**The Dream of World Powers**

**Daniel 2:31-49**

**Introduction**

The study of future events is intriguing to many people. The prophecy section at the local Christian bookstore has several books. Online resources seem almost endless. People want to know what is going to happen in the end. Only God’s Word is authoritative on the subject. We must bear in mind that God’s revelation of end time events is not to satisfy our curiosity; rather, it is to provide hope and to equip believers for godly living regardless of their circumstances. In Daniel 2, Daniel explains Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and its interpretation. Much of the prophecy has been fulfilled. We can be encouraged by knowing what is to come. It clearly demonstrates that God is sovereignly in control and why we should live for His kingdom.

1. **Daniel first told King Nebuchadnezzar the dream. (v. 31-35)**
   1. The king dreamed of an impressive statue. It had to be large in his dream; he built a 90-foot-tall statue in chapter 3. It had an amazing brightness. As it stood before Nebuchadnezzar, it was intimidating and caused alarm.
   2. The parts of the statue consisted of varying metals: The statue’s head was made of gold; the chest and arms of silver; the belly and thighs of brass; the legs of iron; the feet were cast as part iron and part clay.
   3. Take note of these initial observations regarding the statue. It is distinct in its various parts and yet connected. The value of the metals *decreased* as additional metals were introduced. (gold to clay) The strength of the metals *increased* as the additional metals were introduced. (gold to iron) It is, however, built on a feeble foundation. Iron does not mix with clay. Notice also that all the materials were present until it was finally destroyed.
   4. A stone was cut out of a mountain without the effort of human hands. (v. 34-35) It was hurled at the image, smiting the feet. Upon impact, the entire image collapsed, and the parts were no longer recognizable. The new kingdom did not build on the old. It established something brand new. The stone immediately became a great mountain that filled the whole earth!
2. **Daniel proceeded to give the interpretation. (v. 36-45)**
   1. The various materials represent world powers. It is helpful to note that Daniel’s vision in chapter 7 communicates the same prophecy using the images of animals. The four beasts represent four kingdoms that exist until Christ returns.
   2. Liberal scholars hold to a late date for the writing of the book of Daniel because the details are too precise. However, we serve the God who can reveal the future as though it were history!
   3. The head of gold represents the Babylonian kingdom under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar. (v. 37-38)
3. His kingdom extended from Israel across the Fertile Crescent and north into a portion of modern-day Turkey.
4. His kingdom was impressive, but it did not last (636 to 539 BC).
   1. His kingdom was overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire, represented in the dream as the chest and arms of silver. (v. 39)
5. The Bible and secular history make clear that the Medo-Persia Empire succeeded the Babylonian Empire and that they were a united kingdom. (2 Chronicles 36:20-23; Daniel 5:31; 6:8; 8:20)
6. In Daniel’s vision in chapter 8, the Medo-Persian Empire is represented as a ram. One horn was more prominent than the other to illustrate that Persia would be the more dominate of the two. (8:3)
7. The empire covered an immense amount of territory, stretching from northern Africa to China and India on the east.
8. This kingdom was impressive, but it didn’t last (539-330 BC).
   1. The third kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is represented by the belly and thighs of brass, because of its speed in conquering the world. (v. 39)
9. The Greek Empire under the youthful leadership of Alexander the Great marched against the Medo-Persian Empire in 332 BC and defeated it in a series of battles.
10. It spread quickly under his aggressive leadership style. He is said to have led his Greek armies across the entire Medo-Persian empire in 12 years.
11. The Grecian king and his kingdom are specifically named in Daniel 8:21 as the goat that comes swiftly and with great strength to overthrow the power of the ram. (8:5-8)
12. The Greek Empire was impressive, but it did not last (330-146 BC).
    1. The next kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was represented as legs of iron. (v. 40)
13. The material (iron) speaks of dominance and power. This kingdom comes with force and breaks in pieces other kingdoms subduing their regions.
14. This represents the Roman Empire. It began to dominate the world in the defeat of Carthage in 146 BC. Augustus Caesar extended his rule over 3.5 million square miles. At its zenith, Rome covered most of England, South Europe, North Africa, the area around the Black Sea, and most of ancient Babylon to the Indian Ocean. (Combs)
15. The Roman Empire was eventually represented by two capitals: Rome in the west and Byzantium to the east (later named Constantinople in honor of the Emperor Constantine). This fits well with the two legs of the statue in the king’s dream.
16. The Roman Empire is specifically mentioned in regard to the mingling with the people of the lands they conquered. (v. 43) They were simply absorbed into the new culture that ruled. This proved to be a source of weakness in Rome. “Iron represents strength, but clay represents weakness. Rome was strong in law, organization, and military might; but the empire included so many different peoples that this created weakness.” (Wiersbe). The presence of these peoples and influence of Rome continues today.
17. Significant nations emerged from the Roman or Western Civilization. In his commentary on Daniel, James Combs noted that the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, German, Russian, Italian, and British cultures could all trace their roots back to the Roman Empire. Yes, that includes the United States of America.
18. The Roman Empire was impressive, but it didn’t last!
    1. There is a final part of this kingdom that is yet to be fulfilled. (v. 41-43) The feet and ten toes are mentioned for a distinct purpose. It corresponds to the coming kingdom of the Antichrist. We will learn more in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 as it corresponds to the coming ten horns (kings). This kingdom is strong and weak at the same time (iron and clay).
    2. It is in the days of these kings that Christ’s kingdom will come. (2:44)
19. Christ is referred to as a stone in both testaments. (Psalm 118:22; 1 Peter 2:4-8).
20. Just as the previous kingdoms, Christ’s kingdom is literal.
21. Unlike the other kingdoms, His kingdom is established immediately and has no end!!
22. This passage teaches a premillennial second coming of Christ. He will overthrow the kingdoms of this world and establish His Kingdom. He will not build on what they have established. He will establish something entirely new.
23. **Central Idea: Nebuchadnezzar’s dream demonstrates that we should live for God’s kingdom because the kingdoms of man may be impressive, but they are only temporary.**
24. **Application** 
    1. Regardless of circumstances, God is supremely in control. We have been reminded how vulnerable we are. In recent history, we have experienced terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and a global health crisis. None of these alter God’s plan. He is in charge!
    2. Mankind is not improving. Things will not improve as time passes. Our only hope is in the Lord.
    3. Do not become enamored with worldly power. It is temporary at best.
    4. Seek ye first the kingdom that will last. While the world promises you gold, it leaves you with dust. Our King takes you from dust and brings you to gold. While the world takes you from strength to weakness, our King takes you from weakness to strength.

**Conclusion**

“If God does not control our lives–from the actions of kings and others in positions of power to the most minute circumstances–then everything in life is uncertain. We are victims of circumstances, and whatever happens will happen. Que sera, sera! But if God is sovereign, as the Bible declares Him to be, and if He is our God–if the promises He makes and the actions He takes are certain of fulfillment–then we can be confident of the future and know that we will be able to live our lives in a way that will please God.” (J. M. Boice)