



The Book of Daniel

Chapter Two

Chapter one of Daniel sets the context for this book and gives us a glimpse into Daniel's character. Chapter two takes us right into the strong meat of prophecy and illustrates God's providence.

2:1-3 – The King has a dream

“And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.”

Reconciling Timelines

In Chapter one of Daniel, we read that he was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and put through three years of education, after which he was presented to the king and went into his personal service. At the beginning of Chapter two, we read that the events we are about to study occurred during the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign and at the end of the chapter, Daniel is elevated to a high position over the wise men. Is there a conflict in these timelines? How could Daniel be chief of the wise men and still be completing his education? The answer lies in understanding how the Babylonians reckoned the reign of a monarch.

Timeframe	Events
May – Jun. 605 B.C.	Babylonian victory over Egyptians at Carchemish
Jun. – Aug. 605 B.C.	Fall of Jerusalem and Daniel taken captive
Sep. 7, 605 B.C.	Nebuchadnezzar made king after the death of his father Daniel's training begins
Sep. 7, 605 - Nisan (Mar. – Apr.) 604	Year of ascension for Nebuchadnezzar 1st year of Daniel's training
Nisan 604 - Nisan 603 B.C.	1st year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign 2nd year of Daniel's training
Nisan 603 - Nisan 602 B.C.	2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign 3rd year of Daniel's training

In the table above, we see that the first part of Nebuchadnezzar's reign was a year of ascension and was not counted as the first year of his reign. This is because the year of the king's reign was reckoned from the beginning of the year, the month of Nisan on the Jewish calendar. Also, keep in mind that the dreams occurred in Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd year and the story we read in Chapter two may have taken several weeks or months to completely play out.

The Wise Men of Babylon

What drove Nebuchadnezzar to the point of calling his wise men to interpret his dream(s)?

The dream troubled Nebuchadnezzar to the point that he couldn't even get a good night's sleep.

The term “wise men” used throughout Daniel is usually a collective reference to the different categories of advisors that the king used. Four of these categories are specifically mentioned in verse 2.

Magicians – the Hebrew root word here means “stylus” or “pen”. It most likely referred to **scholars**.

Astrologers – those who spoke to the **dead** and practiced **enchantment**

Sorcerers – those who spoke to **idol gods** through chanting and prayers, and practiced magic

Chaldeans – a reference to the nation of people from Southern Babylon that had conquered the Assyrians. They were deeply into the use of astrology as a means of predicting the future.

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2:4-13 – The King's command

"Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, [there is but] one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof. The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore [there is] no king, lord, nor ruler, [that] asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And [it is] a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise [men] of Babylon. And the decree went forth that the wise [men] should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain".

Syriak – **Aramaic**, a language similar to Hebrew that was the official trade language of the Babylonian court.

* Note: from this point through Daniel 7:28, the text is written in the language of Aramaic

What was the king's requirement of the wise men? What promises did he make to them based on their ability to reveal and interpret the dream?

That they both reveal to him the dream that he dreamed and its interpretation. If they successfully revealed the dream, he would give them high position and great riches in Babylon. If they did not, he would have them all killed and their homes and families reduced to a pile of rubbish.

What was the wise men's plan to get around the king's command?

They kept trying to convince the king to tell them his dream so that they could buy time and come up with a false interpretation that might sooth his conscience and spare their lives.

Did the king really trust the wise men and believe in their abilities?

Apparently, he did not have a lot of faith in them because he used this situation as a test of their true abilities. As they themselves said, it was not within the capability of men to reveal the dream. That capability lie only with God.

What was the king's response to the inability of the wise men to reveal both the dream and its interpretation. He declared that all of the wise men of Babylon should be rounded up and killed. This was probably going to be a public execution in front of the people of Babylon, which is why Daniel and friends were not killed on the spot and were allowed additional time to interpret the dream.

Why weren't Daniel and his friends present at this meeting with the king?

It is likely that the king only called the heads of each category of wise men to interpret the dream and that there were many under them in their service that were not present. This would have included Daniel and his friends prior to their exaltation to positions of power.

