

Meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream: The Fourth Kingdom

History tells us the city of Rome was founded in 753 B.C. Then the Roman empire began to evolve from that city, and eventually by 146 B.C. it was pushing towards Carthage. A battle was emerging between the Roman Empire and the Grecian Empire. The Roman Army then defeated the Grecian Army.

By 27 B.C., the first Caesar was named. By 117 A.D. the Roman Empire exploded to its zenith. The empire extended from Great Britain to Babylon on the east and beyond. It also extended from Great Britain in the north to North Africa in the south. The Roman Empire was eventually split by a Caesar whose name was Diocletian. Two empires emerged as a result — the

Western Empire and the Eastern Empire. Interestingly enough, the Western Empire by all consensus existed until A.D. 476. The Eastern Empire continued until A.D. 1453. The eastern leg, the remaining part of the Roman Empire, continued almost 1,000

years longer than the western part. That tells us the Roman Empire not only covered a tremendous amount of territory, but the Roman Empire existed longer than any empire before it or since. Both the western as well as the eastern portions of the Roman Empire eventually collapsed.

Background. I invite you at this point to turn to Daniel

chapter 2. We have already discovered that Nebuchadnezzar's dream was of a statue. The head was gold, the chest and the arms were silver, the waist was bronze, the leg was iron, and the feet were iron and clay. Daniel has explained that the head of gold represented King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar, "You are the head of gold." Now, Nebuchadnezzar was king of the Babylonian Empire. We see consistently in scripture that we can refer to the kingdom or we can refer to the king. They are essentially the same. That is exactly what Daniel did in Daniel 2:38. Daniel said, "You, O king, are the head of gold." The head of gold is the Babylonian empire. Technically, it is the Neo-Babylonian Empire. That

empire existed from roughly 605 B.C. to 539 B.C.

In verse 39 Daniel says,

After you
there will
arise another
kingdom inferior to you . .
. Daniel 2:39a
(NASB)

We saw in our last study that

the word "inferior" is not the best translation of the Aramaic word. The word actually means "lower" or "earthly." In fact, it is the same word that is used at the end of the verse where it is translated as "earth." And so it is wrong to assume that the word means "inferior." It should be "earth" or "lower." And I take it to mean earth—that is, another earthly king-



dom. So we are talking about another kingdom here on earth. Daniel is making the point that King Nebuchadnezzar is of the earth, the Medo-Persian Empire is of the earth, the Grecian Empire is of the earth. We are going to see soon that the next empire is also of the earth. So he is making the point that they are earthly kingdoms.

When he says “another kingdom,” it is the Medo-Persian empire. We will be told that in Daniel 8. History tells us that empire existed from 539 to 331 B.C. In the same verse he then refers to a third kingdom, a kingdom of bronze. Daniel chapter 8 says that is the Grecian Empire or the empire of Greece. That empire existed from 331 B.C. to 146 B.C. In the introduction, I referred to the Battle of Carthage that occurred in 146 B.C. At that battle the Roman Empire decisively defeated the Grecian Empire. That began the fall of the Grecian Empire and the rise of the Roman Empire. That proved to be a decisive battle.

God Builds Up and Tears Down Nations. Our study last time ended with verse 39 where Daniel tells the king,

After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. Daniel 2:39 (NASB)

When we arrive at verse 40, we are introduced to a fourth kingdom. But before we read that verse, I want to reflect what God has said in His Word. In Jeremiah 18:5-6, the prophet writes this,

Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. Jeremiah 18:5-6 (NASB)

God makes a point. He says, “I am like the potter, and you are the clay. I get to do with you as I want.” Verse 7 says,

At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to

destroy it . . . Jeremiah 18:7 (NASB)

Notice that God is saying He might uproot or pull down or destroy a nation.

Verses 8-10 say,

If that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it. Jeremiah 18:8-10 (NASB)

What does God say? What God says that “depending upon the behavior of the kingdom, I will either bring it down or build it up.” It is God’s choice. In verse 9 He said, “I can build it up or I can plant it.” Such as the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Grecian Empire, or the Roman Empire. God can do this with all of the empires, and with any empire, and with the United States as well—or any other kingdom. Jeremiah 25:8-9 is an illustration of the principle. We just read the principle. Now here is an example of the principle. It begins in verse 8 of Jeremiah 25.

Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, “Because you have not obeyed My words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,” declares the LORD, “and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant . . .” Jeremiah 25:8-9a (NASB)

I am always fascinated by that little statement. God refers to King Nebuchadnezzar as “my servant.” God picked him. God chose him.

... and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of

gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Jeremiah 25:9b-11 (NASB)

So God says, “What is going to happen is that they are going to serve King Nebuchadnezzar for seventy years.” Then in verse 12 we are told,

“Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,” declares the LORD, “for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation.” Jeremiah 25:12(NASB)

Do you know what God just said? In verses 8 and 9, God said, “I am going to bring King Nebuchadnezzar and he is going to deport you.” God is punishing Israel because of their sin. “And you are going to be captive for seventy years.” Then God said, “At the end of that time, I am going to discipline King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian Empire, for its evil.” Notice what He said. “And I will punish the king of Babylon.” Actually, it is not King Nebuchadnezzar at this point. There is another king in the line of succession. Why the punishment? For their iniquity. What is the point? God brings up nations, and He puts them down. It is God’s choice. God is in control of the nations of the world. That is the teaching of scripture.

If you were to read Isaiah 45, verses 1-3, you find another example. It is about the Medo-Persian Empire. God said He is going to raise up the Medo-Persian Empire. So when He raises up the Medo-Persian Empire, that means the downfall of the Babylonian Empire. Isaiah said the same thing that Jeremiah said. That is the principle. We find in Daniel the fulfillment of both of them. Daniel has given us statements that describe exactly what God is doing with the nations of the world.

Meaning of the Fourth Kingdom. Our study begins in verse 40 of Daniel, chapter 2. It is important to remember that Daniel 2 is not about all the empires of the world. Daniel 2 focuses on the kingdoms since 605 B.C. to the

end of time that occupied the land of Israel. The Babylonian Empire occupied the land of Israel. Then the Medo-Persian Empire occupied the land of Israel followed by the Grecian Empire. History tells us that the empire that next occupied the land of Israel was the Roman Empire. So let us look at verse 40, and begin our study.

Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. Daniel 2:40 (NASB)

The Roman Empire. There are a number of things I want you to notice. First, Daniel does not name the empire. In fact, if you were to review the book of Daniel, you would find that this empire is not named. All we are told is that there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron. Now notice this kingdom is symbolized by iron. We have already made the point that the Babylonian Empire, when it is referred to as being the head of gold, was known as the city of gold. The Medo-Persian Empire is symbolized by the word “silver.” In Aramaic it meant “money.” It was noted for its taxation. The Grecian Empire used bronze or copper in its military weapons. So the question then comes, which kingdom is known for its use of iron? Interestingly, a Swedish archaeologist, Oscar Montelius coined the phrase, “the Roman Iron Age.”¹ The Swedish archaeologist referred to Rome as the Roman Iron Age because of its prolific use of iron. So Daniel tells us that you can recognize this kingdom because it uses iron. Rome was known for its use of iron in its military weapons.

Then we are told “inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things...” What does that mean? It refers to the fact that iron is very strong. If we compare iron to gold, or to silver, or to bronze, iron is always significantly stronger.

What is significant about the Medo-Persian Empire as compared to the Babylonian Empire? The Medo-Persian Empire occupied the same territory that the Babylonian Empire did. It was much larger. It also lasted longer. The Grecian Empire occupied the same territory as the Medo-Persians. It also occupied the same territory as the Babylonian Empire. The

1. “Roman Iron Age.” Spotting History. (www.spottinghistory.com)

Grecian Empire lasted just about as long as the Medo-Persian Empire did. The Roman Empire, however, expanded greatly in every direction. The Roman Empire occupied the same territory occupied by the other empires. So when we are told it will crush and break all these others into pieces, it is referring to the fact it occupied the same territory. It crushes them. It is powerful. It is significant. It is consistent also with the fact that the Roman Empire was the next empire that occupied the land of Israel. It also defeated the Grecian Empire. So logically it should be the fourth kingdom. The Roman Empire should be the fourth kingdom. I also want you to note the vast majority of the early church fathers identified the fourth kingdom as being the Roman Empire. All the information strongly reveals the fourth kingdom is the Roman Empire.

Verse 41 gives some more information about the fourth kingdom.

In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom . . . Daniel 2:41a (NASB)

Now, there are a couple of things to notice. The first thing is that it is a divided kingdom. When scripture says the king-

dom was composed of iron and of potter's clay, the Aramaic word is "baked clay." It is hardened clay and iron combined together. But the point is that clay and iron is not as strong as it would be if it was all iron. The question is, "What is significant about the ten toes?"

