

The Greatest Of The Prophets

thinks that this expression furnishes us with a hint of the date for the beginning of the writing of the book, even as Daniel 10:1 and 12:13 seem to indicate that it was finished under the third year of Cyrus and only shortly before the death of the prophet.

In any case we have in this chapter revealing incidents in the early life of one of the greatest men of all time. They illustrate the way in which God trains special men whom He plans to use in His work. As a statesman, Daniel had a profound influence on two world empires and exercised this influence during a prolonged career. He was the only prophet during Old Testament times through whom God saw fit to outline in advance the rise and fall of the world's empires down to the end of earth's history and the setting up of the everlasting kingdom of God. This was indeed a high honor which God bestowed upon this Hebrew captive, but the honor and trust were not misused. Daniel is one of the few men of the Bible about whom nothing seriously evil has been recorded; and at the close of his remarkably long life he received the divine assurance that he could confidently expect a bright and happy resurrection-blessed promise for a long life well spent amid trying and perplexing circumstances.

2. THE GREAT IMAGE

The prophecy given in this chapter may be regarded as the ABC of prophetic symbols. It furnishes the key to all the rest, not only to the others given in this book, but to those of the book of Revelation. In point of time also, it is the first which gives an outline of the world's history from that time down to the setting up of the everlasting kingdom of God.

From a literary point of view also it is remarkable. Dr. S. R. Driver expresses it: "The representation of the magnificent but hollow splendor of earthly empire in the form of a huge, gleaming, terrible colossus, of many colors and different metals, brilliant of its summit, but gradually deteriorating, both in material and in appearance, toward its base, and, when struck by the foiling rock, instantly collapsing into atoms, is fine and striking." — "Commentary," page 17.

1. And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams; and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep went from him.

Since Daniel was carried to Babylon in the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar, and then was given three years of training in the royal school, the apparent discrepancy has given no end of trouble to the commentators. Some modern scholars have adopted the view that there is here a double method of reckoning the reign of the king: that in the account given in the first chapter he was then reigning as co-regent with his father Nabopolassar, while on this reckoning he is sole monarch. Driver, however, defends the text as it stands, on the basis of the well-known postdating practice, under which custom the accession year was not counted, but the royal reign was reckoned from the first full year thereafter. This with the universal Hebrew usage of counting fractions of periods, whether of months or of years, as full units, would easily explain every apparent discrepancy in this case.

Dreamed dreams. Among all the ancient Oriental nations dreams were considered matters of profound importance. Numerous classical examples of this are recorded.

His sleep went from him. The more literal rendering would be, "His sleep was come to pass," that is, it was finished or done with. He found he couldn't sleep any more at that time.

2. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the enchanters, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.

The picture which is here presented is that of an Oriental despot who found that he couldn't sleep. In the middle of the night, perhaps, he issued a peremptory summons to round up all the men around the court who professed to have any dealings with supernatural events, to come in and "tell the king his dreams." It was no matter to the king that he was depriving a dozen or ten dozen men of their sleep; he must have his whim gratified on the instant, no matter what trouble or inconvenience it might cause any number of others. Why did the king tolerate these men around him, except to help him out of such circumstances?

All the other classes of men enumerated here are well known in the ancient literatures. Fully one

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fourth of Ashurbanipal's library as discovered has to do with omens or magic of one sort or another. But the name Kasdim (Chaldeans) has caused much discussion, and until the past few years it was used as a point of attack by the "critics." These have said that the word was always used in a national or ethnic sense, never as the name of a class, until long after Daniel's time, hence this term helped to prove the "late" date of the book. Boutflower, a stout defender of the book of Daniel, devotes a whole chapter to this subject and proves that the name Chaldeans was that of a highly privileged class of priests of the god Bel, even as far back as the days of Nebuchadnezzar. He turns the battle around and handsomely shows that the presence of this term "Chaldeans" in the book of Daniel is now an asset, instead of a liability. "The defenders of the orthodox view would now be as sorry to lose the presence of those jealous, contentious individuals as to have the once much-debated, much-doubted-of Belshazzar removed from the scene."--In and Around the Book of Daniel, page 35.

3. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream.

According to the words here used and hereafter, it is not entirely clear whether the king had really forgotten the dream entirely, or whether he was merely withholding the dream itself in order to test the reputed skill of these supposedly wise men.

In this connection it should be remembered that King Nebuchadnezzar was at this time a young man, in his early twenties, and thus not much older than Daniel. He was, moreover, a man of keen intellect and was well able to judge the claims of the men around him as to their genuineness or their fraudulent nature. He seems to have been one of the ablest and cleverest monarchs who ever occupied a throne.

4. Then spoke the Chaldeans to the king in the Syrian language, O king, live forever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.

These high-caste priests of Bel, the Chaldeans were acting as spokesmen for the entire company, which doubtless comprised several dozen persons. Many of these priests were probably elderly, dignified men, almost as accustomed to deference as was the king himself.

Beginning with the words O king, the Aramaic language is used in the book down to the last verse of chapter 7. As for the guesses assigned by scholars for this peculiar division into two languages, see the Introduction, pages 23-3.

It seems evident that the Aramaic was the ordinary court language around Babylon at this time. Many scholars think that the words in the Syrian language (literally, "in Aramaic") are a gloss, and they try to trace to Jerome's mistake the idea that the wise men spoke to the king in this language. From this attempt arose another mistake, that the Biblical Aramaic was called Chaldee. From the numerous Aramaic documents which have been discovered during the last few decades, it has become abundantly clear that Aramaic was on its way to become a world language in Daniel's time.

5. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if you make not known unto me the dream and the interpretation thereof, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill.

Instead of the clause The thing is gone from me, which is not in the original Septuagint, according to Charles, most modern commentators substitute, "The word from me is sure," that is, What I say will surely be carried out. The modern Jewish translation prepared in 1917 by the Jewish Publication Society of America, has: "The thing is certain with me: if etc." This of course carries the idea that the king had not really forgotten the dream, but was withholding it and making the occasion a means of testing the supernatural claims of his wise men. His opinion of these men was probably not high. All these men claimed to have magical or supernatural means of knowing things, the different classes among them, magicians, astrologers, and so forth, merely adopting different means of attaining this magical knowledge. Now the young king had caught them in a situation where he could actually test out their loud claims. He may have been getting a good deal of malicious fun secretly from their predicament.

You shall be cut in pieces. That is, dismembered limb from limb; similar to the custom of the Middle Ages of drawing and quartering. All the Oriental despots, particularly the Assyrians and the Persians, were notorious for their savage cruelty in carrying out their executions. Witness the records in the

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Behistun inscription.

6. *But if you show the dream and the interpretation thereof, you shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor: therefore show me the dream and the interpretation thereof.*

The king was no less able to reward than to punish.

7. *They answered the second time and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.*

This answer may sound more respectful than the former one, but it is essentially a repetition of their former reply.

8. *The king answered and said, I know of a certainty that you would gain time, because you see the thing is gone from me.*

The matter was hastening to a climax. The king was not slow to understand their implied acknowledgment that they could not do anything in the way of revealing a genuine secret, but he was not at all disposed to let them off easy in this case. Probably he never had much respect for them or their business.

The expression The thing is gone from me, is like the previous one, Inasmuch as you see the thing is certain with me, that, if etc.” The temper of absolute monarchs has never been known to improve under opposition or resistance.

9. *But if you make not known unto me the dream, there is but one law for you; for you have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me the interpretation thereof.*

Have prepared lying and corrupt words. He probably means by this that they had agreed together as to what they should tell the king about the meaning of his dream, if he would only tell them what the dream was about.

Till the time be changed, that is, until something should arise to give them a chance to get out of their predicament.

10. *The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter, forasmuch as no king, lord, or ruler, bath asked such a thing of any magician, or enchanter, or Chaldean.*

11. *And it is a rare thing that the king requires, and there is no other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.*

This language can hardly be regarded as anything but a flat statement that the king was unreasonable in making such a request. Undoubtedly the leading ones among these priests of Bel-Marduk were learned, rich, and enormously influential; they had not been accustomed to being put in a corner and made to look like impostors. But in the last part of their answer they tacitly acknowledged that they did not have any supernatural power to reveal secrets; there was no one who could do such a thing except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. In other words, these gods did not really have anything to do in the way of revealing such secrets to the Chaldeans and their companions. Their claims to such superhuman knowledge were only a pretense.

Probably the real idea behind what they said would be that only the “high gods,” or the great or supreme gods, could reveal such a thing, whereas they themselves (the Chaldeans) did not have any dealings with these “high gods,” but only with the subordinate or lower gods. This distinction in rank among the heathen deities is found all through the heathen religions, and became the foundation of what is commonly called “devil worship.” These “devils” or “demons” were recognized as subordinate in rank to other beings whom the priests regarded as beyond their reach.

12. *For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.*

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13. So the decree went forth, and the wise men were to be slain; and they sought Daniel and his companions to be slain.

Herodotus tells us that about a century later Darius I of Persia actually carried out such a wholesale massacre of the Magi, which resulted in their almost complete extermination. This decree by Nebuchadnezzar was not to be any quiet or secret assassination, but a public execution; so the proper officials were sent out to get the condemned men together for their doom. As Daniel and his companions were by this time regarded as included among the professional wise men, they also were hunted up by the officials, though they evidently had not been among those who had been summoned before the king. Probably only a few of the leaders had actually been present at the interview with the king, whereas now the decree was to include all who belonged to these professional classes of wise men, perhaps hundreds in number. The executions were planned to embrace many more than those representative ones who had met the king.

14. Then Daniel returned answer with counsel and prudence to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, who was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon;

15. He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Wherefore is the decree so urgent from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.

The word here given as prudence is literally "taste," and means discretion or tact. Arioch is an ancient Akkadian name.

Captain of the king's guard. This expression occurs several times in connection with the history of Israel in the Old Testament, once also as the title of an officer of the pharaoh of Egypt. The word here translated "guard" originally meant butchers, or slaughterers of animals, not executioners; yet in some way not clearly traced these men became the official bodyguard of the king.

So urgent. Driver says that this word "urgent" is not strong enough to express the original. The Jewish translation reads: "So peremptory."

16. And Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would appoint him a time, and he would show the king the interpretation.

We are not informed how Daniel managed to conform to the royal etiquette in making this request for more time and a stay of the execution. Montgomery suggests that he may have had Arioch intercede for him, or that the latter may have granted a respite informally on his own authority.

This agreement to solve the king's request shows Daniel's faith in his God in a marked degree. He believed God would intervene in this matter.

17. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions.

18. That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his companions should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Several providential circumstances are clearly combined toward the happy outcome of this whole affair. In the first place, the king's dream must have made a profound impression on his mind; and he either forgot it entirely, or was induced to withhold it from the priests and other wise men in such a way as to lead to a complete exposure of the false claims of these men. Again, it was all for the best that Daniel was not at first consulted by the king regarding the dream, for if he had been requested by the king to tell the dream and had made it known with its interpretation there would have been no opportunity to expose the false heathen systems. In this case, as in so many others down through history, the heathen priests and their associates had the first chance.