In which category of wise men was Daniel and his friends included? (See also Dan. 1:20, 4:9, and Matt 2:1)

As the meaning of "magicians" is probably scholars, it is likely that Daniel and his friends were numbered among the magicians / scholars of Babylon. Keep in mind that the Babylonians would have viewed their faith in their God to be equivalent to that of many other exiles they had taken from captive lands. Daniel was later considered the chief of the magicians and in Matthew 2:1, the wise men from the east were magi, a.k.a. magicians of the sort that Daniel came from. They were likely aware of the prophecy of the Christ because Daniel instilled that teaching in their doctrine and it was past down over five centuries so that they recognized the meaning of the star shining over Bethlehem and came to worship the King of Kings.

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2:14-23 – Daniel's seeks God's help

"Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise [men] of Babylon: He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why [is] the decree [so] hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise [men] of Babylon. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said,

Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what [is] in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast [now] made known unto us the king's matter."

This portion of text contains both a narrative of the events that occurred and Daniel's prayer to God once the Lord had answered his prayers.

How was Daniel's response to the king's command wiser than the response of the other advisors?

He didn't try to trick the king into revealing his dream. That would be immoral and the king was not likely to fall for that. Neither did Daniel try to escape the consequence through other means. He attempted to tackle the problem head on and find out why the king was doing this.

Once Daniel had obtained more time from the king, how did he respond to the situation?

Daniel called his friends together to have a prayer meeting. They knew the situation was beyond them but not beyond the capability of God. They simply sought Him out and asked for His help to know both the dream and the interpretation. They were depending upon Him to do something miraculous.

How did God respond to Daniel? Did God ever use this method with Daniel again? (See Dan. 7:1)

God used a vision in the night to respond to Daniel. This would not be the last time that the Lord would use this method to speak to Daniel.

Did Daniel first share the vision with the king or offer up thanksgiving to God? What do we learn from this?

Daniel's immediate response to God was not to go and share the vision and save his head. His immediate response was to stop and honor God for His amazing goodness. In our life, praise should have priority.

How would you summarize Daniel's prayer to God after he received the vision?

God is sovereign over all things. He is in control of world events. He is the one who provides knowledge and wisdom to man. We are simply vessels that are only full at His filling. We are nothing and He is all in all. He is merciful and loving to those that are faithful to Him.

2:24-35 – The Revelation of the Dream

"Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation. Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation. The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. But as for me, this

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secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart. Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet [that were] of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.,”

Before going into the interpretation of this dream, let's make sure we understand what Nebuchadnezzar saw in the vision. The image to the right is an example of what the statue may have looked like.

To whom did Daniel attribute the power to reveal and interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

Daniel made it clear that his ability to reveal and interpret the dream was not from any special wisdom he had above other men, but that it was from the Lord God.

Daniel told the king that the form of the image was terrible. What does this mean?

The word terrible means formidable, dreadful, causing fear. This was probably why Nebuchadnezzar couldn't sleep.

How does the appearance and origin of the stone differ from the rest of the statue?

The stone was not made with the hands of men, unlike the statue, which was obviously a manmade object. It also wasn't made of the "fine" metals of which the statue was made.

Examining the Statue as a whole

The statue from Nebuchadnezzar's dream has some interesting qualities. First, it is a top-heavy statue. That is, the materials at the top of the statue have a higher density than the materials at the bottom.

That makes the materials that are higher on the statue heavier proportionally. However, the materials at the top of the statue are not nearly as strong as those at the bottom of the statue, with the exception of the clay mixed with iron at the feet. Additionally, the value of the material decreases as it goes down the statue.

Where was the weakness of the statue?