We are going to look at Daniel 7 in order to understand what is happening here. In Daniel 7:7 we are told,

After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast . . . Daniel 7:7a (NASB)

This would be the Roman Empire. When we study this passage later we will explain why it is the Roman Empire. Then Daniel says it is,

. . . dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong . . . Daniel 7:7b (NASB)

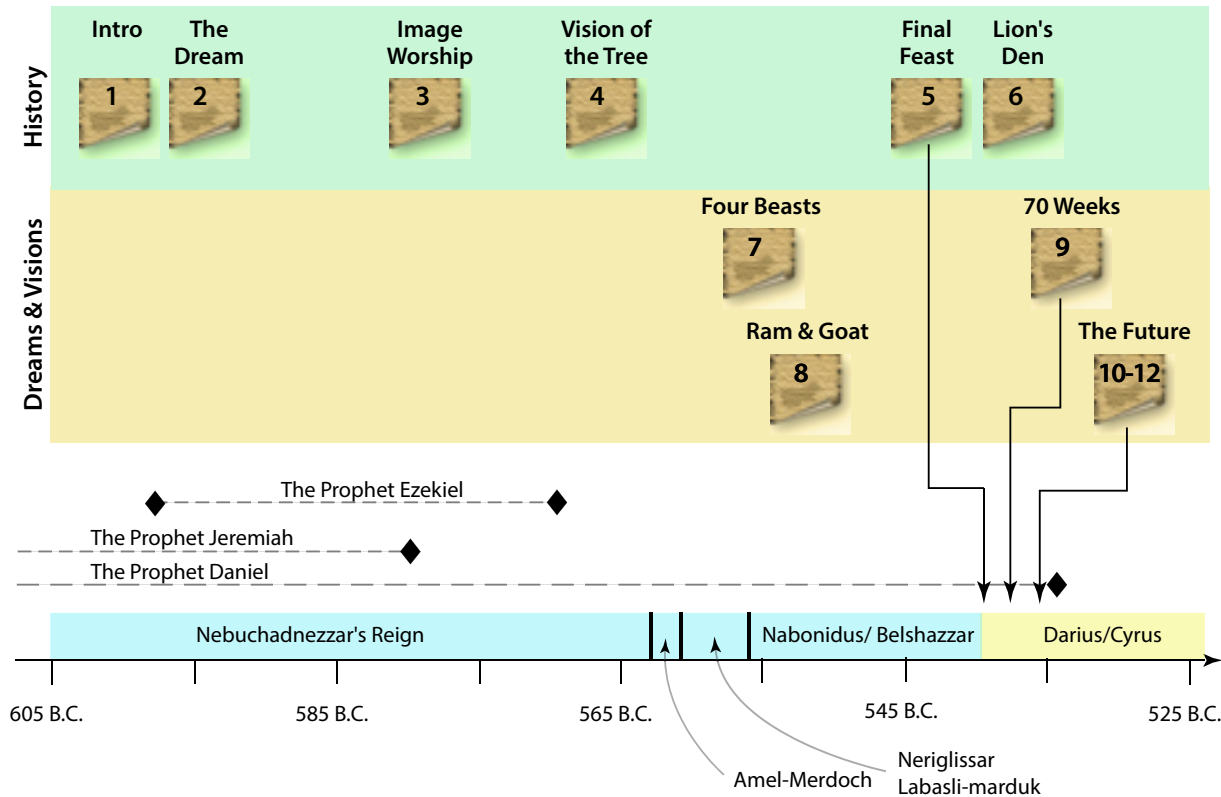
That is consistent with the idea of iron. He says,

. . . and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. Daniel 7:7 (NASB)

Future Alliance of Ten Nations. Now, think about the ten



Outline of Daniel



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toes. Here are ten horns. It is the same idea. Verse 8 continues,

And while I was contemplating the horns, behold another horn, a little horn, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it. And behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth uttering great boasts.
 Daniel 7:8 (NASB)

What is the point of verse 8? First of all, the kings are contemporaneous. That is, they reigned at the same time, not in sequence. That is an important concept to capture. That is, this is an alliance of kings. They are an alliance of nations, like NATO. Together, they will form an alliance that controls the world. One king will defeat three of them—maybe kill three of the kings—and then become the lead ruler of the

world. We will learn later he is the anti-Christ. We are told that he utters great things. We are also told that he is a man. That is important.