They had a free hand, with no one to hinder them. With their lives at stake we may be assured that they did their best. Then when they utterly failed and openly confessed that they could do nothing, it was time for God to honor His trusting servants with the means of explaining the dream to the king. Through this entire set of circumstances He gave to the world for more than two thousand years the first, and in some respects the clearest, outline of the world's history ever shown in advance through anybody.

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19. Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

Some think that the term vision of the night covers dreams as well as visions; others contend that visions are always distinct from dreams, the latter being a lower form of divine communication. If, as appears probable, the king in his impatience had summoned the wise men to him during the night in which he had had his dream, when his sleep went from him, then the search for Daniel and the others would take place the next day, and the prayer of Daniel and its answer would take place during the next night.

As soon as the matter was revealed to Daniel, he doubtless summoned his companions (unless they were already with him engaging in prayer) and blessed the God of heaven. That is, he gave formal thanks to God for answering his prayer, even though he had not tried out the matter with the king to see if he had the real dream which the king called for. He was certain that what had been revealed to him was from God, and he was also assured that God would not be giving him false information. In this act of asking for a direct communication from God and then having his prayer directly answered, Daniel was acquiring a valuable experience which was to prepare him for becoming the "greatest of all the prophets," as Josephus terms him. The other visions given to him later could not have been communicated to him (in all human probability) if he had not acquired an experience in such matters here so early in his life, for he was at this time a young man.

Daniel's praise for the answer to his prayer is in strict metrical form in the Hebrew, consisting of four stanzas of tristichs and tetrastichs which alternate with each other. The Jewish translation prints this portion in metrical form. Several other examples of lyrics or hymns occur in the book further on, quite extensively in chapter 4, in the last part of chapter 6, and twice in chapter 7, with brief spontaneous lyrical outbursts here and there besides that hardly admit of distinct classification.

As the A.R.V., which we have been following, does not preserve the poetical form in this passage, we give it below from the Jewish translation, which is verbally almost identical with the A.R.V.

20. Daniel spoke and said: Blessed be the name of God From everlasting even unto everlasting; For wisdom and might are His;

21. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings, and sets up kings; He gives wisdom unto the wise, And knowledge to them that know understanding;

22. He reveals the deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.

23. I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, Who has given me wisdom and might, And has now made known unto me what we desired of Thee; For Thou has made known unto us the king's matter.

This hymn of praise is a natural and unaffected outburst, and is rightly regarded as a fine example of liturgical form. In the second stanza there is a direct challenge to the fatalism of the Babylonian astral religion. As Montgomery points out, this fatalism continued its baneful influence in the Greek and Roman worlds for a long time.

In the last stanza Daniel unites his companions with himself in his thanks-what we desired of Thee.

24. Then Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and said thus unto him: Destroy not the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation.

We may well imagine that Daniel's visit to Arioch was a hurried but joyful act on his part; and although his own life had been at stake, his first plea is not for himself, but for the wise men of Babylon as an entire class. The secret had been revealed to Daniel, and because of this the lives of all the group should be spared. The priests and their fellows could not in the slightest degree claim any part in this revelation of the secret of the dream; they and all their vain pretensions were as much to be reprobated as before; but Daniel asks for their lives on the strength of what he was now able to do for the king.

How often do sinners receive a prolonging of their tranquillity because of the presence among them of a few who are faithful to God. In one of Paul's numerous shipwrecks of which we have record, he was assured that the lives of all who were sailing with him would be saved because of his faithfulness. Acts

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27:22-24. If only ten righteous had been found in Sodom, that city of iniquity would not have been destroyed. So in the case here under consideration. Because of the intercession of Daniel and his three companions, the lives of all the wise men of the kingdom *were saved from the just anger of Nebuchadnezzar.

25. Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the children of the captivity of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation.

The circumstances here narrated would seem to prove that Daniel himself did not have any earlier audience with the king, as might be inferred from the words of verse 16.

In haste. Montgomery says that the words might more exactly be “in excitement.” The king had already had some acquaintance with the Hebrew captives, yet he could not be expected to remember this young fellow Daniel. Hence the courtly etiquette must be observed by a formal introduction, for as Montgomery slyly remarks, “royal minds are easily forgetful of ‘college professors.’” Arioch also doubtless was glad to have it appear that he had been anxiously hunting for someone to solve the king’s perplexity, and had at last found the right man.

26. The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?

The king was still skeptical about the claim of this young man to be able to reveal the secret. If he couldn’t tell the details of the dream itself, how could the king have any confidence in a professed interpretation?

27. Daniel answered before the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded can neither wise men, enchanters, magicians, nor soothsayers, show unto the king;

28. But there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and He hath made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these:

29. As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter; and He that reveals secrets hath made known to thee what shall come to pass.

Before the king. This seems to have been the more common form of expression, though the less formal “to the king” also occurs in this book.

Daniel had here a splendid opportunity to make known the true God to this heathen king, and he did not fail to improve it.

Under somewhat similar circumstances, Joseph had directed the mind of Pharaoh to the Hebrew Jehovah as the revealer of secrets. Genesis 41:16. Daniel now disclaims any credit for himself and gives all the credit to the God in heaven that reveals secrets. Daniel could be confident and fearless before this greatest monarch of the ancient world, because he had already bowed in love and adoration before the King of kings, who had in turn entrusted to His servant an astonishing message for this Nebuchadnezzar.

