

14. The Brazen Kingdom

Under what symbol was the third kingdom represented in the great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw?

"Another third kingdom of brass, shall bear rule over all the earth!" Daniel 2:39.

We are not left to search the pages of secular history in order to discover the identity of this third world power, for just as MedoPersia was designated by Daniel as the destroyer of Babylon, Inspiration again provides us with the necessary clue.

In the eighth chapter of this prophecy, where we have a more detailed account of the conflict between the second and third empires, the rivals are specifically named as "the kings of Media and Persia" and "the king of Greece" respectively. (Daniel 8:20,21.) Again in the tenth chapter the prophet declares: "The prince of Greece shall come." Verse 20. And still again in the eleventh chapter it is stated that the kings of Persia would "stir up all against the realm of Greece."

Verse 2. Greece is thus conclusively identified as the third empire, corresponding to the brazen portion of the image.

Whence did the Greeks originate?

"The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan." Genesis 10: 2.

The word "Grecia" in the book of Daniel is, in the original, Yavan, which is precisely the same word as Javan. The people of the third empire were the descendants of Javan, the son of Japheth. It is indeed significant that in this genealogical list, Javan is mentioned immediately after Madai, who was the progenitor of the Medes and their close relatives the Persians. Little did Moses, when he penned it, realize that the descendants of Madai and Javan were to constitute two great empires which would successively control the greater part of the civilized world.

When the Greeks first emerged into historical times they comprised a large number of independent city states scattered over the Greek mainland, the islands of the Aegean Sea, and the coasts of Asia Minor, with little bond between them save kinship of race, and devotion to certain religious centers such as that of Apollo at Delphi, and Demeter at Thermopylae.

It was the attempt on the part of the Persians to extend their vast Asiatic empire into Europe which forged these highly democratic communities into a powerful nation, and the two men responsible for raising the Greek kingdom to a world empire were Philip II of Macedon, and his son, Alexander the Great.

Philip ascended the throne of the petty state of Macedonia at the age of twenty-four (399 BC.) and at once applied himself to building up a powerful military force to save his country from extinction. He invented the solid Macedonian phalanx of spear men armed with heavy pikes eighteen feet long, and protected on either flank with a flexible cavalry force. With this remodeled army of 10,000 footmen and 600 horsemen he made Macedonia the most powerful state in Greece. He then abandoned Aegae, the ancestral fortress of the Macedonian kings, and established a new capital at Pella.

Invited by the Thessalians to intervene in the civil strife in the Greek peninsula, he responded with alacrity and was soon head of the Hellenic Confederacy. At once he broached his plans for war against Persia to liberate the Greek cities in Asia. All was ready for the campaign when Philip was assassinated, and his son, Alexander, at the age of twenty, ascended the throne. (336 BC.)

Having made himself master of the peninsula, Alexander turned his attention to his father's great purpose, the destruction of Persia and the conquest of Asia.

To learn whether he had the favor of the gods he went to Delphi. Arriving on a forbidden day he was told by the priestess that she could not prophesy. Seizing her, Alexander began to drag her toward the temple. "My son," she cried out, "you are irresistible!" "That is all the oracle I need," he answered and departed.

Nevertheless the task was a gigantic one and the odds were almost all against him. The Persians could muster thirty times the forces of Alexander. The treasuries of Susa and Persepolis were bursting with gold and silver, whereas the coffers of Pella had been practically exhausted by Alexander in securing himself on the throne. Furthermore, the Persian fleet controlled the whole seaboard of Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt. Persia's one fatal weakness was its monarch, Darius Codomannus, who, despite his vast resources, was no match for the master mind of Alexander and the morale of the Greeks.

In 334 BC. Alexander threw his army of 30,000 foot soldiers and 5,000 horsemen across the Hellespont at Abydos and hastened to meet the Persians. The two armies met at Granicus (334 BC.), where

the Persian army of 40,000 strong wilted before the Macedonian Phalanx, though Alexander himself was only saved from death in the thick of the fight by the intervention of his foster-brother, Clitus.

Hellespontine Phrygia, Lydia, Sardis, Lycia, and the Ionian cities at once submitted, and Western Asia Minor was at his feet. The next spring he pressed on through Phrygia to Cappadocia and the Cilician Gates. At Issus (333 BC.), another vast Persian army, this time commanded by Darius himself, met him, but again the Macedonian tactics won.

From the safety of the Euphrates, whence Darius had fled, leaving his mother, wife, and children behind in his haste, the Persian king now sued for peace, but Alexander replied: "I am lord of all Asia, and therefore do thou come to me.... But if thou disputes the kingdom then wait and fight for it again, and do not flee; for I will march against thee wherever thou may be!"

Realizing the danger of penetrating farther into Asia while Syria and Egypt were still in Persian hands, Alexander did not at once pursue Darius, but turned south to secure his communications. (332 BC.) Most of the Phoenician cities submitted. Tyre, which made a determined stand, was taken by assault. Arriving in Egypt, he received its submission without a battle. Cyrene quickly followed suit. (331 BC.)

Alexander remained in Egypt only long enough to appoint Greek governors of Egypt, Libya, and Arabia, to choose the site for the new city of Alexandria, to replace Tyre as the trading center of the Eastern Mediterranean, and visit the temple of Zeus Ammon in the Siwa oasis deep in the Sahara.. (331 BC.) He then returned to Syria and assembled an army of 40,000 infantry and 7,000 horse to deal finally with Darius. On the plains of Arbela (331 BC.) his army met 1,000,000 Persian foot soldiers with 40,000 horsemen. Though hopelessly outnumbered, Alexander for the third time carried the day, and Darius again fled eastward.

