation (“*the dream is true [yassib, certain, certain to occur] and the interpretation is trustworthy [aman].”* As Montgomery observes, Daniel was claiming to give “God’s interpretation, not his own,” and God’s word can be trusted. KEY: The prophecies of Daniel concerning past events (i.e., the four empires) have been accurately fulfilled, and his Holy Spirit inspired messages concerning future events will just as assuredly occur.

7. As previously indicated, this kingdom of God will be ruled by none other than God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was despised and rejected, yet someday every knee will bow before him and every tongue will confess that he is Lord.

NOTE: This is a very comforting passage of Scripture. In our world filled with crime, injustice, war, and many other problems it is reassuring to know that Christ is coming; and when he comes, all the evils of the age will end. There is indeed a day coming when “*the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters covers the sea*” (Hab 2:14), for Jesus’ reign of righteousness will extend to the ends of the earth.

**46-48: Conclusion to Nebuchadnezzar’s dream vision (self-explained)**

46: *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.*