

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Rise and Fall of the World, Part 1

Scripture: Daniel 2:31-40

Code: 27-07

Boy, I can tell that your hearts are blessed and warm tonight by the fellowship we've already shared and enjoyed. So long as I come to Grace Church Sunday after Sunday, in fact day after day after day, I come to study. Years go by and I never ever grow weary or close to that of the tremendous joy of the blessing of fellowship with God's people, praising Him and studying His word.

Especially am I rejoicing in our study tonight - turn with me to Daniel 2. For our study tonight we want to begin to look at the section from verses 41 through 49. The second half of this second chapter. Now we covered verses 1 to 30 last time. Now whether or not we'll cover the next half of the chapter tonight I really don't know. But I do know that God has some tremendous things to say to us in this second portion beginning in verse 31.

Before we get into the portion of Scripture that we're going to be specifically concerned with, let me just say some introductory things. We're all watching rather sadly - we who know Christ - the fall of the United States of America. As sad as it is, it shouldn't really shock us. The reason is because it has always been and always will be the lot of nations, nations of the world, that the kingdoms of men will go the way of all flesh and ultimately end in collapse and ruin.

Anything based on the might of man, anything established on the wisdom of man will suffer the same kind of deterioration that man himself suffers since the fall. Dissipation is man's history. It is a devolutionary process not an evolutionary process. Man is not ascending, man is descending. In 1 Timothy 3:13, God says, "Evil men shall grow worse and worse." Things don't get better, they get worse.

We see decay working in our society everywhere - nationally, socially, domestically, individually, organically. All things in this world are caught in a process of deterioration that began when man fell into sin in the garden. And each new combination of forces or nations that has tried to achieve a lasting kingdom invariably meets the same inevitable overthrow. No matter what the intentions are, no matter what the safeguards are, the dissolution of manmade effort is inevitable.

So that history as studied becomes a succession of defeat. An empire begins, reaches a peak and fades and dies and another one is built out of its ashes. We are looking at America. America in the past reached its apex. We're on the down side, the back slope. We are watching a defeat taking place. We see the dissolution of our country on every hand. Political humanism ruin the

government. A government once established on the principles on the word of God. Godless atheism dominates our education. International blackmail threatens us all over the world. A lack of conviction and a lack of courage changes the way we approach problems.

The destruction of the family is causing a loss of all orientation among people and a rise of psychological and psychiatric problems. The deterioration of the family contributed by immorality, living together without marriage, working women, women's lib, passive fathers, homosexuality, etc. We've seen a steady decline in authority to the point where in many cases there is absence of authority.

In parts of our society we have lost the ability to control behavior. There's an ever-increasing rise of crime, lax criminal justice. We are constantly being corrupted at a faster rate through materialism, alcohol, drugs, sex, total selfishness. And we can go on and on.

We are deteriorating just like every other nation ever deteriorated. Because built into America is the same basic problem. We have feet of clay like the image in Daniel. And clay says Daniel represents the seed of men. And wherever anything is built on men, it is built for dissolution.

Fred Barshag gave me a very interesting article this week and I want to share it with you. It says the following was written by Professor Alexander Tyler nearly 200 years ago while our 13 original colonies were still a part of Great Britain. In fact, Tyler was at the time writing about the fall of the Athenian Republic over 2,000 years earlier. This is what he said:

"A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves money from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy always followed by dictatorship.

"The average age," says Tyler, "of the world's greatest civilizations has been 200 years." For us, that was 1976. "These nations have progressed through the following sequence:" - now listen to this - "from bondage to spiritual faith, from spiritual faith to great courage, from courage to liberty, from liberty to abundance, from abundance to selfishness, from selfishness to complacency, from complacency to apathy, from apathy to dependency and from dependency back into bondage."

Every nation follows the same cycle. And democracy seems to follow it just as fast or in some cases faster than any other form of government. By the way, it might shock you to know that democracy is not God's form of government. God's form is theocracy where one person rules, and that person is God.

The world today then is simply going through the same cycle of dissolution that it has always endured. We can see the seeds of dissolution very, very manifesting. As we look at the world today, we see the world as a vast stage. A vast stage with the final curtain still down. And we get the feeling that the actors are behind that final curtain, preparing for the last scene in the drama of human history. The play is almost done. There remains by one more scene. And that final scene is the latter days and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we step close to the stage, behind the curtain we can hear the commotion of the stagehands as they set up the machinery and set the stage for that final act. And now as we come to Daniel 2, Daniel takes us behind the curtain before it rises. We're going to see incredible insights, not only in Daniel 2 but from Daniel 2 to the end of the book. The unfolding of the last act on the stage of human history.

Now tonight as we look at chapter 2, verses 31 and following, we're going to see the great history of the Gentile world rule. Jesus said there would be a time titled - Luke 21:24 - the times of the Gentiles. And it had already begun, it would come to an end at the coming of Christ. In fact that verse says Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. There will be a period of time when Jerusalem is under the control. When the nation of Israel is under bondage to some degree or another, the Gentile world power. That is known as the times of the Gentiles.

