

CONNECTING THE DOTS – EARTHLY KINGDOMS

They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

Psalm 145:11-13

As I began to think about our class and where it is going next, now that we have finished studying the Temples, I thought this a good time for a review or a summary of what we have covered in connecting the dots of God's kingdom plan for history.

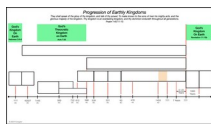
Part I – REVIEW OF WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED SO FAR

Remember a key to understanding God's plan for history is to recognize that God sovereignly controls the kingdoms of the world. Daniel 2 verses 20-22 teaches:

*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 revealeth the deep and secret things:* Daniel 2:20-22

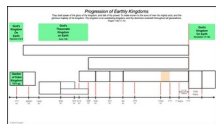
In thinking about the kingdoms, I often got confused as to how they "fit" into God's plan or even how they "fit" into history.

As you have probably realized, I tend to think in pictures and charts. I like everything laid out before me, so that I can properly understand them.



So for this class I have done just that in my chart on the Progression of Earthly Kingdoms. I believe this chart summarizes much of what we have studied on the kingdoms in God's plan of history – Ps. 145:11-13.

These kingdoms are those involved with Israel and the future Millennial Kingdom.



When we started our study, we began with the Garden of Eden kingdom.

In this first earthly kingdom, God presented a concept of governing that will carry through to the last kingdom on the New Earth.

Before the First Adam's sin and rebellion, he was a sub-ruler under God's kingship, and as such a sub-ruler, is called a mediatorial ruler for he rules a people while also acting as their mediator between them and God, the ruler of all Creation.

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Never forget, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit sovereignly rule the entire creation, for there is no power greater than God. He has to answer to no one and is limited only by His righteous character.

In God's plan, He needed a place for humanity to dwell with Him and thus, He uniquely created the earth for mankind – Isaiah 45:18, Psalm 115:16, Acts 17:26.

*For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, [for] **he formed it to be inhabited**: I am the LORD; and there is none else. Isaiah 45:18*

*The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's: but the **earth hath he given to the children of men**.* Psalm 115:16

*And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and **the bounds of their habitation**;* Acts 17:26

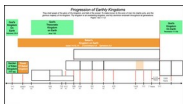
With Adam's sin, this idyllic kingdom came to an abrupt end, but it did not change God's plan for history.

God's plan was and always has been to create a kingdom where He will dwell with righteous citizens who choose to be part of it and spend eternity dwelling with Him .

Being a holy God, the citizens must be righteous. All that the Garden did was to bring forth unrighteous people who needed a righteous Redeemer to pay for their sins and justify them before God.

That Man is the Last Adam Who became the substitute for all who would accept His sacrifice for them, thereby making them acceptable and righteous before God the Father.

Prior to the Garden, Satan had rebelled against God in his desire to be "*like the most High*" God (Isaiah 14:13, 14) he would do this through His own kingdom on earth.



With the First Adam's rebellion, God's earthly kingdom was forfeited to Satan – 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:2:

*In whom **the god of this world** hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, **who is the image of God**, [not like*

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God but God] *should shine unto them.*

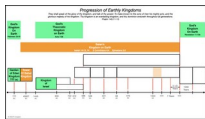
2 Corinthians 4:4

*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to **the prince of the power of the air, the spirit** that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

Ephesians 2:2

The Tower of Babel was Satan's first visible kingdom.

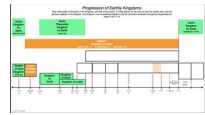
According to God's plan, from the day of the First Adam's disqualification until the coming of the Last Adam, Jesus Christ, this world's kingdoms belong to Satan.



The next major event in God's plan was the creation of the nation of Israel, beginning with the Exodus.

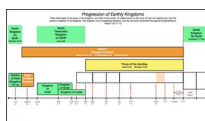
There at Mt Sinai God began His theocratic kingdom of Israel – through a series of mediatorial ruler/kings, God would govern the nation as a

theocracy.



By the end of King Solomon's rule, in 930 bc, Israel had divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. By 586 bc, the end of the theocratic kingdom, proved that a nation led by unrighteous rulers, priests, and citizens could never dwell with God upon the earth in God's kingdom.

That cataclysmic end of the theocratic kingdom came as God chose four Gentile kingdoms to demonstrate that He is sovereign and will accomplish His goal for a nation of righteous people.



The thousands of years of rule by the Gentiles is called the "times of the Gentiles" by the Lord Jesus Christ on Mt. Olivet where He declared God's method of creating the true kingdom for His Son that would be centered about Jerusalem - recorded in Luke 21:24.

*And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and **Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles**, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

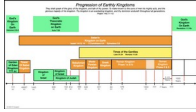
The Apostle Paul declares that fulfillment includes the Jews and Jerusalem – Romans 11:25.

*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness **in part** is happened to Israel,*

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until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

The first step in this fulfillment was the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem in 586 bc.



From that point until the second coming of the Lord, the Jewish people have experienced God's chastisement from Gentile nations.

These give a timeline of history beginning with the Babylonian Empire (612-539 BC) through the Medo-Persian Empire (538-331 BC) and the Greek Empire (330-63BC) to the Roman Empire (63 BC – AD 476).