Alexander followed Darius to Babylon. Susa, Persepolis, and Ecbatana without coming up with him. Retreating still eastward, however, the ill-fated king was treacherously made prisoner by Bessus, satrap of Bactria. When he refused to mount a horse and continue his flight, he was stabbed and left dying on the ground. When Alexander came up and found the corpse he respectfully covered with his own cloak the last king of the second empire.

How extensive were the domains of the third empire to be?

"Which shall bear rule over all the earth." Daniel 2:39.

Having sent the body of the Persian king back to his ladies at Persepolis for burial, Alexander marched on eastward (330 BC.). In 326 BC., three years after the death of Darius and seven years after crossing the Hellespont, Alexander invaded India through the Khyber Pass, and overran the Indus Valley. He would have crossed the Punjab desert into the valley of the Ganges, but the Macedonians, decimated in numbers and worn out by the long years of campaigning, refused to go farther. Reluctantly Alexander agreed to go back (325 BC.), reaching Babylon once more ten years after setting foot in Asia. (323 BC.) There he received the homage of the world.

"They came," says Thomas Arnold, "from all the extremities of the earth, to propitiate his anger, to celebrate his greatness, or to solicit his protection."-Thomas Arnold in "History of Rome," Vol. 2, chapter 30, paragraph 1.

"I am persuaded," declared Arrian, "there was no nation, city, nor people then in being whither his name did not reach."-Arrian in "History of Alexander's Expedition," Rookes' Translation, Vol. 2, page 185.

"Whatever origin he might boast of, or claim to himself," Arrian adds, "there seems to me to have been some divine hand presiding both over his birth and actions, inasmuch that no mortal upon earth either excelled or equaled him."-Ibid, page 185.

Appian of Alexandria declared that "the empire of Alexander was splendid in its magnitude, in its armies, in the success and rapidity of his conquest, and it wanted little of being boundless and unexampled." -Preface to "The Roman History," Horace White's translation, Vol. 1, page 5.

In what ways was brass an appropriate symbol for the Greek empire?

As silver was used for personal adornment by the Persians so brass was characteristic of the Greek soldiers, though with the latter the metal served a more utilitarian purpose. Brazen armor was used by the Greeks from very early times. Even in Homeric poetry we find the expression, "the brass-mailed Greeks."

Brass was used by the Greeks not only for body armor, but also on their head-dresses and sandals. It was likewise used for shields, swords, battle-axes, and for the tips of spears and arrows, as well as on chariots, and to decorate and strengthen the prows of their ships.

So characteristic was brass of the Greeks that we find the expressions, "to be struck with brass"

used to describe wounds inflicted by the sword. The spear is called a "point of brass" and "smiting with a brazen edge" is a term used for wielding a battle axe. "Skilled in brass" meant "skilled in arms" and to be "brazen" meant metaphorically to be hard, strong, or stout. "Brazen-voiced" indicated clear, ringing tones, "brazen teeth" perfection of strength, and heroes were credited with "hearts of brass."

In the seventh edition of Liddel and Scott's Greek Lexicon there are 164 words containing the root chalc (brass), while there are only eighty-four compounds containing the word "silver" and seventy-one from "iron," clearly showing the supremacy of this metal in the third empire.

How strikingly does God's view contrast with man's estimate of the great age of Greece?

Historians frequently refer to the age of Greece as a golden age and expatiate upon the legacy of science and art which it passed on to succeeding generations. God, however, denominates it an age of brass, of tawdry glory with little real merit, and passes it over with the briefest reference. Paul designates this supreme period of the human intellect as the "times of this ignorance." By inspiration he warned of its "science falsely so-called" (1 Timothy 6: 20) and its "philosophy and vain deceit" (Col. 2: 8) which led the Greeks to characterize the Gospel of salvation as "foolishness" and its preachers as "babblers."

How long did the third empire endure and by what was it superseded?

"After thee shall, arise ... the fourth kingdom." Daniel 2:39, 40.

When Alexander received the respects and tribute of ambassadors from the ends of the earth at Babylon there was one people not represented. No one came from the city of Rome on the banks of the Tiber. Was it that they felt themselves too insignificant to be noticed, or was it that, even at this early date, they were too proud to bow before the Great King? If Alexander had been able to carry out his plan for a great Western expedition, he certainly would have come upon the Romans and they would have had to submit or be crushed.

"It is hardly open to question," says Bevan, in his History of Greece, "that he would have annexed Sicily and Great Hellas, conquered Carthage, and overrun the Italian peninsula."

But once again Providence decreed that this was not to be. Following a carousal in Babylon to celebrate the departure of Admiral Nearchus to make a circuit of the southern sea via the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the Nile Canal, the Nile, and the Mediterranean, Alexander fell into a high fever. For six days the fever raged and the sailing of the expedition was deferred. His closest companions spent a whole night of intercession in the temple of Serapis but to no avail, and on the evening of June 13, 323 BC., he died.

Truly says Bevan:

"The untimely deaths of sovereigns at particular junctures have often exercised an appreciable influence on the course of events; but no such accident has diverted the paths of history so manifestly and utterly as the death of Alexander."-"History of Greece," page 422.

His plans for the consolidation of his Asiatic empire were frustrated by the partition of the subjugated territories among his generals, and his scheme for the conquest of the West was never carried out. And so, unmolested, Rome grew from a village to a city and from a city to a kingdom. It laid low the rival power of Carthage, and then it turned upon and broke the third empire. The steps by which Rome strode to world power will be described in the greater detail later. Here it must suffice for us to quote the opening paragraphs of Polybius' famous history of those times:

"Who among us is so worthless or spiritless as not to wish to know by what means, and under what kind of politics, the Romans in less than fifty-three years succeeded in subjecting nearly the whole inhabited world to their sole government-a thing unexampled in history."-I, 1, 4, 5.