Jump down to verse 23. The verse says,

... the fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth ... Daniel 7:23a (NASB)

So Daniel identifies this beast. He tells us it is a kingdom. So if you were not sure it was a kingdom, he tells us explicitly in this verse that it is. He says, “on the earth.” So, he tells us that it is on the earth. It is not heavenly. The rest of the verse says,

... which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.. Daniel 7:23b (NASB)

Now carefully read verse 24. The verse describes the ten toes. It says,

As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise . . . Daniel 7:24a (NASB)

The horns are ten kings, and they are the ten toes. The ten kings emerge from the fourth kingdom. The last part of the verse says,

. . . and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. Daniel 7:24b (NASB)

This is the same story that you saw in verses 7 and 8.

Daniel 2 does not go into all this detail. Why? It will be given in chapter 7. So if you are a little confused, hang on until we study Daniel 7. But the point that we want to make now is that the ten toes are ten kings—ten kings that form an alliance. It is ten nations that form an alliance; or to put it another way, they form a world empire.

Now we will return to Daniel 2:42. The verse says the ten toes are partly iron and clay. Here is the verse,

As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. Daniel 2:42 (NASB)

Now this makes sense, if you think for a minute. An alliance of ten nations will be stronger than any single kingdom. But an alliance is also weak because the alliance can be dissolved at any time.

Verse 43 adds,

And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men . . . Daniel 2:43a (NASB)

Now, what does the “seed of men” mean? It is just saying that the kingdom is earthly.

. . . but they will not adhere to one another, even as

iron does not combine with pottery. Daniel 2:43b (NASB)

This is an earthly kingdom. Ten future kings emerge from the fourth kingdom.

The Millennial Kingdom of Christ. When we come to verse 44, we discover another kingdom. This kingdom is the fifth empire. The first one was the Babylonian. The second one was the Medo-Persian. The third one was the Grecian, and the fourth one was the Roman Empire. This is the fifth kingdom.

Verse 44 says,

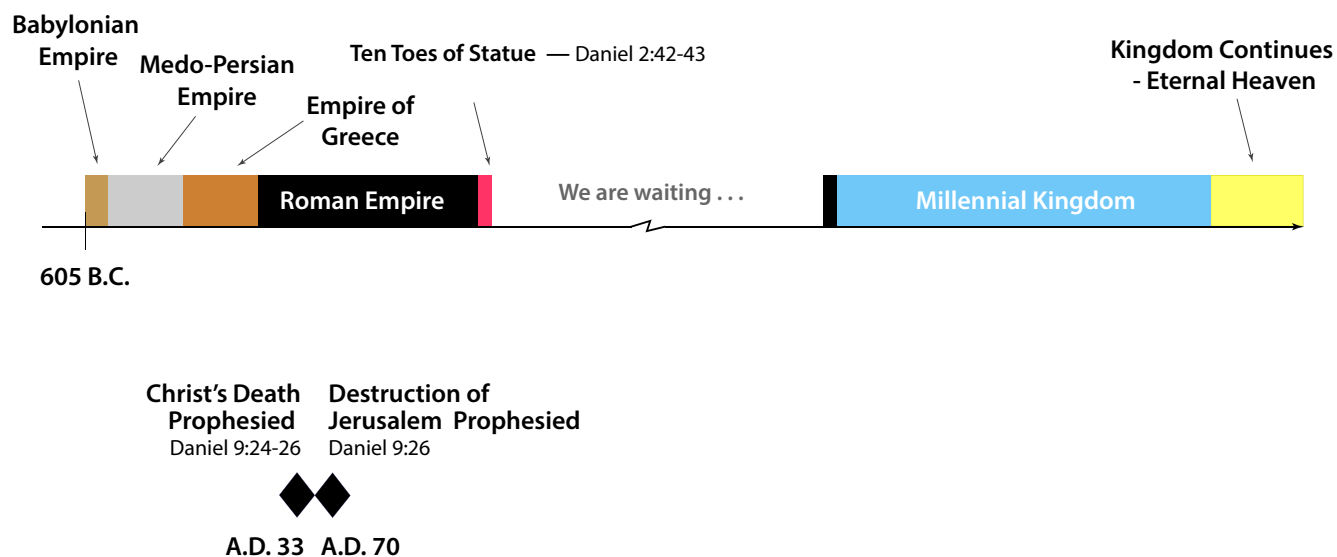
In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Daniel 2:44 (NASB)