Interestingly enough it began with the Babylonian captivity. It began with Nebuchadnezzar, it ends with the coming of Jesus Christ. We're living in that time right now. Israel does not possess the fullness of its inheritance, Israel does not dwell in its land in peace, Israel does not possess everything from the Mediterranean to the Tigris and Euphrates as in the original Palestinian covenant.

These are the times of the Gentiles. Gentile nations have dominated that part of the world since Nebuchadnezzar, and they will to some degree hold power over it until Jesus comes again.

In Ezekiel 21, Ezekiel tells us that the glory had departed from Israel. The glory had departed from Israel. Now God in a sense, when Israel went into captivity, just moved away. And Ichabod, the glory has departed was written on that land.

Now listen to me. The second chapter of Daniel then indicates that God transfers the leadership of this Earth from the Jew and Israel to the Gentiles. Israel takes a back seat. Israel goes into captivity and never returns to its former glory ever, not even today. Not until Jesus comes. Israel should've been the center of the world. Israel should've been the pattern, the leader of the world. Israel should've been that very special people God originally intended them to be, through whom we're given the law and the ordinances and the covenants and the promises. Israel should've been the messenger for the world. But Israel tragically failed.

In Deuteronomy 32:8, When the most high divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. While the Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. Originally, Israel was His people. Jacob was the lot of His inheritance. The center of the world and the focus of everything was on God's chosen people, Israel. That's the way it was. That's the way God intended it to be.

It was God's purpose that the king, the incarnate Son of God should come and reign in Jerusalem. And from Him would flow out blessings to the whole world. But as you know the tragic history of Israel, Israel wouldn't obey God, Israel wouldn't love God, Israel went into idolatry and spiritual adultery and all kinds of other evil things and God finally had to remove Israel from the central place. They were to be the place of messiah.

In Psalm 2, the second of the psalms, God made it clear. He said, "Yet" - verse 6 - "have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." God's place was Zion. God's king was to sit in Zion. No one was to usurp that place. But what happened? First the kingdom was divided because of the terrible sins of Solomon. The ten tribes in the north split off and became known as Israel. The two tribes remaining in the south - Judah and Benjamin - constituted the nation of Judah. So you have Judah and Israel. The northern tribes decided they'd rather have idolatry than the true worship of God. So they pursued their idolatry and they were literally destroyed by the Assyrians.

The righteous out of the ten had migrated to the south. And so the south was the remnant of the ten plus Judah and Benjamin. But sadly to say they also rebelled. They also fell into idolatry, and not many years later they too were hauled off into captivity in Babylon, and that's where we pick up the story when we come to Daniel.

It is the story of Judah, the southern kingdom, carried into captivity. And the beginning of Gentile domination of the land of Israel. The glory days are over. The days of the great are over. Jerusalem is a rubble, devastated, decimated and the times of the Gentiles have begun. And it will not again be Israel in its fullness until the messiah returns.

Now the sweep of history from Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian captivity all the way to the time of Jesus Christ is covered in this one chapter, and I want you to see this. This is a very powerful section of Scripture. Everything from Nebuchadnezzar all the way to the coming of Jesus Christ is touched on in this chapter in a broad and general way.

Now stay with me. Though Syria and Egypt have tried repeatedly to overthrow Jerusalem they have never succeeded. Why? They were always thwarted by the power of God. And of course the Syria and Egypt are seen as the great enemies of Israel because Egypt is to the south and Syria is to the north and east. Syria and Egypt on many occasions have tried to destroy Israel. They had tried to

sack, plunder and wipe out Jerusalem but they never succeeded. Century after century after century, they were thwarted in that effort and the reason is it was not yet God's time.

Jerusalem would not be trodden down by the Gentiles - listen - until the wickedness of Jerusalem was full. And finally when God said that's all I'll take, then Nebuchadnezzar came then the decimation of Jerusalem then the people who were carried into captivity and then begins the times of the Gentiles. Dominion was removed from the nation Israel.

Now as we come to Daniel, Israel is in captivity. Daniel is serving as a captive Jew, however because of his capabilities and talents has been elevated to serve in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar to assist him to work with Jewish affairs. Because of his faithful, uncompromising and amazing character, he has a very unique place in the land.

Now Daniel then begins with the times of the Gentiles. Now let me just say this: immediately in chapter 2, God gives to Daniel the prophecy through the dream of Nebuchadnezzar that describes this period of history. It describes it from the beginning to the end, how it ends, that's even described as well. And as I studied that, I thought to myself well why does such a prophecy come at the very beginning of the times of the Gentiles. If it's going to last for thousands of years - it's already lasted over 2,000 years - if it's going to last for all this period of time, why give this prophecy at the very beginning? Well, I think there's a good reason.