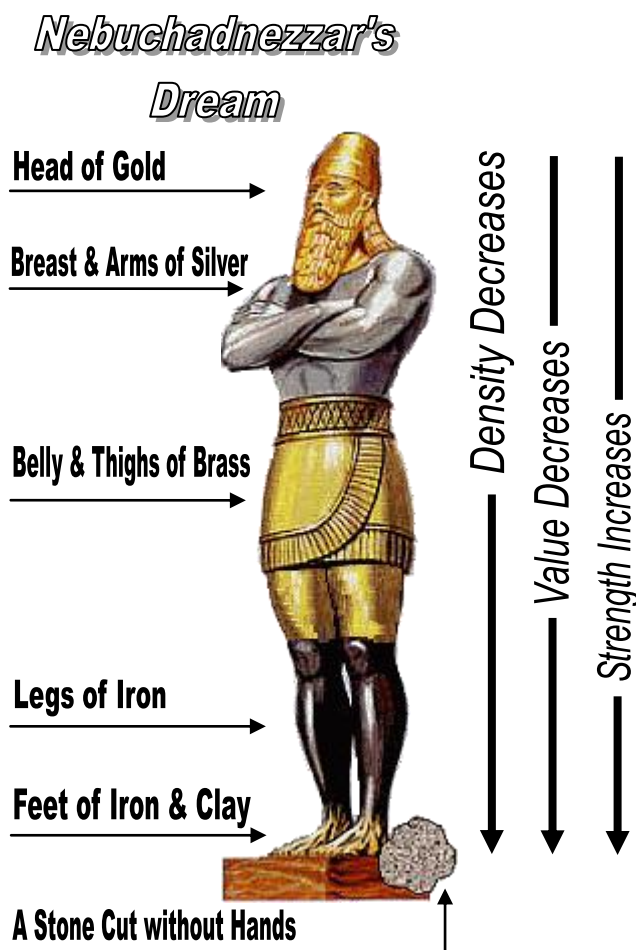
The feet were the weak part because they were made of a combination of iron and clay. These two materials do not mix and therefore cannot truly add their positive qualities to each other. Additionally, the clay is very weak and cannot support the statue.

How was the statue destroyed?

The stone struck the weak part of the statue and brought the whole thing tumbling down.

What became of the stone that destroyed the statue?

The stone became a mountain and filled the entire earth.



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2:36-38 - The Interpretation: First Kingdom (Gold)

"This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold."

What did the head of gold represent?

The kingdom of Babylon.

In The Time of the End, Jay Adams and Milton Fisher say, "Gold is an appropriate metal by which to represent Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar's lavish building program included much gold. Every school child knows about the famous hanging gardens of Babylon, but the city had many other remarkable features as well.

Nebuchadnezzar himself once said (the inscription has been recovered) that nothing was too precious to

be bestowed upon his great Babylon. Aeschylus, 5th century BC Greek dramatist, spoke of Babylon as 'teeming with gold'. And the historian Herodotus tells us that on top of the ziggurat (gigantic tower built in tiers, like the layers of a huge wedding cake) was a small shrine with a solid gold table inside. Below was a temple, with a golden image of Babylon's patron god, Marduk, seated upon a throne of gold upon a golden base, with a gold table in front of that. And outside the temple was an altar of solid gold."¹

Looking at Biblical references to Babylon, we will see Nebuchadnezzar build a golden image for men to worship in Chapter Three. We also see Jeremiah refer to Babylon as a "golden cup in the LORD's hand" (Jeremiah 51:7) and Isaiah called Babylon "the golden city" (Isaiah 14:4).

To whom did Daniel attribute Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, power, strength, and glory? (see Jeremiah 27:5-8) **He made it clear that God was the one who gave them to Nebuchadnezzar. In Jeremiah, we see that God not only delivered the nations into his hand, but also punished those that resisted Babylon.**

In the Jamieson- Faucett-Brown commentary we read, "The committal of power in fullest plenitude belongs to Nebuchadnezzar personally, as having made Babylon the mighty empire it was. In twenty-three years after him the empire was ended: with him its greatness is identified (Daniel 4:30), his successors having done nothing notable. Not that he actually ruled every part of the globe, but that God granted him illimitable dominion *in whatever direction his ambition led him*, Egypt, Nineveh, Arabia, Syria, Tyre, and its Phœnician colonies"²

As we continue to look at the other parts of the statue, we will begin to compare them with each other to understand the reason for the different types of metal used in the vision of the statue. Note the expanse of the Babylonian empire in the map above. What type of government did Babylonia have?



Figure 1: Babylonian Empire

¹ The Time of the End – Jay E. Adams & Milton C. Fisher, Timeless Texts, © 2000 (pp. 15-16)

² Jamieson-Faucett-Brown Commentary – Daniel 2:38

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The Babylonian empire was a pure monarchy. The word of the king was absolute law. There was no power greater than him other than God Himself. He was not subject to any restrictions.

2:39 – The Interpretation: Second & Third Kingdoms (Silver & Bronze)

“And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.”

The Second Kingdom

Very brief mention is made of the two kingdoms that follow the Babylonian empire. According to the statue, the next empire is represented by the silver chest and arms of the statue. What was this kingdom?