In the latter days. Literally, “in the end closing part of the days.” On this Driver has the note: “An expression which occurs fourteen times in the Old Testament, and which always denotes the closing period of the future so far as it falls within the range of view of the writer using it. The sense expressed by it is thus relative, not absolute, varying with the context.... Here, as the sequel shows, it is similarly the period of the establishment of the divine kingdom which is principally denoted by it.”

Thy thoughts came into thy mind. Here Daniel tells the king what he had been thinking about previous to having the dream. Nebuchadnezzar had been pondering the future of his kingdom and what might occur after him. We should remember that this occurred near the beginning of his reign and that afterward he had a reign of some forty years full of glory and prosperity for his kingdom. Because of his commendable desire to know the future of his kingdom and of the world, the great Jehovah took notice of it and gave him this extraordinary picture of the course of the world’s successive empires down to the establishment of the kingdom that shall have no end. Instead of giving the king the full meaning of it all, He ordained that the interpretation should come through one of His chosen people in order that the additional light of His true religion might also be made known to this young ruler, and through him to all the world.

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30. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but to the intent that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that thou may know the thoughts of thy heart.

As Joseph had done before him, Daniel here disclaims any personal wisdom in making known the dream and its meaning. The dream, which follows in the succeeding five verses, is in many respects the most remarkable dream ever given to any human being. Aside from the handsome tribute paid by Driver in the sentence already quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Hebrew scholars and commentators, as Montgomery remarks, “have in general hardly done justice to the grandly conceived and artistic symbolism of the image.... Yet its simplicity, its magnificence of proportion, its originality, deserve their right valuation.” - Commentary, page 185.

31. Thou, O king, saw, and, behold, a great image. This image, which was mighty, and whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the aspect thereof was terrible.

This dream image is rightly spoken of as a colossus, of which the ancient world gives us several examples. Herodotus tells us of a golden statue of Bel twelve cubits high, which still existed in his day; and the fame of the great stone colossi in Egypt had doubtless been spread over the ancient world. The word colossus comes to us as the specific name of the bronze Apollo erected 280 BC on the shore of the harbor of Rhodes, and in the myth which has since grown from it, reputed it to have stood astride the entrance to the harbor. It is said to have been more than 100 feet high, and was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Whose brightness was excellent. The word “excellent” in old English always carried the distinctive meaning (which it has since lost) of pre-eminent or surpassing.

32. As for this image, its head was of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of brass,

33. Its legs of iron, its feet part of iron, and part of clay.

The progressive deterioration of the materials, composing this colossus is one of its most noticeable and most surprising features. A large image or statue of any sort would naturally be an object of attention to any intelligent pagan, and this one was most extraordinary in its brilliancy and in its size. As the upper parts were bright and beautiful, the king may not at first have noticed how it deteriorated both in appearance and in quality as one looked it over from the top to the bottom. Yet when considered from the standpoint of stability, the shoddy, fragile feet rendered the entire colossus about as unstable and as surely doomed because of its construction as one could possibly conceive. The five parts into which it was divided grew progressively less beautiful, less valuable, and less stable, from the top to the bottom. Even if no stone had appeared to destroy it, anyone could easily see the utter impossibility of this statue’s enduring permanently. It is evolution reversed which we find in this gradation from gold down to a mixture of iron and miry clay.

Two only of these materials call for comment. The term here rendered brass is more properly rendered “bronze” or “copper,” the ancients not discriminating carefully between these different materials. The word given as clay is often used to signify “earthenware,” as is shown by the marginal reading under verse 41.

The ancients were profuse in their use of bronze in making statues and images, and decorations of all kinds. There are also instances of tile work (probably what is meant by the earthenware or clay of the image) entering into the composition of an image or other art as a sort of decoration, similar to the examples which have been discovered of metals inlaid with enamels or porcelain. This may be ornamental in certain instances; but such combination of earthenware and metal would be nothing but a shoddy, flimsy pretense when used in place of iron in the foundation of a colossus like this.

34. Thou saw till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon its feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them in pieces.

35. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors. And the wind carried them away, so that no

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place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

The sublimity and literary beauty of this passage have not been appreciated sufficiently. Karl A. Auberlen remarks:

“Where among all the poets and historians of antiquity and of modern times, is there a passage which, for simplicity and majesty, can be compared with these words?”

The climax of this symbolic colossus was brought about by a stone which was cut out without hands and smote the image on its feet. This stone was quarried without any human agency, implying that it was a work done directly by God. Any event we see take place without any visible agency which we can ascribe to natural law we are disposed to class as a miracle; hence the action of this stone has about it all the characteristics of the miraculous. This end of all these earthly kingdoms as here given is parallel to the end of the power called the “little horn” of chapter 8:25; and also similar to the end of the power described in chapter ii, which comes “to his end, and none shall help him” (chapter 11:45).

Threshing floors in the Orient were usually on elevated or exposed spots, where the wind would be felt most strongly, in order to carry away the chaff during the process of winnowing. When a metallic statue should be knocked down by some external moving object it would not naturally be so completely pulverized as is here described; this also may be regarded by the beholder as something decidedly out of the ordinary.

A great mountain. One of the astonishing facts revealed by archaeology is that the Chaldeans, the leading priests of the god Bel-Marduk, are also represented as priests of “The Great Mountain.” Thus we may identify the cult of The Great Mountain with that of Bel-Marduk. This cult of Shadu Rabu, or The Great Mountain, was one of the most powerful cults of Babylonia; so at the mention of this term by Daniel, the king’s mind would inevitably receive the impression that this miraculous Stone was to become a visible manifestation of the God of heaven who was giving this vision and revealing these things to the king through His chosen messenger, Daniel. On this point see Boutflower,

36. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

37. Thou, O king, art king of kings, unto whom the God of heaven hath given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory;

38. And where so ever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens hath He given into thy hand, and hath made thee to rule over them all: thou art the head of gold.