I think as soon as Israel went into captivity, as soon as the land of Judah was taken into captivity, as soon as God's people knew that Gentiles were ruling in their land, God wanted them to know that that was not a permanent thing. Why? Because if they felt that it was all over for Israel permanently, they would've begun to question the credibility of God. Because God at many times said he would never forsake His people, he would ever keep his covenant, he would always fulfill his promise, he would never forget Jerusalem. And so I believe that no sooner are they in captivity than God immediately reveals the fullness of the plan from beginning to end. The start of the times of the Gentiles and the ending of the times of the Gentiles when Israel returns to its place of glory so that they will know that God has not failed in all His good promise.

At this time when the prophecy comes in chapter 2, Jerusalem is in ruins, the temple is torn down, Judah has been destroyed, the sacred vessels of the temple have been carried off and placed in a temple of an idol. Glory is departed from between the [inaudible] and the ark of the covenant. Ichabod has been written over the people, the children of Israel stand on the banks of the rivers of Babylon hanging their harps on the willows because they have no song to sing, and the immediate question is has God forever forsaken His people? And the ringing prophecy of Daniel 2 says no.

Is this the end? Has God forgotten His covenant? Are all the promises lost? Is God's word untrue? No. And so comes immediately this fantastic, incredible revelation. Now let's look at it. In the first 31

verses of Daniel 2, we have the dream received. We're not going to go back over that. If you were here last week, you got in on it. The dream was received. One night, Nebuchadnezzar, this pagan king who didn't believe in the god of Israel, was just about to go to sleep and as he was lying on his bed, according to verse 29, he was lying on his bed thinking, he began to think about his empire and he ruled the known world and he was the most powerful monarch there was. And he began to think about what will happen when I die? What is it going to be like in the future?

And as he was musing over these thoughts he fell asleep and he dreamed some dreams, the Bible says. One of those dreams was a very special one given to him by God. He knew he wouldn't be around forever. He had seen other empires come and go. He became deeply concerned by his own empire and so he dreamed a dream. One of the dreams, the one that God gave him was a picture - now watch this - of history from Nebuchadnezzar to the return of Jesus Christ. And incredible prophecy in a dream. The period that he saw was the time of the Gentiles, the world ruler during the setting aside of Israel.

Look not - verse 28, and that'll frame it for you of chapter 2 - "there is a God in heaven, says Daniel, who reveals secrets and makes known to the king, Nebuchadnezzar, what shall be" - now watch this - "in the latter days." Now there is a key phrase, and we're going to kind of give you some teaching tonight. It's going to be a little academic so hang on. The latter days: that is not a phrase restricted to Nebuchadnezzar's understanding. That is not a phrase restricted to Nebuchadnezzar's lifetime. When it says the latter days, that is what we call an eschatological statement. From the Greek word, Escatos, which means last things. That is a term that refers all the way to the last days to messiah's time. In fact, the latter days is a repeated prophetic statement.

You can find it in your Scriptures in Genesis 49, Deuteronomy 4, Deuteronomy 31, Numbers 34, Jeremiah 23, Jeremiah 30, Jeremiah 48, Jeremiah 49, Ezekiel 38, Daniel 10, Josiah 3, Michael 4 and other places. And all the time when you see the latter days, it encompasses the messiah returning or the messiah's time. So it's a very broad term taking us to the latter days.

As far as I can see, every Old Testament prophetic writing that refers to the latter days, encompasses the consummation of history in the coming of Messiah. So that very phrase there, "What shall be in the latter days," in the case that Nebuchadnezzar was to see all the way to the messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The New Testament uses this term the very same way. The New Testament, for example, it's used in Acts 2, the latter days. It's used in 2 Peter 3 and every time it's used it encompasses the consummation of history and the kingdom of messiah. So Nebuchadnezzar was revealed by God a prophecy of the latter days encompassing all of the history of the nations till Christ returned.

Look back at verse 28 again. It says what shall be in the latter days, thy dream and the visions of thy head upon my 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 reveals secrets makes known to thee what shall come to pass. There you have to phrase twice - what shall come to pass. Again, Nebuchadnezzar was thinking of a succession in history. So Nebuchadnezzar sees what shall come to pass all the way to the latter days.

Now Nebuchadnezzar received this dream. Then what happened? Do you remember? He forgot it, didn't he? He forgot the dream. It left his mind. I think God gave it to him and I think God let him forget it because God wanted to prove a point. I think he remembered some hazy things so that he could recall it when Daniel told it to him. But basically I think he forgot the dream. Now some of your Bible versions may have given you problems on that last week because where it says in the authorized version, that the dream went from him. Some versions say the thing has gone from me. Others say the command from me is sure or the command from me is firm. Now what, the Hebrew says the thing has gone from me. But some have introduced the concept of an Aramaic source that would see - the Aramaic, I should say, basically says the thing has gone from me - but some say it comes from a different Aramaic word meaning the command is firm. And he's not saying I'm forgot it at all, he's just trying to test all of his wise men. So he pretends to forget.