Notice on this chart I have called them kingdoms, for the Scriptures do not identify them as empires, calling them kingdoms (Daniel 8:22). From a historian viewpoint, the word, empire, well describes these kingdoms and is used by historians to reflect the world domination aspect of these kingdoms ruled by a king.

Also, notice that the Roman Kingdom had divided into two segments by the 5th century ad, with the Western portion disintegrating into multiple independent provinces and states. This was the result of a loss of control by the central government throughout the 4th century and culminating in 476 ad. The Eastern Kingdom continued on until 1453 ad, when Ottoman armies killed the emperor at the battle of Constantinople.

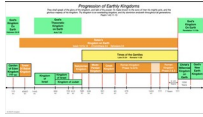
At this point, it is well to realize that the dates for the transfer of world dominion from one kingdom is of use by historians. In reality, this transfer of power occurred over a period of time and was a gradual result of a series of economic, military, cultural, and political actions that brought the change.

This period of time does not rule out brief periods of independence for Israel, such as during the Maccabean era (164-63 bc). The first Jewish revolt against Rome (AD 66-70), the second Jewish revolt (AD 132-135), and since 1967, today's Israel.

This period of history is when the Gentiles are the dominant world powers and the people of Israel are subject to or are controlled indirectly by them.

Until the second coming of Christ, any freedom Israel has had with respect to Jerusalem has been only temporary. During these times, the Gentiles have dominated Jerusalem and the temple site and continue to do so to this day. and that during those times, a threat of Gentile domination of Jerusalem continues to this day. However, these Gentile kingdoms have been sovereignly controlled by God.

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As we have studied before, we know the ultimate kingdom of God on earth will begin with the Millennial rule of the Lord Jesus Christ, followed by the eternal, New Heaven and Earth kingdom – Revelation 11:15.

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

In our next class we will see how God foretold His plan to all who read of it in the Scriptures. In doing this we will see that God the Son's Millennial Kingdom will come, just as it was planned from the foundation of the world.

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Part II – PROOF THAT GOD IS IN CONTROL

In our last session we showed how God is using the Times of the Gentiles as a means to bring the nation of Israel back to Him during the 7-year Tribulation.

As I ended, I said that the four kingdoms/empires of the Times of the Gentiles were prophesied by God before they were truly kingdoms or empires.

God offers prophecies as a means to show that the Scriptures are trustworthy and represent the truthful and all powerful God of the Creation.

That proof is given by the prophecy of Daniel in chapters 2, 7, and 8. Through two dreams and a vision God revealed the sequence of nations that would serve Him and be directly involved with Israel and the city of Jerusalem.

The prophecy spoke of 5 kingdoms, the last of which would be Jesus Christ's earthly millennial (1000-year) kingdom. While there have been and are many other kingdoms in history, they are on the "sidelines" of history in the sense that their history outside of Israel's history is not covered in the Scriptures. But never forget the people of these nations are important to God, for His salvation is available to all peoples.

The best way to see the uniqueness of this prophecy is to place Nebuchadnezzar's dream alongside of Daniel's dream and vision, as recorded in Daniel chapters 2, 7, and 8.

Even a brief study of these texts expand and elaborate our understanding of these times.

Additionally, an understanding of these four kingdoms helps us as we study the four Gospels of the New Testament.

The first Kingdom – Babylon – Daniel 2:31-45

Daniel interpreted "*the head of gold*" (Dan.2: 38) as King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the first kingdom of the dream. The head of the image aptly represented its preeminence.

Gold was commonly used in Babylon not only as currency but also to adorn objects.

The lion with eagle's wings described in Daniel's dream (Dan. 7: 4) also was an excellent representation for Babylon since the lion has always been regarded as the "king" of beasts and the eagle the most exalted of birds. The eagle wings indicated the swiftness with which Nebuchadnezzar gained his power.

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Dreams and Vision in Daniel 2, 7, and 8

Interpretation		Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream Dan. 2:31-45		Daniel’s Dream Dan. 7:3-7	Daniel’s Vision Dan. 8:3-10
<i>Kingdom</i>	<i>Scriptural Identification</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Symbol</i>
First	Babylonian empire Dan. 2:38	Head v. 32	Gold	Lion with Eagle’s Wings v. 4	

Babylon was a highly developed and prosperous kingdom.

This first kingdom identification signifies God’s prophetic word and the future of the “*times of the Gentiles*.” When Daniel wrote his prophecy, the only world empire was Babylon. Only the omniscient, sovereign God could have revealed the identities of the next two kingdoms that were yet in the future.

The Second Kingdom – Mede-Persian Empire -

The image’s two arms and breast of silver aptly picture the kingdom that conquered and followed Babylon, the Mede/Persian kingdom; for the arms, joined at the breast, represent their co-rule.

By uniting in 550 BC, these two nations were successful in overcoming and capturing Babylon in 539 BC and destroying King Belshazzar who had succeeded Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 5).

Historical records reveal that silver was the medium of exchange for these two nations and it was “collected through an extensive tax system (Ezra 4:13; Dan. 11:2).”³

This was the next Gentile kingdom that maintained its control over the land of Israel, treading Jerusalem under its feet.