In and Around the Book of Daniel, pages 35-45, where the original authorities are cited.

This young king, still in his early twenties, was accustomed to flattery and homage; but here was an announcement which must have secured his profound attention. He had been born to the royal power, his father, Nabopolassar, being the founder of the dynasty. In union with Cyaxares the Mede, Nabopolassar had revolted against Assyria, had captured Nineveh in 612 BC, and in this way had made Babylon an independent kingdom with himself as its head. In 605 BC he died and was succeeded by his son, Nebuchadnezzar, who became one of the most illustrious sovereigns of the ancient world, enjoying a long and prosperous reign of some forty-three years.

Thou art the head of gold. This does not mean that the king himself was here designated, but his kingdom. The terms king and kingdom are used interchangeably in this connection, both in this chapter and in the following ones, particularly the eleventh.

The details of the history of Babylon may be obtained from any reliable history of these times. See Source Book for Bible Students, pages 45-59.

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

The “critics” perversely desire to assign a pseudo kingdom of Media as the second of the series, the one here mentioned as “another kingdom inferior to thee.” They know well that there was no such Median kingdom between the Babylonian and the Persian. Dr. R. H. Charles, in the latest and most authoritative work by this school of “critics,” acknowledges that this Median empire is “a mythical one.”-

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Commentary, page 177. Yet with one voice they declare that Daniel teaches there was such an intercalary empire of the Medes between Babylon and MedoPersia. They refer to such texts as Daniel 5:31 to prove that this is what Daniel believed and therefore what is here “meant” by the empire immediately following Babylon. All this, of course, depends upon the theory that this book of Daniel is not really an inspired revelation from God, but a literary work by a clever, pious Jew of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. This man, they say, wished to encourage his people by a romantic picture of the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God, but was often mistaken about the facts of history. This theory of an intercalary Median empire was one of those historical “mistakes.” The object of these “critics” is to avoid the conclusion that the fourth empire of Daniel is Rome, but they can attain this only by charging Daniel with blundering in inserting this mythical Median empire after the Babylonian.

With such a pseudo interpretation of the symbols of this dream image we have nothing to do here. It remains for us to point out that Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon in the year 539, and thus Medo-Persia became the empire outlined in this prophecy as the one to follow Babylon.

There has been much speculation concerning this expression inferior to thee. Even a superficial glance at ancient history reveals that Medo-Persia was not inferior to Babylon in either power or extent of territory. It doubtless was inferior in the matter of unity and compactness of organization, and some have thought that it may have been inferior in riches and grandeur, though this is doubtful. However, we must remember that this problem of relative inferiority does not concern these two empires alone; it is a universal comparison all down the entire image from the top to the bottom: Every one below is represented as inferior in value and in beauty to the one preceding. So whatever problem there is must not be considered solved until we have covered the entire ground.

And another third kingdom of brass or bronze. Obviously this must refer to the empire of Alexander, which succeeded that of Medo-Persia when Alexander won the battle of Arbela in 331 BC. The Greeks were noted far and wide for their brass armor, which was a new thing under the sun, and which gave them a great superiority over their enemies. Later even this efficient style of weapons, defensive and offensive, was displaced by the still more efficient iron or steel. This displacement was a gradual one and, as Lucretius points out, was contemporary with the rise of the Roman power. Boutflower has an enlightening chapter on this subject, dealing with the metals represented by the various parts of the image. Op. Cit., Pages 24-34.

40. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things; and as iron that crushes all these, shall it break in pieces and crush.

In all the visions of the world empires recorded in the book of Daniel, the fourth of each series gets about as much space and description as all the others put together. So in this instance. The others are passed over hurriedly, with a mere mention; but the fourth is characterized in detail, and the divisions into which it split up are also set forth with considerable minutiae. Further consideration also is devoted to the everlasting kingdom of God which is to succeed them all.

The description here given of the fourth kingdom must mean Rome and no other. It fits Rome and no other. Also in all the other three visions, those of the seventh, eighth, and eleventh chapters, the fourth kingdom or power as described means Rome, their descriptions fit Rome, and they fit no other power before or since. This comparative application of these four lines of prophecy is the strongest proof that this application must be the correct one.

Gibbon has never been accused of evangelical prejudices; yet he could not fall to see how wonderfully appropriate is the prophetic description when applied to Rome. It is almost superfluous to quote his words, as they are so much a classic as to be known by all who have read extensively along these lines; but we insert them here, as no other words so fittingly characterize this prophecy:

“The arms of the republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid steps to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the ocean; and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the iron monarchy of Rome.” - The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chapter 38; General Observations at end of the chapter, paragraph.

41. And whereas thou saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou saw the iron mixed with miry clay.

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42. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

43. And whereas thou saw the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron does not mingle with clay.

Since this prophecy must extend down the centuries from imperial Rome even to the Second Coming of Christ (as do also all the other visions of Daniel), we have here the extension of the iron legs into feet and toes, which are expressly spoken of as “a divided kingdom.” The two legs are not designed to represent the Eastern and the Western parts into which imperial Rome was divided. Nor is there any express mention of there being ten toes, as there are ten horns expressly mentioned in the symbolism of the seventh chapter, and also in the parallel visions of the Apocalypse. All that we are definitely told is that there would be a division of the kingdom—not, it should be noted, a conquest of this empire by some external power. It is tacitly asserted that this Roman Empire would not be conquered by any other or later power, as had been the case with all the preceding world empires, but that in its divided state it would be prolonged and would extend down to the establishment of the eternal kingdom of God.