Now frankly, folks, as you look at the text it could go either way. The reason I believe he forgot the dream is because that makes better sense to me in the context. You say why? Well, why would Nebuchadnezzar have a dream that scared the life out of him that absolutely panicked him, that gave him a good case of apoplexy, a dream that cost him such frenzy that he couldn't sleep, that he lost his sleep. Why would he then pretend not to remember that and start to play games with his wise men? It would seem to me that if the panic was as deep as the text indicates it was, he wouldn't be fooling around just trying to prove that his wise men couldn't really tell him the answers. Because as it turned out, he kept saying to them, "Tell me the dream and then its interpretation." And they would say, "Well, you tell us the dream and we'll tell you the interpretation. We can't figure out the dream if you don't tell us." And some say, well, he was just pretending not to remember to smoke out their phoniness.

But you see that would've been completely off his point. He was trying to get an answer to this tremendously disturbing dream, not try to unmask his wise men. That could save itself for another day when things weren't quite as panicky. The fact that he made the wise men tell the dream and its interpretation. And he was so distressed that they couldn't, he said I'm going to kill every one, gather every single one of them and kill every one of those. Now that'll give you a little idea of the anxiety of his heart.

By the way, when Daniel finally told him the dream, he never killed anybody, which shows you that he wasn't really trying to kill his wise men, he was really trying to get the answer of the dream. And

that's why I believe he forgot it. And I think God helped him forget it, just like God gave it to him, so that God could smoke out the phonies among the wise men and put Daniel in the place he wanted him in. The only one who had the answer was Daniel. He was the only one. This was no time for playing games. Daniel stepped in to be the channel of God's revelation and when he did, the king spared all the wise men, showing that that was not his intention. He just wanted to get his dream cleared up.

Now God had called by Daniel the revealer of secrets, and that's exactly what happens beginning in verse 31. The dream is recalled, the dream received in the first 30 verses, then in 31 the dream recalled. "Daniel remembered as God's chosen man" - and back in chapter 1, verse 17, it said that Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now Daniel was given this gift by God to be able to deal with dreams, to be able to interpret dreams, to be able to reveal dreams and now was his moment.

You see God was pushing Daniel up the ladder and this will be the final straw. Nebuchadnezzar was already convinced this man was ten times wiser than all of his wise men put together. And now when this happens, he makes him prime minister of the whole place. Let's see the dream recalled, verse 31.

Daniel speaks and this is what he says to him: "Thou O King, here's what you saw." Now get this, Daniel doesn't know because the king hasn't told him. There's no way humanly that Daniel could get this information. The king says I can't remember my dream, and so first Daniel has to tell him what his dream was and then interpret it. First he says, "Thou O king sawest and behold a great image." The Aramaic word here is statue. It's not an idol that you worship, it's just a statue.

This great image whose brightness was excellence stood before thee and the form of it was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, its breasts and its arms of silver, its belly or bowels and its thighs of bronze. Its legs of iron and its feet part of iron and part of clay. Now that's a strange looking thing. The head is gold, the breasts and arms are silvers, the bowels and upper thighs are bronze. And the legs and feet are iron and iron and clay.

And it's just this huge, brilliant, massive statue. And then the action takes place in verse 34: "Thou sawest until a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image on its feet that were of iron and clay and broke them to pieces. Then were the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, the gold, broken to pieces together and became like the chafe of the summer threshing floors 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. Now that's a strange dream, very strange dream.

And those people in those days believed that dreams had significance and this one did because it was from God. What did he see? He saw a statue in a human form. It was made of shining metal.

You'll notice it says this great image twice in verse 31. That word in the Aramaic is immense, massive, with no way to know just how big it was in his thoughts but it was a massive image, a massive statue. And it says its brightness was excellent there. That means it was extraordinarily splendid. The metal in it was shining brilliantly. This massive immense brilliantly shining thing - it says at the end of verse 31 - was terrible. It inspired terror or it inspired fear. Perhaps we would best say it was awesome. So immense. So splendid, so awesome that he was literally scared to death. And even though he couldn't remember what he saw in his dream, he could remember that it scared him and all he had left was the fear without the dream. And so now Daniel tells him what it was he saw.

Now notice this thing. Very interesting. It is made out of different metals basically. It starts out and it goes from gold all the way down to iron and clay. By the way, the clay is asopin in the Aramaic, which is a word meaning baked clay. It probably refers to the China Kyle that they used in those times and that would've been what he saw. He saw the feet made out of a combination of iron and tile, ceramic brittle tile.