The lopsided bear in Daniel’s dream also represents this Mede/Persian alliance because the Persians ultimately dominated the Medes.⁴

The three ribs in the bear’s mouth most likely represent the three nations they conquered, Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt.⁵

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God leaves no doubt as to this nation’s identity. Daniel’s vision confirms this identification, for the angel Gabriel told Daniel, “*The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia*” (Dan. 8:20).

The use of the image of the ram is also quite appropriate because the guardian spirit of the Persian kingdom was believed by the Persians to appear in the form of a horned ram, and the Persian king led his army wearing the head of a ram.⁶

The observation that the ram’s two horns were of unequal height foretold the dominance of the Persians over the Medes just as the lopsided bear had indicated.

Knowledge of a culture and its symbols is helpful to gaining an understanding of the Biblical revelation, but in this instance, God provided an indisputable confirmation of the symbols through the angel Gabriel.

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Daniel’s dream and vision occurred about fifty years after Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, during King Belshazzar’s reign.

With Belshazzar’s death and the capture of Babylon, the Mede/Persian Empire became the dominant world power. The expansion of the empire encompassed Israel in addition to Asia Minor and Egypt. However, the strength of the Medes and Persians was no match for the leader of the next kingdom, Alexander the Great.

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The Third Kingdom – Greek Empire

Young Alexander of Greece was the amazingly gifted general who swiftly conquered and replaced the Mede/Persian Empire with that of Greece.

Once again, God clearly identified this kingdom that was symbolized in Nebuchadnezzar's dream as the image's belly and thighs of bronze.

The Greeks used this metal alloy extensively to make their tools and weapons of war. Most likely, the image's belly represented Alexander himself while the two thighs signified Seleucus and Ptolemy, two of his four generals that succeeded him and who played significant roles in history as rulers of Syria and Egypt.

In Daniel's dream, the Greek Empire was represented by a leopard having four wings and heads while in his vision, it was portrayed by a male goat with feet that did not touch the ground and one prominent horn that was later replaced by four.

The leopard's four wings and the goat's feet that did not touch earth both represented Alexander's swiftness in conquering the Mede/Persians.

And the rough goat is the king of Greece: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

Daniel 8:21

It was God who revealed the identity of this empire to Daniel through the vision. He also used it to demonstrate that what He promises will come true, for He sovereignly controls history and His word or prophecy is sure or certain (Daniel 2:45).

Long before Alexander was born or Greece was a significant country, God not only indicated that Alexander's Grecian Empire would replace the Mede/Persian Empire on the world stage, but that four kings would share power following Alexander's death as the leopard's four heads and the goat's four horns indicate (Dan. 8:22).

Historical record confirms this prophecy, for Alexander came to power, thrusting Greece into dominance as a world empire by conquering the Mede/Persians. When Alexander died at the age of 32 in Babylon, his four generals (Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy),⁷ divided the Greek Empire into four regions or nations (Dan. 8:22) that were individually ruled but united as one empire.

This prophecy truly reveals the attribute of God's trustworthiness in that what He showed in

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dreams and visions centuries ago is completely accurate from the historical perspective.

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Third	Greek Empire Dan. 8:21	Belly and Thighs v. 32	Bronze	Leopard with Four Wings upon its Back v. 6	He Goat with Single Notable Horn vv. 5-8

The Fourth Empire Identified – Rome

Unlike the previous three kingdoms, God does not identify the fourth kingdom by name.

The world of Daniel’s days knew of the nations of the Medes, the Persians, and the Greek even before they became empires, but Rome was not even a province in Daniel’s day.

Its identification is derived from descriptions found in the two dreams. In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream it is described as the image’s two legs of iron with feet and toes of iron and clay.

In Daniel’s dream, the fourth beast is not a common, identifiable earthly creature but is merely described as being “*diverse*” (different, unique) from all the beasts that were before it.

It is “*dreadful, terrible, and exceedingly strong*” with teeth of iron and stamping, crushing feet.

Next, this beast is described as having ten horns, three of which are later replaced by a little horn having the eyes and mouth of a man -- a mouth speaking great or pompous words.

As previously shown, Daniel identified three of the four empire/kingdoms that precede Jesus

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Christ's earthly kingdom by name. Many believe that Daniel's fourth, unnamed empire is the Roman Empire.⁸

We base our conclusion on the historical pattern established by the three identified empires of Daniel.

That pattern has the second empire, Mede-Persia conquering the first empire, Babylon, and that in a similar manner, the third empire, Greece, conquered the second empire, Mede-Persia. Extrapolation of this pattern requires that the fourth empire must be the conqueror of the third empire, Greece. This makes the Roman Empire the only viable historical candidate for the fourth kingdom.

This conclusion is strengthened by the identification of “*iron*” as the metal that composes the image's legs (Dan. 2:33; 7:7).

The Roman legions used iron weapons of war and “were noted for their ability to crush all resistance with an iron heel.”⁹

Certainly, history records the Roman army's ability to break conquered nations into pieces (literally: to “crush and demolish”).¹⁰

The image's two legs indicate the two regional divisions of the Roman Empire; the Eastern, with its center in Constantinople and the Western, centered in Rome.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream also suggests that there are two phases to the fourth empire while Daniel's dream divides it even more finely into three.