Far too much stress also has been placed upon the alleged division of Rome into ten parts or ten minor kingdoms. The number ten does come into the prophecy in the seventh chapter; and in that place we shall deal with the matter. Here there is no express mention of the number of parts into which it is divided; though the mention of “toes” would seem to imply the number ten.

In chapter 7 the fourth beast is said to have ten horns, and they are explained as meaning ten kings (or kingdoms) which were to arise from the breaking up of the Roman Empire. The ten horns are also mentioned in the Revelation in several places (Revelation 12:3; 13:1; 17:1 11, 16); so the expression “the ten kingdoms of Western Europe into which Rome was divided,” is correct enough. But no definite mention of ten toes is made here.

Moreover, as will be seen later (in the note on chapter 7:8), it is quite probable that the number ten is used as an indefinite but comparatively large number, rather than as an exact number. The fact that this number ten is ever afterward maintained, when chapter 7:8 definitely tells us that three of them were plucked up to make place for another little horn (an eleventh), this number ten being always maintained throughout the subsequent prophecies in the book of Revelation, is a strong argument in favor of the suggestion that the number ten is used only as a round number.

While the specific number ten is not mentioned here in connection with the toes, another related fact is mentioned, and it is given with almost tedious repetitiousness, namely, that there are to be elements of weakness running through the entire lower part of the image—“partly strong, and partly broken” [margin, brittle].

Some scholars have thought that the meaning is that some of the toes would be of iron and some would be of the clay or tiling or terra cotta. Montgomery contends that the underlying meaning of the whole description is that “each leg, each foot, every toe, are severally composed of non coherent stuffs, all equally subject to fracture and crumbling.” - Commentary, page 189. This seems a most fitting characterization of the modern nations of Europe, the resultants of the old Roman Empire.

It seems truly extraordinary that Hippolytus, one of the earliest Christian writers on prophecy (about AD 236), in dealing with this verse foretold that the ten kingdoms into which Rome would be divided would pass from monarchies to democracies. Simcox wrote nearly three quarters of a century ago: “Few things were humanly speaking less likely in his days, few more so in ours.” - Revelation, page 107. Cambridge University Press, 1902.

They shall mingle themselves with the seed of men. This undoubtedly refers to the perennial attempts all down through the centuries to cement friendships among the various incongruous parts by marriage alliances between the various royal families. To such an extent has this been carried that at a certain point in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Queen Victoria was quaintly termed “the grandmother of all Europe.”

44. And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

In the original the “it” is emphatic, in contrast with the other kingdoms. This verse carries us on into the future to the miraculous setting up of the eternal kingdom of Christ. In the verses immediately

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preceding we are brought down past the division of the Roman Empire into its various parts, a division which had not even commenced in the days of Christ and the apostles; accordingly the setting up of this kingdom could not have been done in their days. It could not have been done until after the division of the Roman Empire, which was carried on between AD 351 and 476. This text says, “in the days of those kings” clearly referring to the divisions represented by the feet and toes of the image.

It is completely false to interpret this setting up of the everlasting kingdom as having taken place at the first part of the Christian Era, or in the days of Christ and His apostles, for the following reasons:

1. This everlasting kingdom is not to exist contemporaneously with earthly governments, nor even to overlap with some of them, but to succeed them, and to do so catastrophically, by utter violence, resulting in their total destruction.

2. This everlasting kingdom, the fifth of the series, is symbolized by the stone which struck the image. But what part did it strike? Not the legs, which were the parts existing in Christ’s day; but the feet and toes. Verse 34. Let us remember that the successive parts from the head downward represent accurately a chronological succession; and from this point of view we may say that the feet were not in existence until about four centuries after the death of Christ and the establishment of the visible church. Hence this stone cannot possibly represent the Christian church. In the days of Christ and His apostles, to use the apt words of Uriah Smith, the image was developed only down as far as the thighs or the knees; hence the smiting if done by the church, would have had to be done on the legs, not on the feet, where the prophecy locates the smiting. The feet of the colossus had not been formed when the Christian church was founded.

3. The stone which smites the image is spoken of as having been quarried out of the mountain without hands. Verse 45. This surely represents, not the church acting in a quiet and orderly way in spreading the good news of salvation, but an obviously miraculous work, a sudden and catastrophic work of annihilation and complete displacement. Such a work will be accomplished when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God. Then will be the time when this everlasting kingdom will be set up, and not until then.

Down in the feet of iron and of clay,
Weak and divided, soon to pass away;
What will the next great, glorious drama be?
Christ and His coming, and eternity.

In Revelation 17:12 we are told of ten kings or kingdoms which, at the time spoken of, had received “no kingdom as yet,” but would at some time then future receive “authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour.” The time here spoken of is obviously well along in the Christian dispensation. Finally, these ten kingdoms are to be destroyed, along with the beast of Revelation 17, at the Second Coming of Christ. It should be self-evident that these ten kingdoms of Revelation 17 cannot possibly be identical with the original ten kingdoms into which Rome was divided, as represented by the ten horns of Daniel’s fourth beast (Daniel 7:24), and as represented in this second chapter by the toes (presumably ten, though no specific number is mentioned), into which the iron kingdom was divided. In Daniel’s vision of the four beasts we are told that three of the original ten horns were “plucked up by the roots,” never to exist again. This term, “plucked up by the roots,” obviously means that they were absolutely destroyed as nations, never to become nations again. They were to have no national successors.