Another interesting thing about this is that not only is it decreasing or a deteriorating value, but it's always interested me that there's a corresponding lower specific gravity. Gold is heavier than silver and silver is heavier than brass and brass is heavier than iron and iron is heavier than iron and clay mixed. In fact, I did a little research on that. The approximate specific gravity of gold is 19, silver 11, brass 8.5, iron 7.8.

In other words, gold at the top is more than twice as heavy as the bottom. The whole thing is top heavy. It's top heavy. It's getting more and more brittle as it goes down. In fact, gold is so flexible and malleable that it can't even be shattered. But iron and clay can. The whole history of humanity, the whole history of the Gentile world until the coming of Christ is going to be a very precariously balanced thing that is constantly and incessantly deteriorating until its final dissolution when it has smashed at its feet and it is blown away like dust in the wind. Pretty vivid. From its head of gold to the fragile feet of glazed China mixed with iron, the image is fragile and prone to fall over.

And that is exactly what happens in verse 34. The action begins, a stone was cut out without hands. That means it has no human source. No men made that stone. It smote the image on its feet of iron and clay and broke them to pieces. In fact, so much so that they became like chafe of the summer. [inaudible] thrown in the wind carried them away. No place was found for them and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole Earth. The stone takes over the whole world, and all the rest of that stuff blows away.

The top-heavy image is toppled by a crushing blow at its feet. In rapid succession, the entire disintegration of the image follows and all of its dust is blown away. Now this is a pretty amazing missile, wouldn't you say? That smashes all of the history of the Gentiles. Now what a dream, what

a dream. Now how do you interpret a dream like that? Well, if you were Carl Hume- God forbid - who was a famous psychoanalyst who was forever fiddling around people's dreams. Carl Hume has given a shot at this, believe it or not. Carl says people who have unrealistic ideas or too high an opinion of themselves or whom make grandiose plans out of proportion to their real capabilities have dreams of flying or falling.

Have you ever had those dreams? Don't admit it. You got an ego problem if you've had. We've all, I think, had those from time to time. Carl Hume says that anybody who has a grandiose idea of himself fears falling. And so he says, this king no doubt, if this is true, was afraid of the toppling of his empire so his fear was realized in his dream. Hume goes on, "The dream compensates for the deficiencies of their personalities and at the same time it warns them of the danger of their present course." In other words, it's good that your psyche gives you that dream cause it makes you alert so that that won't happen so readily.

Now if we take the psychological angle, the dream is simply Nebuchadnezzar seeing himself. He sees himself trying to stand and he's got a massive huge empire. And at the head he's all together, man. He's gold. But the further down the deal you go, the more fragile it becomes and he is very, very delicately standing in balance about to be toppled by some succeeding monarch or rival. Now that's the psychological angle. And I'll promise you, folks, that I'll give you a guess. I think if the wise men in that day have ever heard the dream, that's probably what they'd have given them. That's probably their interpretation. That's the psychological approach. You're just seeing the potential of your own collapse.

But frankly, folks, the wise men were useless and Carl Hume is too when it comes to the Bible so let's listen to Daniel. And from the dream received and the dream recalled, we come thirdly to the dream revealed, verse 36. And just so you don't miss it in verse 36 is explicit. This is the dream - I've just given that - and we will tell its interpretation before the king. Now I gave you the dream. Here comes the interpretation. What amazes me is Nebuchadnezzar never says anything in this whole deal. He never says a word.

He doesn't say, "Well, you're right. That's it. You got it." Or he doesn't say, "No, that's wrong." He doesn't say anything. You know, I think he couldn't say anything. I think he mouth was hanging open. Because Daniel was right. As the end of the story in chapter 2 will tell us, Daniel was right when he makes him prime minister in the whole area.

But he says - look at this at little thought - verse 36: "We will tell its interpretation." Who is the we? Some people will say it's Daniel and his three friends who prayed together about this and with whom he shared the dream. Some say it's Daniel and God. And commentators argued back and forth about that. I don't have any problem. I think it's God and his three friends. They were all in on it. We have to include anybody who knew about it. And we're going to tell you the interpretation. And

here it comes, watch this.

"Thou O King art the king of kings for the God of heaven have given thee a kingdom power in strength and glory. And wherever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heavens hath thee given into thine hand and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold." That's you. "And after thee shall arise another kingdom" - the authorize says inferior; we'll talk about that word in a little while - "to thee. And another third kingdom of bronze which shall bear rule over all the Earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron for as much as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things. And as iron that breaketh all these, it shall in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron for as much as thou sawest the iron mixed with the [inaudible] 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 brittle. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with myrror clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men but they shall not adhere one to another even as iron is not mixed with clay."

Now we'll stop right there. And you say, "Well, that didn't help a whole lot." It will if you just concentrate for a minute. This is phenomenal. The image represents - mark it - four world empires in succeeding stages from Nebuchadnezzar to Jesus Christ. Israel is no longer God's leading nation, not longer rulers of that part of the world, no long is Jerusalem under Israel's rule to be the center of God's dealing with men. And four great world powers will exist until Christ comes and restores Israel.