The Medo-Persian Empire

Silver was appropriate to use as a representation of the Medo-Persian empire. Their currency, the daric (named after King Darius I), was silver and the Medo-Persian empire was renowned for their amazing wealth. In fact, we read in Daniel 11:2 that the sheer wealth of the Medo-Persians stirred up the Grecians to wage war against and conquer the Medo-Persian empire. The Medo-Persian empire was made up of an alliance between the Medes and the Persians. The Persians eventually became dominant in this alliance, which is symbolized in Daniel 7 by the bear raised up on one side.



Figure 2: Medo-Persian Empire

The Third Kingdom

The next part of the statue are the belly and thighs of brass. What kingdom did this represent?

The Greek Empire

Like the previous two empires, brass is a fitting symbol for the Greek Empire. Alexander the Great was the military leader of this empire as it expanded its borders. His army was arguably the most successful military power in human history. In his Antiquities, Josephus calls Alexander, “a king from the west, clad in bronze”. Elsewhere, Josephus refers to the Greek armies as ‘men of bronze’, coming from the sea. The bronze used to represent Greece in Nebuchadnezzar’s statue was prophetic of the armor that would identify Alexander’s armies. One might note that in the Greek Empire, for the first time, there were both an eastern and a western part of the kingdom. The western portion was that



Figure 3: Greek Empire

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part of Europe currently known as Greece. This may be represented by the two thighs (one for East and one for West) that were part of the bronze portion of the statue.

Comparing & Contrasting the Kingdoms

How did the Medo-Persian empire compare to the Babylonian empire in terms of size?

The Medo-Persian empire was much larger than the Babylonian empire at the height of its glory.

How did the Greek empire compare with the Medo-Persian empire in terms of size?

The Greek empire was larger than the Medo-Persian empire.

How do these facts correspond to the statue from Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

On the statue, we see that silver is not as dense as gold but it is a stronger metal. We also see that bronze is not as dense as silver but is a stronger metal. We should expect to see each kingdom become progressively stronger / larger.

If the Medo-Persian empire was larger and wealthier than Babylon, how was it "inferior" to Babylon? See Daniel 6:6-15 for an example.

The Medo-Persian government did not have as strong of a central government as the Babylonian empire. We are trained to think of a democracy as being the greatest form of government. However, in reality it can be an inefficient and easily corrupted form of government. It is difficult to convince the people to make decisions that adversely affect them for the good of the whole. According to the Jamieson, Faucet, Brown commentary, "Politically (which is the main point of view here) the power of the central government in which the nobles shared with the king, being weakened by the growing independence of the provinces, was inferior to that of Nebuchadnezzar, whose sole word was law throughout his empire." We see an example of this in Daniel 6:6-15. Would Nebuchadnezzar have had the problem that King Darius faced?

How would the Greek empire be considered "inferior" to the Medo-Persian empire?

We will find later that at the death of Alexander, the kingdom was split between his four most trusted generals. From that time forward, there were struggles between each portion of the Greek empire and it did not have a coherent unity. There was no clear kingship reigning over the empire. Overall, though it was stronger, it was much less stable than the Medo-Persian empire.

2:40-43 – The Interpretation: Fourth Kingdom (Iron & Clay)

"And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all [things]: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And [as] the toes of the feet [were] part of iron, and part of clay, [so] the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay."

What kingdom is represented by the legs of iron and the feet / toes of iron and clay?

The Roman empire

The reason for using iron as the symbol for the Roman empire is largely revealed in the above passage. It is because of its great strength. The Roman army was very effective at conquering and subduing the lands with which they made war. The Roman empire was larger than those