Obviously the seven remaining could not become ten many centuries later, or immediately before the Second Coming of Christ, which is the period spoken of in this chapter in the Revelation. It is mere nonsense and trifling with sacred truths to speak, as some have done, of a readjustment of the modern map of Europe in such a way as to bring again into existence these three defunct kingdoms, which were extirpated, or plucked up by the roots.

Many attempts have been made to solve the puzzle. There is no difficulty at all, if we once realize that the number ten is often used in the Old Testament for an indefinitely large number, and is doubtless so used in these instances. Thus we are not under any necessity of supposing that the ten kingdoms of Revelation 17, down just before the Second Coming of Christ, have to be identical either in their boundaries or in their total number with the ones into which the empire of Rome was originally divided.

The ten kingdoms into which Rome was divided dominated Western civilization. Again, just before the Second Coming of Christ, the ten kingdoms which combine with the beast and the false prophet to make war against the Lamb and whom the Lamb overcomes (Revelation 17:12-14), also represent the nations of the entire world (Revelation 16:14); for the last, life-and-death struggle between right and wrong

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takes place on a global or world-wide scale.

45. Forasmuch as thou saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

In this concluding statement of Daniel we find a summary of all the major elements of the vision in a brief restatement of the grand outcome. This is followed by a solemn declaration of the truth of the entire vision, and the fixed inevitability of it all. The words he has spoken are God's vision and also God's own interpretation, not Daniel's; hence they are all reliable and true, not like the "lying and corrupt words" which the king had accused the priests of using. Verse 9.

46. Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshiped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him.

The king was profoundly impressed with what had been presented before him. The revelation of the secret thoughts of his mind, with the opening up of the future history of the world, all came home to him as actually from a supernatural power; and, in accord with this natural feeling of wonder and reverence, he was ready to do homage to the human instrument through whom such divine knowledge had been made known.

It is useless for us to ask how a strict monotheist like Daniel could permit himself to be treated in the fashion here spoken of, for we are not told anything of how Daniel reacted toward this homage. He may have been as strong in his protest and in his monotheistic explanation as Paul and Barnabas were to the people of Lycaonia. Acts 14:13-18. Jerome cites a somewhat parallel incident from Josephus. When Alexander the Great was approaching Jerusalem, the Jewish high priest came out to meet him dressed in his beautiful white priestly robes, with the golden breastplate on which was engraved the name of Jehovah. Alexander bowed in profound homage before the high priest, and when one of his officers, Parmenio, twitted him because of the act, Alexander retorted, as stated by Josephus: "I do not adore him [the high priest], but the God who hath honored him with his priesthood."

47. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou has been able to reveal this secret.

It is a mark of true greatness on the part of Nebuchadnezzar that he did not in the slightest resent the statement of the vision that his own kingdom would be replaced by another. Young as he was he was sufficiently a realist in human affairs to realize that no kingly line can hope to be permanent in this changing world. He was doubtless sufficiently familiar with the more esoteric teachings of the Babylonian religion to know that in its primal aspects all its reasonable ideas tended to head up in one supreme God. Even if we may not suppose him to be thus initiated into all the philosophic aspects of the inner mysteries of his country's religion, by which he would instinctively identify Daniel's God with the great Chief of all the "high" gods, we can fall back on what Montgomery states: "A polytheist can always take on new gods, the monotheist never."

48. Then the king made Daniel great, and gave him many great gifts, and made him to rule over the whole province of Babylon, and to be chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon.

We sometimes speak of the unchanging East, but there is no part of the world where such sudden and surprising changes in human affairs have occurred all down the line of history. Here we have Daniel promoted to the place of administrator of the chief province of the empire, in which was the capital itself.

Chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon. The literal of this is "chief of the sages," or prefects. As Pusey thinks, each college or group of the wise men had its own head, while Daniel had general authority over all. A Biblical precedent for this is found in the case of Joseph, who married a daughter of the chief priest of Heliopolis, and who held a high office under the Pharaoh; also in the case of Moses, who "was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." Acts 7:22. It may be questioned whether there was any more nonsense taught back there than in our modern universities, which are today considered so essential for a young man's advancement. At any rate, no one can attain to mental clearness who does

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not have the ability to reject the chaff and retain only the wheat in any system of education.

49. And Daniel requested of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel was in the gate of the king.

Daniel would feel more satisfied to have subordinates whom he could trust and who would do efficient work; hence the appointment of his three companions. In the gate of the king. This term has been misunderstood by some of the “critics,” who do not seem to have been familiar with the wide use of this phrase in the ancient East. Doubtless at first this word “gate” was a literal one; but soon it came to mean only the royal offices or the chancellery, and its locality may have been far removed from the actual entrance of the city. The Turkish royal offices used to be known as the Sublime Porte, and “porte” originally meant “gate.” This is a survival of the same idea. Daniel, if not exactly premier, was at least among the leading men of the nation; he was in the cabinet, as we would express it.

Thus we come to the close of the second chapter, which, like the first, is a document complete in itself. Considered as literature, it is sublime; as history, it is brief, though complete and accurate, and written hundreds of years in advance; as prophecy, it assures us of the future reality of the glorious kingdom of God, sealing to us this assurance by its preliminary outline of the successive stages of earth’s kingdoms which were to precede it. Since we now see that these successive stages have been fulfilled as predicted, we know for a certainty that God has spoken. In due season He will surely set up His kingdom, one that shall never be destroyed or given to other people.