Let's meet the first one in verse 37. "Thou O King art the king of kings for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom power, strength and glory. And wherever the children of men dwell, the beast of the field and the fowls of the heavens hath thee given in to thine hand and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold."

Now you'll notice that Nebuchadnezzar is addressed in verse 37 as a king of kings. A title that was given to him by God. Notice that. Isn't that interesting? For the God of heaven had given thee a kingdom, power, strength and glory. The powers that be says Paul in Romans 13 are ordained - what - by God. Acts 17, Paul says has set the nations up and determined their boundaries. God is in the business of ruling over kings and nations. And God granted to thee the power, the kingdom, the strength and the glory. Thou art a king of kings. In other words, the supreme monarch in the Earth. And he was given the right to rule the Earth though he never extended his rule to encompass the Earth. The indication of the text is that he could have. For God gave him that right.

Everywhere men existed, everywhere there were beasts and fowls, it was given into his hand though he never really claimed it all. He is called a king of kings. By the way, in Ezekiel 26:7, Ezekiel calls him the same thing. So Ezekiel got from the Lord the very same message: Nebuchadnezzar was a unique king. By the way, his kingdom lasted 70 years, the exact number of years that God wanted to

chase in Israel in the Babylonian captivity before he sent them back. God raised up Nebuchadnezzar. God raised up his kingdom to be a chastening agent. And when their chastening work was done, they passed out of existence.

And so the God of heaven granted him his kingdom. Now his kingdom spread over the important portion of the world of his day. From all the way into Egypt around the Mediterranean area, clear to the Persian Gulf, all of that part of the world was under the dominion of this man. He was a supreme monarch. He was the king of the kings of his day. He ruled over everything and everybody. And as I said, the idea that it extended over the beasts and the birds is simply a hyperbole to show the tremendous degree and extent of his authority. So far as any man of his time, Nebuchadnezzar had gone beyond them in his power and his authority.

Now Nebuchadnezzar was a monarch for only 43 years, but 70 years his empire stood. He was the head of it for only 43 of the 70 or around 43. Subsequent kingdoms to him - note this - are identified as kingdoms, not as kings. In the four-world empires, it says Nebuchadnezzar is the head. From then on no monarch is ever mentioned. It passes from a king to kingdoms. The second kingdom, the third kingdom and the fourth kingdom. But the first time it is a king. Why? Because the first one was the only real single united absolutely monarchy. The rest of the image there's a change in the way the rule is rendered. But Nebuchadnezzar was a king of kings who literally, personally, uniquely was responsible for attaining and maintaining his status and the status of his empire. And after him the power rapidly diminished. It was far more his kingdom than he was its king, says Leon Wood, and he's right.

The same is not true of the succeeding empires. Now let me tell you something else that's very interesting. You'll notice that it says the head is the head of gold. Why gold? Well, gold was big in the Babylonian Empire. Herodotus, who is a historian, visited Babylon 90 years - he's an ancient historian - visited Babylon 90 years after the era of Nebuchadnezzar. And Herodotus has written that never in his life on the Earth did he see such an abundance and proliferation of gold as he saw in Babylon. He describes the chapels and the vessels and the accoutrements and the embellishments made of solid gold all over the Babylonian Empire. Ninety years after the era of Nebuchadnezzar, the residual was still there.

Nebuchadnezzar wanted to build a golden throne in the midst of a golden city. Isaiah 14:4 refers to Nebuchadnezzar's preoccupation with gold. But it lasted only 70 years, just long enough to fulfill God's chastening purpose. So Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. Great solidarity because it was a one-man rule. He called all the shots.

Look at verse 39: the second kingdom follows. "And after these shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee and then another third kingdom of bronze that shall bear rule over all the Earth." Let's look at that second kingdom for a minute. It tells us back in verse 32 that its arms were of silver. So the

second kingdom is represented by silver. And you'll notice it as you come down, you come down to the breasts and the arms. All right. Its arms of silver. The breasts and arms. And now no longer do you have the solidarity of the head. You have a two-part situation. And the second one in verse 39 can only refer to the Medo-Persian Empire. It has to refer to the Medo-Persian Empire because the Medo-Persian Empire succeeded Babylonia. There's no other way you could interpret it. Commentators agree that it's the Medo-Persian Empire because it followed immediately after Babylon.

"It's breast and arms," according to verse 32, "were of silver." And it implies a two-fold division. And the Medo-Persian Empire was just that. Made up of the Medes and the Persians. No longer is there solidarity there and also you will note that the medal is not as valuable. It is silver.

Notice the word inferior in verse 39. "After these shall arise another kingdom inferior." Literally, and I want you to stick with me on this, the word means lower. I don't think the inferior is the right translation. I don't think we ought to make a qualitative or a value judgment on it. I think he's simply saying lower and then lower and then lower. That is the literal Aramaic reference. He's simply talking about lower down the statue. You start to gold and lower you come to silver. It's not really a commentary on quality or size or anything.