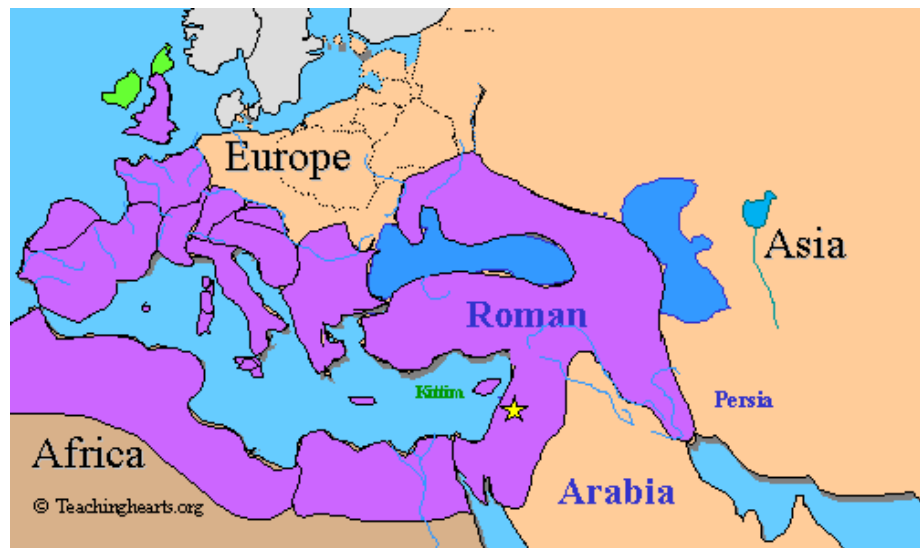


Figure 4: Roman Empire

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preceding it in Nebuchadnezzar's statue and it consisted of a significant western and eastern portion as it conquered most of Europe. Remember that there are two legs and this is represented by both portions of the empire. According to Adams and Fisher³, one of the distinctive weapons of the Roman army was the iron-headed pilum, which was a kind of javelin. This may also tie into the symbolism of iron.

Mixing Iron and Clay

This passage specifically mentions that the mixing of iron and clay comes from mingling the Roman Empire (iron) with the seed of men (clay). What does it mean to mingle "with the seed of men"? In order to maintain consistency with this passage, we must consider the contextual harmony of this passage.

What made the quality of the material degrade as we move from the head of gold to the feet of iron and clay?

The material degraded as the authority and power of the ruling entity (king, dictator, general...) degraded.

The leaders of each successive empire had less authority and stability than the previous empires.

How was the Roman government divided?

The Roman empire consisted of several provinces that were added piece-meal as different areas were conquered. They made the attempt to "Romanize" each province by setting up their own leaders, constructing a empire-wide road system, unifying their currency, and enforcing the integration of Roman ideas and beliefs. However, each province retained its own character and there were frequent uprisings against Roman authority (like the Jews in the Judean province).

It is important to notice that the "purity" and strength of the fourth kingdom declined over time. The legs, from the knees down were made of iron until we get to the feet and the toes. It is at this point, that they become a mixture of iron and clay. So it was with the Roman empire. It began as a strong, conquering force but became weaker as time progressed and the iron was mingled, "with the seed of men."

There are a diversity of opinions on the interpretation of "the seed of men". How will we determine whether our interpretation is correct? We should look for the following characteristics:

1. A change in Roman culture or politics
2. A gradual degradation of Roman power
3. A division within the Roman empire: parts would be strong (iron) and parts would be weak (clay)

The following excerpt was taken from *Ancient Rome* by Robert Payne⁴, "Rome had Romanized the world, yet it had lost much of its old identity as non-Romans swarmed in to dilute it. The capital had become the greatest melting pot of antiquity, peopled with swarthy Arabs and Syrians, olive-skinned Berbers, fair-haired Gauls, bearded Dacians from beyond the Danube, and long-haired Scythians from remote regions of southern Russia who congregated in the streets, where the emperor – an Arab like Philip or an Illyrian like his successor Decius – passed in state. Greek merchants were everywhere, and the tonsured priests of Isis, in their immaculate white robes, were seen along with Jewish followers of Christ. So many races crowded into Rome that one might have been hard put to find a Roman face in a given assembly.

As Rome became more mixed it also became more divided. Senators holding military commands sometimes sought the throne for themselves, in opposition to generals raised in the provinces. The imperial bureaucracy, increasingly militarized, became, like the armies themselves, increasingly composed of foreign elements." (Emphasis added)

Does the excerpt above explain how the Roman empire lost strength as it mingled with "the seed of men"?

Yes. This historical excerpt explains that the Roman empire became so vast and large that its ethnic strength and purity was watered down. The sheer number, but divided allegiance of its subjects made Rome partially strong but partially weak.

³ The Time of the End – Jay E. Adams & Milton C. Fisher, Timeless Texts, © 2000 (p. 16)

⁴ Ancient Rome – Robert Payne, American Heritage Press, New York, © 1970 (p. 270)

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What led to the eventual downfall of the Roman empire?

The Roman Empire was strong for a time. It was founded on geography, family values, military strength, and wise leadership. It flourished because of social, economic, political, military and religious strengths. The Roman Empire declined based upon the same factors that had caused it to flourish. It fell because the social, economic, political, military, and religious strengths were no longer viable. The Roman Empire came gradually and fell gradually. Uprisings within the oppressed tribes of the provinces waged war against the central government and eventually won independence. The Roman Empire crumbled piece by piece.