Now, there are a couple of things we need to notice. First of all, this is the next kingdom, this is the fifth kingdom. That is important for us to see. This agrees with verses 34 and 35. In Daniel 2:34-35 Daniel said,

You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. Daniel 2:34-35 (NASB)

Now we will try to put this all together. The first thing that is important in verse 44 is that Daniel said this kingdom will never be destroyed. At the end of the verse, he said it will endure for forever. So what does that tell us? This kingdom will last forever. What happened to the first four kingdoms? The Babylonian Empire did not last forever. The Medo-Persian Empire did not last forever. The Grecian Empire did

Five Kingdoms Prophesied In Daniel



Daniel 2:31-45; 7:1-8, 21-28; 9:24-27

not last forever. The Roman Empire and its future version will not last forever. But this kingdom is going to last forever. Notice it will crush all of the previous kingdoms. All of them will be destroyed.

In verse 35 we are told a stone smashes the feet. When it does, the whole statue dissolves. It becomes like chaff. The pieces are so fine that the wind blows it all away. Now that is small! So this new kingdom is powerful and ends the reign of human government. Why? Did you catch the first part of verse 44? It says,

In those days the God of heaven will set up a kingdom . . . Daniel 2:44a (NASB)

We are told that God set up this kingdom. In Jeremiah 18 we learned that God raises kingdoms and pulls them down. God is the one who is in control of human history. God will end

Gentile rule and set up His own kingdom.

Gap in Prophecy. We are also told when this will happen. It says,

In the days of those kings . . . Daniel 2:44a (NASB)

Now, what kings are we talking about? The ten toes are ten kings. So God's kingdom will be set up in the days of the ten kings, the alliance of ten nations. You might wonder, "When will that happen?" Well, we are in a time gap. We know the gap did not occur between the Babylonian empire and the Medo-Persian empire because Daniel 8 will tell us they follow one another immediately. Also, we know that from history. The gap did not occur between the Medo-Persian empire and the empire of Greece for the same reasons. We know that the gap did not occur between the empire of Greece and the Roman Empire for the same two reasons. The gap will not occur between the ten kings and God's kingdom because

Daniel says “in the days of those kings.” So that means the gap exists between the establishment of the Roman Empire and the future alliance of ten kings. Today, we are living in this time gap. We are waiting for the alliance of ten nations to be established.

Next verse 45 continues describing God’s kingdom.

Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy. Daniel 2:45 (NASB)

So the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy. We know this is true because almost one hundred prophecies in Daniel have been fulfilled already.

Conclusion. Now we wrap up the chapter. Verse 46 says,

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. Daniel 2:46 (NASB)

Some people have said, “The king should not have been bowing down to Daniel and worshiping him.” I do not think he was worshiping Daniel. I think he was worshiping the God that Daniel worshiped, the God that gave Daniel the dream and the interpretation. Verse 47 adds,

The king answered Daniel and said, “Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.” Daniel 2:47 (NASB)

I think about Daniel standing before this king when all of a sudden this king changed. Remember the king had been threatening him. The king threatened to tear him limb from limb and make their house a manure pile? Now this king quickly changed. It would have been interesting to have been there in the throne room to watch what actually happened. The king said, “God of gods.” Some people say, “Oh!

he became a Christian!” No he did not. He was a polytheist. The chief god was Marduk and he worshiped many others. Do you know what he did? He has just added God to his list of gods. Daniel’s God is the chief one.

Verse 48 describes Daniel’s reward for interpreting the king’s dream.

Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. Daniel 2:48 (NASB)

So Daniel receives the promotion that was promised to the wise men. Verse 49 concludes,

And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king’s court. Daniel 2:49 (NASB)

So what did Daniel do? He appeals on behalf of his friends. He wants them to join him. I suspect there was a motivation for the request. Then they could help him administer Babylon.

We have been given a glimpse into our future. We are in a gap in prophecy between the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of the alliance of ten toes or ten nations. This alliance will control the world. We will discover more about this alliance and what will happen when it occurs in Daniel 7, 9, and 11. I thank God for this wonderful prophecy. Our God has given us a glimpse into His plan for the end times. He wants believers to understand what He has planned. Thank you, dear Father!