By the way, the last three empires were larger by far. In fact they get larger as they go. Medo-Persia was larger than Babylon, Greece was larger than Medo-Persia and Rome was larger than Greece. They get continuously larger. Not only that, each of them was stronger than the one before. So to say inferior is really not the best thing to say. They weren't inferior in size and they weren't inferior in power. It's better to see it as simply the meaning of the word is lower since there was a growth of power and a growth of territory.

Now it's always interesting in verse 39 that it simply says that after these shall arise another kingdom lower. Lower from thee or lower than thee. It says nothing about it. Of all the four kingdoms, this is the one it says nothing about. The next one it says it'll bear rule over all the Earth. He says nothing about the second one. Why? Well, I think he didn't want to make Nebuchadnezzar paranoid, worried about what this one was gonna be and who it was gonna be and where it was gonna come from. Because this is the one that would topple his empire. And so it's passed rather rapidly. But we know that it refers to the Medo-Persian Empire.

Now silver in Aramaic is the same as money. Same word. The characteristic of this Medo-Persian Empire would be money or silver. And history bears this out. The Medo-Persian Empire developed a vast system of taxation. They require that their taxes be paid in silver and they literally filled their coffers with tons and tons of silver. The kings of the Medo-Persian Empire - there were many of them - just gobbled up silver money. The prophecy here then is that there would come another kingdom and that kingdom would be characterized by silver. Zirkstees who was one of the kings of the Medo-

Persian Empire, inherited the incredible silver fortune of his father Dorias. He also inherited more silver from other Persian kings and he used it to finance his massive war against the Greeks. So they had a tremendous amount of silver.

The Babylonian Empire made it to 538 B.C. and then came Cyrus the Great and with Cyrus the Great came the Medo-Persian Empire. That empire last 200 years about, until 330 B.C., when you come to the third one in verse 39. Look at it. "And another third kingdom of bronze which shall bear rule over all the Earth." And what is it? Back to verse 32. it's the belly and thighs of bronze.

Now you come down to another kingdom of bronze, the belly and the thighs. This is Greece. How do we know it because following the Medo-Persian Kingdom came the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great who received the power and the authority initially from his father Philip of Macedon. So moving down Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. It's interesting that Greece descends to the thighs because the great Greek Empire primarily had two major facets. And although it was divided among four generals, two of those generals took Syria and two of them took Egypt and they became the two facets of the great Greek Empire.

Now I want you to notice that this kingdom is characterized by bronze. Bronze is not as valuable as silver but bronze is stronger than silver. It's characterized by bronze, I think, for other reasons. One writer says this: "It is easy to imagine what an astonishing impression the Greeks must've made on the civilized world. Consider the contrast between their soldiers and the soldiers of the Persian army. They knocked off the Medo-Persian Empire. Have you seen a soldier of Media or Persia in the days when they controlled the civilized world, he would've looked like this. Here's what a Medo-Persian soldiers looked liked.

On his head would've been a soft turban, he would've been clothed with a tunic with sleeves and trousers full and long. That would've been a Medo-Persian soldier. But when you saw a Greek soldier, he would've had on his head a helmet of grass, on his body a breastplate of brass. Before him he would be carrying a shield of brass and believe it or not a sword made out of brass. That is why the classic writers of ancient days refer to the brazen coded Greeks. Grass became a sign and symbol of Greek conquests and the Greek empire. Gold, why? Because Nebuchadnezzar was preoccupied with gold. Silver, why? Because the Meds and the Persians were preoccupied with silver. Brass, why? Because it symbolized the power of the forces of Alexander the Great.

And again, that empire splits into two thighs. Syria and Egypt again. And still separated when we come to the fourth and final kingdom in verse 40, the legs of iron. By the way, now I add that the end of verse 39 it says that this third kingdom would bear rule over all the Earth. Hang onto that. They'll rule over all the Earth? Very interesting statement because Alexander the Great commanded people to call him by this title: Alexander King of all the Earth. Alexander King of all the Earth.

He ruled - this is amazing - he ruled Europe, he ruled Egypt and he ruled all the way to India. Died in his 30s. Finally you come to the fourth kingdom and that is Rome. How do we know that? Because Rome follow Greece in history. And the stress again is on strength. The Greek Empire lasted only a little under 200 years. The Medo-Persian Empire last about the same amount of time. Somewhere in there at 100 B.C. give or take 50 years. It's really hard to say exactly when it started. Rome became a power. By the way, Rome was never even heard of before that. They emerged out of nowhere to rule the world. And the Roman Empire, believe it or not, even went further than Alexander's conquests. Incredible.