Up to this point, the interpretation of Daniel's vision was fairly straightforward and not largely controversial, except perhaps among non-believers. However, the remainder of this prophecy is often interpreted based upon one's convictions regarding the events surrounding the end of time.

2:44-45 – The Interpretation: Fifth Kingdom (Stone)

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, [but] it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream [is] certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.”

A Matter of Timing

The description of the fifth and final kingdom in this passage begins with the expression of an element of time. Specifically, “in the days of these kings”. “These kings” appears to be a clear reference to the Roman empire. During the time of the Roman Empire, a fifth kingdom would be established. There are two viewpoints on the fulfillment of this passage that we will look at: past and future. Before we can intelligently discuss this question, we must understand what prophecies this fifth kingdom must fulfill (verses 34 & 35) and their interpretation by Daniel (verse 44). We will then look at the past and future fulfillment viewpoints and see how they claim to meet the requirements of the passage.

Prophecy	Fulfillment
A stone was cut without hands	The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to other people
It struck the statue on its feet and crushed them. The remainder of the statue was crushed at the same time. The wind carried the remainder of the kingdoms away like chaff in the wind	(1) In the days of those kings... (2) It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms
The stone became a great mountain & filled the earth	This kingdom will endure forever

Argument for a Past Fulfillment

This viewpoint is called “past fulfillment” because it interprets this prophecy as being fulfilled in the past. The argument for a past fulfillment equates the church established by Christ during His ministry as the kingdom prophesied here in Daniel Chapter 2. We will consider the three parts of Daniel's prophecy from the table above individually.

A Stone Cut without Hands

What is the significance of the stone that destroyed the statue being cut without hands?

God Himself would establish this kingdom. It wouldn't be something built by men, but rather would be organized by Him, upon His principles, and it would remain under His guidance and reign. This is why the stone was not cut by the hands of men, but rather the hand of God.

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If Christ established the kingdom during His ministry, we would expect to see some statements that would make this evident. Look at the following passages and discuss how each one may relate to the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Luke 1:31-33 – **Jesus is God's Son and He will have a kingdom**

Luke 6:12-20 – **Jesus prayed in a mountain all night, came down and selected His 12 Apostles (the leaders of the early church) and then began the Sermon on the Mount with the statement, "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."**

Luke 17:20-21 – **Jesus indicates that the kingdom would not come with observation, but would come covertly (to human eyes). He then said that the kingdom of God was already among them.**

Striking the Statue

There are two parts to the fulfillment of this prophecy listed by Daniel. The first is that the stone would be cut "in the days of those kings", specifically during the time of the Roman Empire. Look at the passages below and determine whether the time of Jesus' ministry would fulfill this qualification.

Luke 2:1 – **Jesus was born during Roman rule**

John 19:15 – **He died under Roman rule**

The second part of this portion of the prophecy is that the kingdom would crush and put an end to the four kingdoms mentioned in Daniel's prophecy. There are two ways to look at this: a spiritual fulfillment or a literal fulfillment.

Spiritual Fulfillment

The statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was Satan derived and man-made. It began in Babylon, an ancient nation that existed from the early parts of Genesis and was the cradle of mankind (post-flood). Not only did the Babylonian empire spread its power over the globe, but also its false religion. It was the spread of false religion that truly endangered mankind, not the rule by the Babylonian government. Each successive empire grew in size and influence until the known world was filled with the idolatry of the Romans.

The kingdom established by Christ struck at the very core of the problem: the false religion spread throughout the empire. Within a few decades after the death of Christ, the gospel had reached much of the Roman empire and even Rome itself (Philippians 4:22). Thousands were being converted and churches were established everywhere. Christianity grew so fast and so strong that the Christians began to be persecuted by Rome under the reign of Caesar Nero. A form of Christianity was later adopted as the official religion of the empire under the reign of Constantine, but over time, this too became corrupt and true Christians were persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church.

The spiritual fulfillment viewpoint declares that the destruction of these empires was not so much physical destruction, as a spiritual destruction of their evil influence. There were many (in fact most) that rejected the truth of Christianity, yet the truth was propagated and men were given greater opportunity to hear the gospel and be saved. The idols of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome are discussed as items of history, but you would be hard pressed to find any who seriously practice those religions today. To the believer in a spiritual fulfillment of this prophecy, this would fulfill the prediction that the Kingdom of God would strike the statue at its base, grind the image up, "and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them."