O glorious kingdom of God! Long hoped for by the weary pilgrims of earth’s dark night, but now soon to be established in the times determined by the wisdom of the King of eternity! Hasten on, glad day, when all the faithful of the past, as well as those living among the last generation of mankind, will receive their inheritance together. Hebrews 11:39, 40.

Note on the Four World Empires of Daniel 2. All scholars admit that the symbols of this second chapter must be understood as parallel to those of chapter 7, where the same powers are represented as four beasts. The differences in interpreting these symbols have to do chiefly with the way of understanding the fourth empire, represented by the legs of iron in this second chapter and by the nondescript fourth beast of chapter 7, which had great iron teeth and nails of brass, which devoured the whole earth, and out of which came another blasphemous and persecuting power, speaking great words against the Most High, wearing out the saints of the Most High, and thinking to be able to change the times and the law of the Most High. The “critics” apply this fourth symbol to the petty Greek kingdom under Antiochus Epiphanes; the conservatives apply it to Rome, first in its stage of world empire, afterward in its stage of religion-political world domination.

At this point we will not stop to argue for or against either interpretation, but will touch briefly on the history of the interpretation of this second chapter, postponing until the end of the seventh chapter a fuller statement.

It is probable that the Jews of the Maccabean age and the decades following were chiefly interested in the symbols of this prophecy as it pictured the Messianic kingdom. Naturally, they were not prepared to give a correct evaluation of the symbolism of events still future. When we come down a little later, say a century or two after Christ, we find many of the early Christian writers who well recognized the empire of Rome as the one that fitted the specifications of the prophecy.

For instance, the following is from Hippolytus, a voluminous writer who was martyred about AD 235:

“Rejoice, blessed Daniel! thou has not been in error: all these things have come to pass. After this again thou has told me of the beast, dreadful and terrible. ‘It had iron teeth and claws of brass: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it.’ Already the iron rules; already it subdues and breaks all in pieces; already it brings all the unwilling into subjection; already we see these things ourselves. Now we glorify God, being instructed by thee.”

Plenty of evidence can also be given to show that, long before this date, Josephus and the Jews of his time quite generally applied this fourth empire to Rome. Further details on this point will be submitted at the end of the discussion of the seventh chapter.

As for the meaning of the stone which smote the image on its feet, then became a great mountain and filled the whole earth, we have already given argument to show that this cannot refer to the spread of the Christian church. The smiting did not take place when the legs were representing the victorious and undivided Roman Empire (as if this smiting had been done in the days of Christ); but the stone smote the

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image upon its feet that were of iron and clay or in its divided condition. It says further: In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.” It is absolutely clear, therefore, that this kingdom of God was not due in the days of Christ and the apostles, for Rome was not divided until some four hundred years after their time. Some Catholics would like to apply this prediction to their church, which came into power soon after that date, but they shrink from applying the parallel vision of the seventh chapter in the same way.

Looking at this whole matter in a broad and common-sense way, we must confess that this kingdom of God has not yet been set up; it can be set up only by a catastrophic end of all the present world powers; and this can take place only at the Second Coming of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

3. THE FAITHFUL THREE

No date for this chapter is given in the Massoretic text, but the Septuogint and two other ancient versions, those of Theodotion and the Peshitto, insert here at the beginning, “in the eighteenth year,” which would be 587 BC. This is one year before Jerusalem was destroyed by this some Nebuchadnezzar. This date would seem to be very significant.

The king erects a gigantic golden statue on the plain of Durn, near Bobylon. He assembles all the officials within reach, asking them to bow down to this image, under penalty of death in a furnace. The three companions of Daniel refuse to obey the king’s command and are thrown into the furnace. They are miraculously delivered, whereupon Nebuchadnezzar proclaims the power of the God of the Hebrews.

1. Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

The kings of Assyria, his predecessors, had been in the habit of erecting statues or other monuments to commemorate their conquests. Since Nebuchadnezzar had recently completed the conquest of the western countries, some have thought that this golden image was occasioned by these recent victories; but other considerations were doubtless also involved. Hippolyttis and other early commentators suggested that the king was probably trying to outdo the great metallic image which he had seen in his dream some sixteen years previously. That statue had a head of gold which Daniel had interpreted as meaning Nebuchadnezzar; but from the head downward there was a rapid deterioration, and finally the entire image was overthrown and destroyed by a supernatural stone which then spread out and occupied the whole earth. The young monarch resented this idea of deterioration and destruction, and was determined to erect a statue wholly of gold, to indicate that his kingdom was to stand forever.

The author of Prophets and Kings has outlined for us the psychology of the king, his boundless ambition and selfish pride. He forgot the many supernatural circumstances connected with his dream and its interpretation by Daniel, and defiantly determined to erect a symbol of “Babylon as an eternal, indestructible, all-powerful kingdom, which should break in pieces all other kingdoms, and stand forever.”-Page 504.

The sequel shows that this colossal egotism received a providential rebuke with so plain a meaning that he was once more taught an important lesson concerning the great facts of life.

Of gold. Doubtless not of solid gold, but of some other material overlaid with gold plates or gold leaf. The proportions here given, about ninety feet high by ten feet wide, indicate that there must have been a base or pedestal of a considerable size beneath the image proper, as the proportions of a human statue are quite different, or about 5 or 6 to 1.

In the plain of Dura. This locality has not been identified with certainty, for there are at least three places of this name in the vicinity of the capital. A small river called the Dura flows into the Euphrates some six or seven miles below Babylon; and near this river, about twelve miles southeast of the site of old Babylon, are a number of mounds carrying the name Dura. One of these mounds has a large rectangular brick structure, forty-five feet square at the base and some twenty feet high, which some have identified with the site of this ancient statue.