Rome was two legs. You know that Rome existed in a divided state, didn't it? It was the Eastern Roman Empire and the Western Roman Empire. Now Daniel says - and we're going to hasten to a conclusion - that the fourth kingdom - verse 40 - shall be strong as iron, strong as iron. By the way, in Daniel's day, iron was believed to be the strongest metal. And Rome, no question, was the strongest empire the world has ever known. Babylon lasted 70 years, Medo-Persia lasted around 200. The Greek empire last around 200. The Roman Empire lasted 500 years on the West and all the way to 1453. So Constantinople was knocked off in the East. That's a long time. No empire even comes close. They were strong.

He goes on to say, for example, it breaketh in pieces. It subdues. He says it breaketh all these. It breaks in pieces and it bruises. All of those terms refer to a smashing, crushing, shattering power of Rome. In fact, the verb breaketh in the Aramaic means to crush with a hammer. And Liphold, the Bible scholar says, "The Roman legions were noted for their ability to crush all resistance with an iron heel." There's apparently little that is constructive in the program of this empire in spite of Roman law and Roman roads and civilization because the destructive workout weighed all else for we have the double verb crush and demolish at the end of verse 40.

The Roman Empire came to crush and demolish. By the way, the legs are the longest part of the image and the Roman Empire lasted the longest. Given who wrote the famous fall of the Roman Empire said this, "The empire of the Romans filled the world. And when the empire fell into the hands of a single person, the world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. To resist was fatal and it was impossible to fly." Given says the Romans ruled the world.

Robert Culvawrites, "Two millennia ago, Rome gave the world the ecumenical unity at the League of Nations and the United Nations organizations have sought to revive in our time. But are the revivals of the ancient Roman ideal that never since the time of Augustus Caesar has been holy lost? It is probable that the PaxRoman, the roman peace, the peace of a well-ordered prison with plenty of iron gates, steel doors, trained guards and high walls is till the best the world will ever achieve till Jesus comes.

You know why the Romans lasted so long? Because they rule with an iron rod. They were strong. The iron legions of Rome were the final world power and image. Now as you can see, folks, Rome is the last world empire. You say, "Wait a minute. There's got to be more to this. Rome passed away a long time ago." But there's more to the prophecy. We haven't gotten to the toes yet.

And the toes are not iron but iron mixed with what? Clay. What does that tell us? You know what I believe it tells us? I believe that we're going to see a return of the ancient Roman Empire. If so, you're kidding. I mean people running around with SPQR all over their chests? What do you mean? What are you talking about? I believe they'll even be ten toes to that revived empire. What are you talking about? What do you mean? Here's what I mean.

You been watching Europe lately? Europe which once occupied the territory of the Roman Empire has revived itself in the confederacy right now known as the European economic community. The European common market. As far as I know at present, there are ten member-nations. Interesting. I heard on the radio station. KFWB in December 27, 1971. But in December 27, 1971, KFWB Radio reported, and I heard it, the biggest event to look for in 1972 is the rise in the European common market, which will become the greatest single economic power in the world. Paul Steen, who at the time was the president, said, "Make no mistake, we are not an economic group, we are political." Listen to this. The L.A. Examiner, October 29, 1971, said, "The British decision to join the common market has brought western Europe to the threshold of its strongest alliance since the nations were tied together as a part of the Roman Empire 15 centuries ago.

The history of the world is reaching its climax, there's no question about that. If you want to find out how it's going to end, come back next week. And I'm going to tell you, listen. Can America survive? Can they? We're succumbing - listen - we're succumbing already to the deadly, inexorable, inevitable, unchangeable, deterioration of many. Our people are selfish and their selfishness will self-destruct.

Alexander Tyler said it: "From bondage to spiritual faith, from spiritual faith to great courage, from courage to liberty, from liberty to abundance, from abundance to selfishness. From selfishness to complacency, from complacency to apathy. We're somewhere in there right now then from apathy to dependence. And we're asking for that from dependency back to bondage. And somebody else will rise from our ashes should Jesus start this cycle all over again. How will it end? That's for next time. Let's pray.

Father, thank you again tonight for fascinating truth that your word reveals. Bless every heart here. O Lord, we think of the words of blessed Peter who said, "Seeing that you know all these things so come to pass what manner of persons ought you to be." If we know that history is winding down, that the image of man as dominion in the world as a precarious image balanced on feet of clay, top heavy,

to be crushed and smashed by a stone cut out without hands, to blow away his dust. Oh God we would not be a part of that system. We would not want to be a part of what shall fail and die. We want to be a part of the living kingdom of Jesus Christ. And so Lord we would pray for those tonight who might not know Christ. That they might step out of the deteriorating process of sin where the gold of man is turning to dust. And into the kingdom of God where he takes the dust we are and turns it into gold. Touch each heart, Father, with how we should respond. Give us the sense of urgency to reach the multitudes around us who are caught in this terrible cycle. May we be able to touch their lives for Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

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