Look at the following verses and discuss how they corroborate this viewpoint.

John 18:33-36 – **Jesus tells Pilate His kingdom is not of this world, therefore no fight**

Ephesians 6:12 – **Paul defines our battle as not flesh and blood but spiritual**

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Literal Fulfillment

There are some who believe that Christ's church was responsible for the physical downfall of the Roman empire. I personally have not seen a plausible explanation or a passage in Scripture that could be interpreted to demonstrate that Christ's Church Kingdom crushed the Roman or the previous four world empires. That doesn't mean the proof doesn't exist, just that I have not found it. However, there are passages in Scripture that address His future destruction of the world empires in harmony with the prophecy in Daniel. Both were written in future tense in the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 15:20-25 – Christ will reign until all enemies have been vanquished. Under this interpretation, the church kingdom was founded by Christ during His ministry and delivered to Him at His ascension. He will reign in His kingdom until all enemies are vanquished.

Revelation 19:11-15 – A prophecy about Christ coming to destroy the nations with a rod of iron

A future interpretation of this passage requires the following to be true:

1. There is still a remnant of the Roman Empire existing today as a divided empire
2. This remnant will exist until the return of Christ

We will discuss the plausibility of this in more detail within the section dealing with the future fulfillment viewpoint.

A Great Mountain filling the Earth

The last part of this prophecy discusses how the stone would become a great mountain and fill the earth. Daniel said that this kingdom would endure forever.

Matthew 16:18-19 – Jesus said that He would establish His church upon the rock of the relationship He has with His people. He also said that the gates of hell would not prevail against it (the church will endure). Finally, He said that He will give His church the keys to the kingdom, controlling the entrance to and the exit from its membership.

Matthew 28:18-20 – Jesus gives the Great Commission to His church kingdom and tells them to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Truly the gospel has spread since the ascension of Christ and it is available to more people now than ever before. This work must continue until Christ's return!

Argument for a Future Fulfillment

The future fulfillment position look to a future series of events that will complete Nebuchadnezzar's vision. Specifically, a heavenly kingdom, to be established at some point in the future, will come and bring literal destruction to the fourth empire, causing all the kingdoms of men to crumble with it. Like the previous section, we will consider each portion of Daniel's prophecy

A Stone Cut without Hands

Under the past fulfillment perspective, the stone cut without hands symbolized God Himself setting up a kingdom through the person of Jesus Christ. Does the future fulfillment perspective share this interpretation? Yes, they believe that Christ will establish the kingdom upon His return to earth.

How will this happen? The following passage regarding the return of Christ is interpreted by the future fulfillment position as offering further clarification of the prophecy of Christ's return. Write a brief synopsis of what happens in this passage? Does it appear to fulfill the requirements of Daniel 2:44?

Revelation 19:11-21 – Jesus returns with the host of heaven and wages war against the beast and the armies of evil. He triumphs and casts them into the lake of fire.

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Striking the Statue

Nebuchadnezzar's vision indicated a sudden and catastrophic end to the statue of gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay. Those who hold to the future fulfillment position regard the passage we just read in Revelation 19 as the realization of this prophecy. Review the passage again. Does this appear to fit the vision?

We do see Christ make a very sudden and catastrophic end to the evil kingdom of this world in Revelation 19. He comes to fight the beast, the false prophet, and the kings of this fourth empire. The battle ends as He casts the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire and kills the wicked arm with the sword of His mouth and beckoned the birds to come and feast upon their flesh.

As we mentioned earlier, the argument for the future fulfillment of this prophecy requires the continuation of the fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire, until the return of Christ to destroy the kingdoms of this world and implement the 5th kingdom. Obviously, the Roman Empire of history no longer exists in the same form that it took in the time of Christ. The Roman Empire broke apart piece by piece as the provinces of its vast region rebelled or were overtaken by warring tribes. Under these conditions, how could one argue that the fourth kingdom is a present reality?

As I studied this perspective, I ran across a few different theories on the perpetuation of the Roman Empire until the present day. We will now look at one of those theories. We may review another theory when we study the seventh chapter of Daniel. Before we begin, let's review Daniel 2:41-43.