The idea that there are two main phases to the Roman Empire is based upon the image's anatomical and compositional distinctions regarding the fourth kingdom--the legs of iron are distinguished from the feet and toes of iron and clay. This would appear to suggest that there are two distinct phases to the fourth empire.

Bible teachers traditionally view the iron legs as the first phase, representing the ancient Roman Empire; while the feet and toes suggest a second phase--a latter day, revived Roman Empire.

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Rather than a vague hint as to the kingdom's identification, God specifically named the first three kingdoms in Daniel 2 and 8, leaving no doubt in our minds. God chose not to identify by name the fourth kingdom, in all likelihood, owing to the great span of years of that kingdom and its stages of development.

That fourth kingdom will begin during the inter-testament period and continue through the years of the New Testament. It has three stages in its history:

In the first phase, the beast is called dreadful and terrible with teeth of iron and stamping feet. In the second phase, it is portrayed as having ten horns. In the third phase, a little horn with the eyes and mouth of a man comes up and replaces three of the ten horns and speaks "*great things*" (Dan. 7:8). Renald Showers defines the three-phased Roman Empire as:

- Phase 1--The Conquering or Beast phase, symbolized by the iron and its destructive power – this existed during the New Testament times.
- Phase 2--The Ten Horn/Ten Kingdom phase, symbolized by the ten toes and the ten horns – this phase is yet future, perhaps its embryo phase is in our day.
- Phase 3--The Little Horn/Antichrist phase, symbolized by the little horn of Daniel 7¹² – this is the final phase, that I believe is primarily during the last half of the Tribulation.

In its simplest form, we can divide this fourth kingdom into two parts--the revived Roman Empire *before* and the revived Roman Empire *after* the antichrist rises to power.

According to this interpretation, phase 1 of the ancient Roman Empire ended and a gap or interim period of time occurs before Phase 2. The concept of a gap is justified by the fact that Daniel "passes over the present [Church] age, the period between the first and second coming of Christ, or, more specifically, the period between Pentecost and the rapture of the church."¹⁴ Such gaps or skips do occur in the Old Testament with respect to the first and second coming of Christ.¹⁵ The Old Testament prophets portray

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Christ as being both a suffering Savior as well as a conquering King. At His first advent He came as a suffering Savior to redeem both humanity and creation; in the future He will return as a conquering King. The gap in time was not recognized by many in Israel and contributed to the rejection of their Messiah. Therefore, the gap concept is a possibility with regard to the Roman Empire. According to this scenario, the ancient Roman Empire will “revive” in the modern era as the ten-toe/ten-horn stage. This revived empire will include the former territories of the ancient Roman Empire and possibly those western hemisphere nations that trace their ancestry back to lands within the ancient Roman Empire. Certainly, this explanation satisfies the demands of the dreams and vision found in the book of Daniel.

In this fleeting review of history, it is apparent that God’s word is certain and He truly does establish as well as bring down kings and kingdoms (Dan. 2:21). It is also important to understand that the ancient kingdoms of Babylon, Mede-Persia, and Greece are gone, yet not entirely. When viewed sequentially, it is apparent that each succeeding empire/kingdom assimilated historically, culturally, and religiously the preceding conquered empire.¹⁶

This means that when the first three empires ceased to rule, their cultures and religions did not also cease to exist; rather, they merged with the succeeding empire, “so that elements of each still exist in the final phase of the Roman Empire.”

¹⁸

God used Daniel in a mighty way to give “wisdom unto the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding.” It is available to those who genuinely desire to seek it out. Through these dreams and vision He has revealed his outline for human history regarding mankind’s kingdoms and the coming kingdom of His own Son. As He promised, “*the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*”

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ACT II -- SCENE 2 GOD REVEALS EARTH'S FUTURE KINGDOMS

Time: During the Babylonian Captivity

Setting: Babylon, the King's Palace

Enter: King Nebuchadnezzar

As the curtain rises, Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar has just been given a perplexing dream from God, one that greatly troubled him. Bible scholars debate as to whether or not he could recall his own dream, but clearly the distress it gave him caused Nebuchadnezzar to desire its immediate interpretation (Dan. 2:5). Calling his wise men together, he gave what seemed to be an unreasonable request--he demanded that they not only tell him his dream's meaning but also the dream itself! Whether he had forgotten the dream or merely feigned forgetfulness in order to test his wise men is uncertain. It is certain, however, that their lives were at risk, for he told them that failure to comply with his demand would mean their deaths as well as the deaths of all wise men throughout the Kingdom of Babylon.

It is at this point in the event that four young captives of Israel, Daniel and his three companions, enter the picture. Through them, the one and only true God was exalted for His wisdom and might (Dan. 2:20). They had remained faithful to God by refusing to eat food that most likely was connected with worship of the Babylonian's false god, Marduk. As a result, God rewarded them with "*knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom,*" and Daniel was given the additional ability to understand all visions and dreams (Dan.1:17). In answer to the prayers of these four young men for mercy, God showed and explained the dream's meaning to Daniel through a vision. Their lives and the lives of all of the wise men were spared. As he stood before King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel was careful to give God the praise and credit for the dream's interpretation, and eventually this pagan King acknowledged the "*most High God*" (Dan. 2:28, 4:34). Surely, God was glorified when He enabled Daniel to fulfill this Gentile King's unreasonable request by revealing the secrets of history through a dream.

Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream began with a proclamation declaring God to be the One Who ultimately controls the progression of earth's kingdoms and that He alone both establishes and removes kings. Also, it is God Who reveals the future, "*the deep and secret things:*"

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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 revealeth the deep and secret things:

Daniel 2:20-22

Then he told Nebuchadnezzar his dream: There was an awesome and gigantic image of a man. The various body parts of this image were composed of distinctly different materials: it had a head of gold, arms and breast of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet of both clay and iron (Dan. 2:32, 33). Suddenly, a stone “*that was cut out without hands*” came and struck the feet of the image, causing the entire figure to disintegrate and blow away. Then the stone grew, becoming a mountain that filled the entire earth (Dan. 2:34, 35). The chart below indicates the symbols in the dream, the materials they were made of, and the kingdoms each represented:

INTERPRETATION		NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S DREAM DANIEL 2:31-45	
KINGDOM		SYMBOL	MATERIAL
FIRST BABYLONIAN		HEAD v. 32	GOLD
SECOND MEDE/PERSIAN		BREAST & ARMS v. 32	SILVER
THIRD GREEK		BELLY AND THIGHS v. 32	BRONZE
FOURTH STAGE 1		LEGS v. 33	IRON
FOURTH STAGE 2		FEET & TOES vv. 33, 41	IRON & CLAY
FIFTH MILLENNIAL		STONE CUT W/OUT HANDS v. 34	STONE

This dream, found in the second chapter of Daniel, is the key to understanding God’s plan for the Gentile kingdoms during the time that Jerusalem is trodden down by the Gentile nations (Luke 21:24, Rm. 11:25). This timeframe began with Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom of Babylon and Judah’s captivity and progresses forward in time through three successive Gentile kingdoms to the period of time called “*the latter days*” (Dan. 2:28). These are the days immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ. This dream was a revelation from God regarding the relationship of four Gentile kingdoms and the nation of Israel. It will culminate

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with the period of history immediately preceding Christ’s return.

The chart below shows the progression of earth’s kingdoms and where these four kingdoms fit in.

PROGRESSION OF EARTHLY KINGDOMS

Garden of Eden	Tower Of Babel Kingdom	Kingdoms Exodus - Malachi		Babylonian Kingdom #1	Mede Persian Kingdom #2	Greek Kingdom #3	Un-named Kingdom #4	Fifth & Final Kingdom
		Kingdom of Israel	Divided Kingdom of Israel & Judah	Gentiles are Dominant world powers Jerusalem trampled underfoot by Gentiles				Restored Earthly Kingdom Jewish & Gentile
		Israel Kingdom Era		Times of the Gentiles				Millennium
God’s Kingdom	Satan’s Kingdoms							Christ’s Kingdom

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was an image of a man that revealed the future. Daniel also had a revelation of the future in a dream and vision, but the symbols in his dream were animals. Nebuchadnezzar’s perspective was typical of the world’s view of events. He saw the kingdoms from man’s viewpoint, glorifying man, while Daniel saw them from God’s viewpoint, as unruly beasts.¹

Daniel 7 and 8 discloses that Daniel himself had both a dream and a vision about the same future Gentile kingdoms from God’s viewpoint. In the dream of chapter 7, Daniel saw a lion with eagle’s wings, a lopsided bear with three ribs in his mouth, a four-headed leopard with four wings, and an indescribably terrible beast having iron teeth and ten horns. Later, a little horn, having eyes and mouth of a man, replaced three of the ten horns and spoke “*great things*.” Then thrones (kingdoms) were cast down and One called the Ancient of days (God the Father) appeared on His throne. The Son of man (God the Son) came with the clouds of heaven, stood before Him, and was given an everlasting kingdom, the fifth kingdom of Daniel.

In Daniel’s vision of chapter 8, he saw a ram with two horns, one being higher than the other. A male goat appeared next, first having one great horn, then four horns, and finally one “*notable*” little horn that grew very large. Both Daniel’s dream and vision expand our understanding of the kingdoms. The vision actually identifies the second and third kingdom by name.

The aspects of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and Daniel’s dream and visions are presented in

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parallel form in the chart below. When put side-by-side in this manner, the linkages become obvious and the identities of three of the kingdoms are clear. In successive order they are the Babylonian Kingdom (Dan. 2:38), the Mede-Persian Kingdom (Dan. 8:20), and the Greek Kingdom (Dan. 8:21). The fourth kingdom remains unnamed.

