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Daniel 2 – An Apotelesmatic Chapter

Part 1b

“The king then asked Daniel (whose name was also Belteshazzar), ‘Are you able to make known to me the dream that I saw, as well as its interpretation?’ Daniel replied to the king, ‘The mystery that the king is asking about is such that no wise men, astrologers, magicians, or diviners can possibly disclose it to the king. However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the times to come. The dream and the visions you had while lying on your bed are as follows: ‘As for you, O king, while you were in your bed your thoughts turned to future things. The revealer of mysteries has made known to you what will take place. As for me, this mystery was revealed to me not because I possess more wisdom than any other living person, but so that the king may understand the interpretation and comprehend the thoughts of your mind” (Daniel 2:26-30 – NET).

The king has already been deceived and delayed, and experienced the failure of the wise men to meet his request. It is natural that he questionably eyes this young man: “Are you able?”

- As so often occurs in Scripture, God’s intervention is often “at the last minute” and unique.

“The king is in great distress amid all his riches and glory, but the youthful exile is peaceful and happy in his God. Now, if ever, is the time for Daniel to exalt himself, to make prominent his own goodness and superior wisdom. But his first effort is to disclaim all honor for himself and to exalt God as the source of wisdom.”¹ Daniel honors God by giving Him credit for what the seer will convey. In these prefaced words to the king, he makes these observations:

¹ *The Sanctified Life*, pp. 35-36.

1. The message is for the “latter days” (*acharith* – A). This word also occurs in a Hebrew phrase (Daniel 10:14). Throughout the Old Testament this phrase nearly always has an eschatological, Messianic connotation (Genesis 49:1, Numbers 24:14, Deuteronomy 4:30, Isaiah 2:3, Micah 4:1, Jeremiah 30:24, 48:47, 49:39; Ezekiel 38:16, Hosea 3:15, Daniel 10:14).
2. The goal of this Daniel 2 vision is to reveal how the Messianic era will be ushered in, far beyond the first advent.²
3. The vision is to reveal what will happen in days to come when God’s eternal kingdom begins!

An eschatological mystery is unfolding.

Daniel and his three companions were the only ones in the Babylonian court who could rightfully claim access to supernatural power! Like Joseph in Pharaoh’s court, he refused to take personal credit.³

Giving God credit shattered any pretensions to magic power. “*There is a God in heaven*” who is sufficiently great to reveal to you what the dream was and means! What next follows is stunning: “Before you went to sleep you were thinking about the future. Then you had a dream that related to your thoughts.” “This is what was revealed to me.”⁴ Stunning! The king’s thinking before the dream even began was revealed!

“You, O king, were watching as a great statue – one of impressive size and extraordinary brightness – was standing before you. Its appearance caused alarm. As for that statue, its head was of fine gold, its chest and arms were of silver, its belly and thighs were of bronze. Its legs were of iron; its feet were partly of iron and partly of clay” (Daniel 2:31-33 – NET).

“You were looking” when an enormous statute arose in front of you (Aramaic). It had extraordinary brilliance. It appeared to be “lit up,” causing the king to be afraid.

- Daniel then describes what Nebuchadnezzar saw.
- Five distinct portions of this statue were noted.
 1. Head of “fine” (pure) gold
 2. Chest and arms of silver
 3. Belly and thighs of bronze
 4. Legs of iron
 5. Feet – a mixture of clay and iron

² Steinmann, Andrew E.; *Daniel* (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 2008), p. 129.

³ Whitcomb, John C.; *Daniel* (Moody Press; Chicago, IL – 1985), p. 43.

⁴ Baldwin, Joyce G.; *Daniel* (Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL), p. 85. Driver, S. R.; *The Book of Daniel*, CBSC (Cambridge University, 1922), p. 91. Miller, Stephen R.; *The New American Commentary, Daniel*, vol. 18 (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), p. 90.

The shape of the statue was “human.” It had a unique message for the world. Since Daniel will tell the king he (his empire) is the head of gold and that the final empire beyond the image will destroy the whole image all at once and fill the earth (a divine kingdom), the picture implies unity of all parts at some point in time, existing simultaneously. Yet, they are initially presented in a sequence. A historical framework became its foundation for that future meaning, mainly associated with the eschaton?⁵

“You were watching as a stone was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its iron and clay feet, breaking them in pieces. Then the iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold were broken in pieces without distinction and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors that the wind carries away. Not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a large mountain that filled the entire earth” (Daniel 2:34-35 – NET).