Daniel 2:41-43 – “And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And [as] the toes of the feet [were] part of iron, and part of clay, [so] the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.”

This passage mentions that the fourth kingdom would be divided as it mingled with the seed of men. As we discussed earlier, the weakness of clay was likely the diversity of the Roman Empire as it expanded to incorporate men of almost every make and mold throughout the known world. This great diversity was unable to be controlled effectively through the centralized Roman government and eventually led to its division. Note that in this division of the fourth kingdom, the strength of iron would remain, but would be scattered throughout the clay. Could the fourth kingdom still exist today?

A Case for the Continuation of the Roman Empire: The Catholic Church

One of the theories for the perpetuation of the Roman Empire is that it continues to exist through the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church came into existence during the reign of the Emperor Constantine in Rome. He claimed to have a vision of a fiery cross in the sky one night and heard the words, “By this shalt thou conquer”. Inspired, he sought to create an allegiance between the Roman state and the willing Christian churches who desired to expand their power and influence through this evil union. The church-state alliance evolved into the Roman Catholic Church that we know today and it has perpetuated and thrived, despite the dissolution of the Roman Empire.

The following excerpt taken from Ancient Rome by Robert Payne⁵ offers some interesting insight on how the “iron” qualities of the Roman Empire may have continued in the Roman Catholic Church. “What happened was that the Church (Roman Catholic Church) had gradually acquired many qualities of the old (Roman) imperial order. The Roman genius for organization, along with the Roman sense of hierarchy, had given shape to the Church institutions. The Roman political imagination, which had once brought so many peoples into one orbit, had lent strength to the idea of a Church universal. Roman jurisprudence had become the basis of canon law. The Church, which had begun by being an enemy of Rome, became the chief stronghold and preserver of the ancient Roman traditions.”

⁵ Ancient Rome – Robert Payne, American Heritage Press, New York, © 1970 (p. 316)

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A Great Mountain filling the Earth

The latter portion of the vision speaks of a great mountain filling the earth, formed from the stone which struck the statue. The future fulfillment perspective interprets this as the millennial kingdom to be established and reigned over by Christ after the destruction of the fourth kingdom. Read the following passages and discuss their interpretation from the future fulfillment viewpoint.

Revelation 20:1-6 – Upon the victory of the beast, false prophet, and the fourth kingdom, Satan is bound for one thousand years. During this time, Christ reigns with His saints for the duration of the thousand years.

Zechariah 14:1-9 – This passage again describes a great battle in which the Lord destroys the leaders of the nations of this world and establishes His throne in Jerusalem. He is described as the king of all the earth (the mountain fills the earth).

2:46-49 – Nebuchadnezzar's Response

"Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth [it is], that your God [is] a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret. Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise [men] of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel [sat] in the gate of the king."

Does Nebuchadnezzar's response to Daniel's revelation and interpretation strike you as odd? Why?

His response is to bow and worship Daniel. In Scripture, we never see a godly individual or even an angel allowing someone to bow and worship them.

How can these things be reconciled if Daniel is truly a man of God?

Nebuchadnezzar's verbal response to Daniel makes his intention clear. He wasn't worshipping Daniel as a God. He was bowing himself to Daniel as a messenger of the God of gods and Lord of kings, whom he was truly reverencing. Nebuchadnezzar's reverence for Daniel was founded upon his reverence for God.

In Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation, John F. Walvoord says⁶, "An interesting parallel is found in Josephus, recording the instance where Alexander the Great bowed before the high priest of the Jews. When Parmenion, one of his generals, asked him why, when ordinarily all men would prostrate themselves before Alexander the Great, he had prostrated himself before the high priest of the Jews, Alexander replied, 'It was not before him that I prostrated myself, but the God of whom he has the honor to be high priest.'"

What does Daniel's request that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be promoted imply about his character?

Daniel was a true friend and didn't get carried away with his new found import. He realized that the petitions of his friends were lifted to God, along with his. God heard them all, but used Daniel as the chosen vessel to come before the king. Daniel was a man of excellent character and sought a similar reward for his friends.

Daniel's position in the gate of the king was a very powerful position. This implied that he was involved in every matter that came before the king and was a chief advisor to him in all of his affairs.

Items for Discussion:

How has our first glance at Biblical prophecy affected your world view?

⁶ Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation – John F. Walvoord, Moody Press, Chicago, © 1971 (p. 77)