Interpretation	Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream Dan. 2:31-45		Daniel’s Dream Dan. 7:3-7	Daniel’s Vision Dan. 8:3-10
<i>Kingdom</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Symbol</i>
<u>First</u> Babylonian	Head v. 32	Gold	Lion with Eagle’s Wings v. 4	
<u>Second</u> Mede/Persian	Breast & Arms v. 32	Silver	Bear with one side Raised Higher v. 5	Ram with Two Horns--one higher than the other vv. 3, 4
<u>Third</u> Greek	Belly and Thighs v. 32	Bronze	Leopard with Four wings upon its Back v. 6	He Goat with single Notable Horn vv. 5-8
<u>Fourth</u> Stage 1	Legs v. 33	Iron	Dreadful and Terrible Beast v. 7	
<u>Fourth</u> Stage 2	Feet & Toes vv. 33, 41	Iron & Clay	Dreadful and Terrible Beast with ten Horns, then a little horn v. 7	
<u>Fifth</u> Millennial	Stone Cut without Hands v. 34	Stone	Son of Man with Clouds of Heaven vv. 13-14	

Kings and kingdoms are separate in the 21st century experience, but that was not so in Nebuchadnezzar’s day. Kings and kingdoms were viewed synonymously.² For example, when giving the interpretation of the great image and the head of “fine gold,” Daniel said to King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:38, “*thou art this head of gold*” which we would understand as referring to his position as king. Yet, in verses 39 and 40, Daniel used king and kingdom interchangeably when speaking of the kingdoms that would follow King Nebuchadnezzar.

The First Kingdom Identified

Daniel interpreted “*the head of gold*” (Dan.2: 38) as King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the first kingdom of the dream. The head of the image aptly represented its preeminence. Gold was commonly used in Babylon not only as currency but also to adorn objects. The lion with eagle’s wings described in Daniel’s dream (Dan. 7: 4) also was an excellent representation for Babylon

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since the lion has always been regarded as the “king” of beasts and the eagle the most exalted of birds. The eagle wings indicated the swiftness with which Nebuchadnezzar gained his power.

Dreams and Vision in Daniel 2, 7, and 8

Interpretation		Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream Dan. 2:31-45		Daniel’s Dream Dan. 7:3-7	Daniel’s Vision Dan. 8:3-10
<i>Kingdom</i>	<i>Scriptural Identification</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Symbol</i>
First	Babylonian empire Dan. 2:38	Head v. 32	Gold	Lion with Eagle’s Wings v. 4	

Babylon was a highly developed and prosperous kingdom. Because Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom was portrayed as having preeminence with the value and quality of gold, Nebuchadnezzar became prideful. Daniel attempted to humble Nebuchadnezzar when he told him that it was “*the God of heaven*” Who gave him his power, strength, and glory (Dan. 2:36-37). Daniel’s terms, “*the God of heaven*” and later, “*the most high God*” (Dan. 5:18) remind the reader, that while Satan sought to be like “*the most High*” through these earthly kingdoms of men, the Son of the Most High God, the “*stone,*” ultimately will destroy them. His kingdom will grow as the stone did filling the entire earth (Dan. 2: 34, 35).

This first kingdom identification signifies God’s prophetic word and the future of the “*times of the Gentiles.*” When Daniel wrote his prophecy, the only world empire was Babylon. Only the omniscient, sovereign God could have revealed the identities of the next two kingdoms that were yet in the future.

The Second Kingdom Identified

The image’s two arms and breast of silver aptly picture the kingdom that conquered and followed Babylon, the Mede/Persian kingdom; for the arms, joined at the breast, represent their co-rule. By uniting in 550 BC, these two nations were successful in overcoming and capturing Babylon in 539 BC and destroying King Belshazzar who had succeeded Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 5). Historical record reveals that silver was the medium of exchange for these two nations and it was “collected through an extensive tax system (Ezra 4:13; Dan. 11:2).”³ This was the next Gentile kingdom that maintained its control over the land of Israel, trading Jerusalem under its feet. The lopsided bear in Daniel’s dream also represents this Mede/Persian alliance because the Persians ultimately dominated the Medes.⁴ The three ribs in the bear’s mouth most likely represent the three nations they conquered, Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt.⁵

Daniel’s vision confirms this identification, for the angel Gabriel told Daniel, “*The ram*

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which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia” (Dan. 8:20). The use of the image of the ram is also quite appropriate because the guardian spirit of the Persian kingdom was believed by the Persians to appear in the form of a horned ram, and the Persian king led his army wearing the head of a ram.⁶ The observation that the ram’s two horns were of unequal height foretold the dominance of the Persians over the Medes just as the lopsided bear had indicated. Knowledge of a culture and its symbols is helpful to gaining an understanding of the Biblical revelation, but in this instance, God provided an indisputable confirmation of the symbols through the angel Gabriel.

Dreams and Vision in Daniel 2, 7, and 8

Interpretation		Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream Dan. 2:31-45		Daniel’s Dream Dan. 7:3-7	Daniel’s Vision Dan. 8:3-10
Kingdom	Scriptural Identification	Symbol	Material	Symbol	Symbol
First	Babylonian empire Dan. 2:38	Head v. 32	Gold	Lion with Eagle’s Wings v. 4	
Second	Mede-Persian Empire Dan. 8:20	Breast & Arms v. 32	Silver	Bear with one Side Raised Higher v. 5	Ram with Two Horns one higher than the other vv. 3, 4

Daniel’s dream and vision occurred about fifty years after Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, during King Belshazzar’s reign. With Belshazzar’s death and the capture of Babylon, the Mede/Persian Empire became the dominant world power. The expansion of the empire encompassed Israel in addition to Asia Minor and Egypt. However, the strength of the Medes and Persians was no match for the leader of the next kingdom, Alexander the Great.

