

I. Introduction and review: The ABCs of Eschatology.

II. The four great world empires. 31-33, 36-43

A. General observations concerning the statue. v. 31

1. The one statue represents human empires throughout the ages. v. 31
2. Each section of the statue represents one great world empire.
3. The sections of the statue are of decreasing worth but increasing strength.
4. A more complete description of these events and empires is given in Daniel's visions in the second half of the book.

B. The golden head represents the Babylonian empire (626-539 B.C.). v. 32a,36-38 7:4

1. It is appropriate that the statue be identified with Babylon. Gen. 11:1-9 Re. 18:2
2. How is Babylon superior to the subsequent kingdoms? v. 38 5:19 6:15
3. Nebuchadnezzar is reminded that his dominion is only by the purpose and permission of the God of heaven. v. 37 2:21 1:2 4:29ff Jer. 27:5-7 28:14

C. The silver breast and arms probably symbolize the Medo-Persian empire (539-330

B.C.) v. 32b, 39a 5:28 6:12 7:5 8:20

1. Nebuchadnezzar is told that God has determined the fall of his great empire. 2:21 5:28,30 Jer. 27:5-7 Isa. 47:5ff
2. While the Medo-Persian empire was not inferior to Babylon in size or duration, it was inferior in terms of unity and power wielded by the monarch. 6:12-15 Es. 1:19
3. The duality of the arms could symbolize the divided authority between the Medes and the Persians.

D. The bronze belly and thighs probably represent Greece (330-63 B.C.). v. 32c, 39b 7:6 8:21

1. Its unique characteristic was the extent of its domain (Alexander the Great).
2. After Alexander's death the kingdom was divided and weakened. 7:6 8:22

E. The iron legs and feet probably symbolize the Roman empire (63 B.C. - ??). v. 33, 40-43 7:7-8

1. Its unique characteristic is its crushing power against all who stood in its way.
2. In its later stages Rome became weakened and mixed.
3. It is during the time of this empire that Messiah comes. Luke 2:1
4. The controversy over the interpretation of the clay feet and toes. v. 41-43

III. The stone represents the kingdom of God. v. 34-35, 44-45 7:9-14,26-28

A. It stands in complete contrast to merely human empires.

1. It is of divine, not human origin. v. 34a
Why is the stone cut without human hands? Ex. 20:25 Mark 14:58 Col. 2:11
2. It is permanent, all powerful and universal, as opposed to the temporary, supplanted and finite earthly kingdoms.
3. This is the climax of the battle which began with Genesis 3:15. Num. 24:20-24 Gen. 11:1-9

B. When does the triumph of the kingdom of God take place? v. 29

1. The present aspect of God's kingdom is inaugurated at Christ's first coming.
 - a. His coming was of supernatural origin.
 - b. He is the Rock. Gen. 49:24. Ps. 118:22 Mt. 21:42-44 Isa. 8:14-15 28:16 Ex. 17:6 I Cor. 10:4 Dt. 32:4 I Pet. 2:6-8 Luke 2:34
 - c. He came bringing the kingdom. Mark 1:15 Mt. 4:17,23 12:28 Luke 17:21
 - d. He brought a crushing defeat to the enemy. Col. 2:15 I John 3:8 Luke 10:18
 - e. There is a sense in which the kingdom is present and Christ is reigning. Co. 1:13 I Co. 15:25 Eph. 1:20-22 Acts 2:16ff 28:31 Jo. 18:36 Lu. 17:21 Re. 1:6
 - f. All believers in Him are members of the kingdom.. Mt. 21:33-44 Gal. 3:26-29 Eph 2:11ff I Pet. 2:6-10
2. The kingdom will be fully consummated for eternity when Christ returns. Isa. 8:7 Rev. 11:15 Heb. 1:8 Luke 1:33
 - a. He will suddenly crush (pulverize) all earthly empires and dominions. I Cor. 15:24-28 Heb. 1:13 Isa. 41:15 Psalm 1:4-6 2:6-9 Mt. 3:12
 - b. What is the significance of the fact that the whole statue is destroyed? v. 35
 - c. God's kingdom will fill the earth. Isa. 2:2,10 Mic. 4:1
3. Eschatological implications of Daniel 2.

C. Nebuchadnezzar humbles himself before Almighty God. v. 46-49

IV. Concluding Applications

A. A Christian viewpoint of history.

1. God is sovereign over earthly kings and kingdoms. v. 21 Prov 21:1
2. Mankind will not bring in the consummation of God's kingdom: politically, socially or religiously.
 - a. Civilization is not getting better and better.
 - b. History is not a sequence of meaningless cycles.
 - c. History is not an evolutionary journey determined by chance.
 - d. Human history and civilization as we know it will end one day.
3. God's Word is true! v. 45b Ps. 19:9
4. All empires (political, economic, and personal) which seek greatness apart from God are wicked and will be annihilated.
5. We await the kingdom of God which will destroy and displace all earthly realms.

B. Of which kingdom are you? Psalm 2

Discussion questions

1. Why has God revealed the future to us?
2. What are the basic facts about the future upon which all believers should agree?
3. What does the statue in the dream represent?
4. What does the Rock represent?
5. When is this dream fulfilled?
6. What is the significance that the Rock had been cut out without human hands.
7. How does this text affect our view of current political events?
8. What bad characteristics do earthly empires have in common?
9. What then should our attitude be towards those who govern us?
10. How does our hope for the future help us in troubled times?