The Third Kingdom Identified

Young Alexander of Greece was the amazingly gifted general who swiftly conquered and replaced the Mede/Persian Empire with that of Greece. Once again, God clearly identified this kingdom that was symbolized in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream as the image’s belly and thighs of bronze. The Greeks used this metal alloy extensively to make their tools and weapons of war. Most likely, the image’s belly represented Alexander himself while the two thighs signified Seleucus and Ptolemy, two of his four generals that succeeded him and who played significant roles in history as rulers of Syria and Egypt.

In Daniel’s dream, the Greek Empire was represented by a leopard having four wings and

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heads while in his vision, it was portrayed by a male goat with feet that did not touch the ground and one prominent horn that was later replaced by four. The leopard’s four wings and the goat’s feet that did not touch earth both represented Alexander’s swiftness in conquering the Mede/Persians.

And the rough goat is the king of Greece: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

Daniel 8:21

It was God who revealed the identity of this empire to Daniel through the vision. He also used it to demonstrate that what He promises will come true, for He sovereignly controls history and His word or prophecy is sure or certain (Daniel 2:45). Long before Alexander was born or Greece was a significant country, God not only indicated that Alexander’s Grecian Empire would replace the Mede/Persian Empire on the world stage, but that four kings would share power following Alexander’s death as the leopard’s four heads and the goat’s four horns indicate (Dan. 8:22).

Historical record confirms this prophecy, for Alexander came to power, thrusting Greece into dominance as a world empire by conquering the Mede/Persians. When Alexander died at the age of 32 in Babylon, his four generals (Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy),⁷ divided the Greek Empire into four regions or nations (Dan. 8:22) that were individually ruled but united as one empire. This prophecy truly reveals the attribute of God’s trustworthiness in that what He showed in dreams and visions centuries ago is completely accurate from the historical perspective.

Dreams and Vision in Daniel 2, 7, and 8

Interpretation		Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream Dan. 2:31-45		Daniel’s Dream Dan. 7:3-7	Daniel’s Vision Dan. 8:3-10
<i>Kingdom</i>	<i>Scriptural Identification</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Symbol</i>
First	Babylonian empire Dan. 2:38	Head v. 32	Gold	Lion with Eagle’s Wings v. 4	
Second	Mede-Persian Empire Dan. 8:20	Breast & Arms v. 32	Silver	Bear with one Side Raised Higher v. 5	Ram with Two Horns one higher than the other vv. 3, 4
Third	Greek Empire Dan. 8:21	Belly and Thighs	Bronze	Leopard with Four Wings upon	He Goat with Single

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		v. 32		its Back v. 6	Notable Horn vv. 5-8
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The Fourth Kingdom Identified

Unlike the previous three kingdoms, God does not identify the fourth kingdom by name. Its identification is derived from descriptions found in the two dreams. In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream it is described as the image’s two legs of iron with feet and toes of iron and clay. In Daniel’s dream, the fourth beast is not a common, identifiable earthly creature but is merely described as being “*diverse*” (different, unique) from all the beasts that were before it. It is “*dreadful, terrible, and exceedingly strong*” with teeth of iron and stamping, crushing feet. Next, this beast is described as having ten horns, three of which are later replaced by a little horn having the eyes and mouth of a man -- a mouth speaking great or pompous words.

As previously shown, Daniel identified three of the four empire/kingdoms that precede Jesus Christ’s earthly kingdom by name. Many scholars speculate that Daniel’s fourth, unnamed empire is the Roman Empire.⁸ They base their conclusion on the historical pattern established by the three identified empires of Daniel. They note that the second empire, Mede-Persia, conquered the first empire, Babylon, and that in a similar manner, the third empire, Greece, conquered the second empire, Mede-Persia. Extrapolation of this pattern requires that the fourth empire must be the conqueror of the third empire, Greece. This makes the Roman Empire the only viable historical candidate for the fourth kingdom.

This conclusion is strengthened by the identification of “*iron*” as the metal that composes the image’s legs (Dan. 2:33; 7:7). The Roman legions used iron weapons of war and “were noted for their ability to crush all resistance with an iron heel.”⁹ Certainly, history records the Roman army’s ability to break conquered nations into pieces (literally: to “crush and demolish”).¹⁰ The image’s two legs indicate the two regional divisions of the Roman Empire; the Eastern, with its center in Constantinople and the Western, centered in Rome. Only liberal scholars who oppose the prophetic nature of Daniel reject the Roman Empire as Daniel’s fourth empire.¹¹ Nebuchadnezzar’s dream also suggests that there are two phases to the fourth empire while Daniel’s dream divides it even more finely into three.

The idea that there are two main phases to the Roman Empire is based upon the image’s anatomical and compositional distinctions regarding the fourth kingdom--the legs of iron are distinguished from the feet and toes of iron and clay. This would appear to suggest that there are two distinct phases to the fourth empire. Bible teachers traditionally view the iron legs as the first phase, representing the ancient Roman Empire; while the feet and toes suggest a second phase--a latter day, revived Roman Empire.

The beast of Daniel’s dream suggests a three-phased Roman Empire: In the first phase, the beast is called dreadful and terrible with teeth of iron and stamping feet. In the second phase, it is portrayed as having ten horns. In the third phase, a little horn with the eyes and mouth of a man comes up and replaces three of the ten horns and speaks “*great things*” (Dan. 7:8). Renald Showers defines the three-phased Roman Empire as:

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- Phase 1--The Conquering or Beast phase, symbolized by the iron and its destructive power
- Phase 2--The Ten Horn/Ten Kingdom phase, symbolized by the ten toes and the ten horns
- Phase 3--The Little Horn/Antichrist phase, symbolized by the little horn of Daniel 7¹²

He believes that Phase 1 was the ancient Roman Empire while Phase 2 represents a latter-day revived Roman Empire consisting of ten nations or regions. Phase 3, he says, will occur during the Tribulation period with the rise to power of the antichrist (the little horn) from within the ten-nation empire of Phase 2.¹³ This concept simply divides the second phase into two parts--the revived Roman Empire *before* and the revived Roman Empire *after* the antichrist rises to power.

According to this interpretation, phase 1 of the ancient Roman Empire ended and a gap or interim period of time occurs before Phase 2. The concept of a gap is justified by the fact that Daniel “passes over the present [Church] age, the period between the first and second coming of Christ, or, more specifically, the period between Pentecost and the rapture of the church.”¹⁴ Such gaps or skips do occur in the Old Testament with respect to the first and second coming of Christ.¹⁵ The Old Testament prophets portray Christ as being both a suffering Savior as well as a conquering King. At His first advent He came as a suffering Savior to redeem both humanity and creation; in the future He will return as a conquering King. The gap in time was not recognized by many in Israel and contributed to the rejection of their Messiah. Therefore, the gap concept is a possibility with regard to the Roman Empire. According to this scenario, the ancient Roman Empire will “revive” in the modern era as the ten-toe/ten-horn stage. This revived empire will include the former territories of the ancient Roman Empire and possibly those western hemisphere nations that trace their ancestry back to lands within the ancient Roman Empire. Certainly, this explanation satisfies the demands of the dreams and vision found in the book of Daniel.

The Fifth Kingdom Identified

The “*stone...cut without hands*” symbolizes the fifth and final kingdom that will crush the preceding four Gentile kingdoms, for Jesus Christ as the Son of God was not made with hands and is the “*stone*” that the builders (Israel) rejected (Dan. 2:34; Psalm 118: 22, Matt. 21: 42). His earthly kingdom will be established by the “*God of heaven*” beginning with Christ’s Millennial Kingdom, which will be centered in Jerusalem on Mount Zion and continue forever in a new heaven and earth (Dan 2:44; Is. 28:16; Zech. 14; Rev. 20:4, 21:1).

The Legacy of Humanity’s Four Gentile Kingdoms

In this fleeting review of history, it is apparent that God’s word is certain and He truly does establish as well as bring down kings and kingdoms (Dan. 2:21). It is also important to understand that the ancient kingdoms of Babylon, Mede-Persia, and Greece are gone, yet not

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entirely. When viewed sequentially, it is apparent that each succeeding empire/kingdom assimilated historically, culturally, and religiously the preceding conquered empire.¹⁶

- Under Cyrus, the Mede/Persian Empire fully accepted and absorbed the Babylonian religion and culture and integrated them into the Persian world beginning in 539 BC.
- Under Alexander the Great, the Greeks began to absorb the Mede/Persian culture in 331 BC, with a resulting amalgam of cultures later known as Hellenism.
- With Roman conquests, starting in 63 BC, the Romans “did not annihilate the religious, philosophic and cultural aspects of the various Greek and Hellenistic kingdoms but incorporated them into the multifaceted empire called Rome.”

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This means that when the first three empires ceased to rule, their cultures and religions did not also cease to exist; rather, they merged with the succeeding empire, “so that elements of each still exist in the final phase of the Roman Empire.”¹⁸

God used Daniel in a mighty way to give “wisdom unto the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding.” It is available to those who genuinely desire to seek it out. Through these dreams and vision He has revealed his outline for human history regarding mankind’s kingdoms and the coming kingdom of His own Son. As He promised, “*the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*”

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Third	Greek Empire Dan. 8:21	Belly and Thighs v. 32	Bronze	Leopard with Four wings upon	He Goat with single notable

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				its Back v. 6	Horn vv. 5-8
Fourth Stage 1	Not Identified most probably Roman Empire	Legs v. 33	Iron	Dreadful and Terrible Beast v. 7	
Fourth Stage 2	Not Identified most probably a reformed Roman Empire	Feet & Toes vv. 33, 41	Iron & Clay	Dreadful and Terrible Beast with ten Horns v. 7	
Fifth	Christ's Earthly Millennial Kingdom Rev. 20	Stone Cut w/o Hands v. 34	Stone	Son of Man with Clouds of Heaven vv. 13-14	

Suggested Reading:

Renald E. Showers. *The Most High God*. (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1982)

John F. Walvoord. *Daniel-the Key to Prophetic Revelation*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971).

John C. Whitcomb. *Daniel – Everyman's Bible Commentary*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985).