The stone hewn without hands points to divine activity. The striking of the statue at its feet and toes means that the image comes down at the era of the iron and clay, ***but the whole image is then destroyed simultaneously!***

“The wind sweeping away the remnant of the statue (2:35) points to this being a dream, ***the meaning of which is about history and eschatology.***”⁶

- The chaff being swept away by the wind is a familiar one in the Old Testament (Isaiah 17:13, 29:5, 40:24, 41:2, 15-16; Jeremiah 4:11-12; Hosea 13:3; Zephaniah 2:2; Psalm 1:4; Job 13:25, 21:18).
- The picture shows that God, with ease, can blow away the heavy chaff and replace it with a mountain. Against all human might, He has the upper hand.

Though not stated in English, the rock was hurled by some force. The feet were crushed into pieces – and – the ***rest of the image crumbled.*** Interestingly, there is a reverse arrangement of the metals as they are destroyed:

<u>Verses 32-33</u>	<u>Verse 35</u>
Gold	Iron and clay
Silver	Bronze
Bronze	Silver
Iron and clay	Gold

The destroying rock “grew” into an earth-sized mountain. Its authoritative scope was worldwide. Later, Daniel states that it is the kingdom of God, which would never be destroyed. The dream covered from Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon (605 B.C.) – “*days of these kings*” to the end of this earth’s secular existence. The stone enters the dream as a rock and becomes a mountain. Some suggest that the stone represents the onset of God’s kingdom that formally began at the First Advent of Christ. It would be complete when the new earth is recreated. However, most scholars conclude that it represents the kingdom at Christ’s Second Coming.

⁵ Collins, John J.; *Daniel* (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN – 1993), p. 165.

⁶ Steinmann, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

John later references that *“the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever”* (Revelation 11:15). This alludes to the time of His Second Advent.

An epithet for God as a stone is found in the Psalms (18:2, 42:9, 71:3).⁷ Daniel has finished telling the king what he had dreamed. One can only imagine how Nebuchadnezzar felt at this point. (“This is what I wanted!” “I was so concerned about not remembering!” “This young man’s God is stunning!” “What does the breaking up of that image mean?”). He likely had many conflicting emotions and queries. Daniel then said:

“That was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation. You, O king, the king of kings – to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the might, and the glory, into whose hand he has given human beings wherever they live, the wild animals of the field, and the birds of the air and whom he has established as ruler over them all – you are the head of gold. After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over the whole earth. And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron; just as iron crushes and smashes everything, it shall crush and shatter all these. As you saw the feet and toes partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the strength of iron shall be in it, as you saw the iron mixed with the clay. As the toes of the feet were part iron and part clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. As you saw the iron mixed with clay, so will they mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay” (Daniel 2:36:43 – NRSV).

Beautiful and heaven-directed, Daniel tells this regal leader: *“Thou art a king, a king of kings”* (vs 37). Babylon is superior to all other kingdoms. Intriguingly, he had just told him *“we will tell you the interpretation.”* Daniel has partnered with God.

God gave this man dominion over all things (including the animal world). This reminds one of Adam’s responsibilities, worded in the same language (Genesis 1:28). Like Adam at Creation, he is the “first man” of this amazing prophecy!

- The king is reminded that his power has come from God.
- With this authority comes a responsibility to administer and protect.⁸

“Thou art the head of gold.” “Head” in Hebrew and Aramaic means “beginning” or “first.” Gold was the most popular metal in Babylon. The Greek historian Herodotus, in visiting this city, marveled at the lavish gold temples, palace, walls, and statues, testifying to its splendor.⁹

- Jeremiah compared Babylon to a golden cup (51:7).
- The harlot named Babylon (Revelation 17:4), sitting on a scarlet-colored beast noted by John, had a golden cup in her hands filled with abominations and filthiness of her fornication. A historical meaning is to be understood – then a future application!

⁷ Lucas, Ernest C.; *Daniel* (Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL; 2002, p. 74.

⁸ Doukhan, Jacques B.; *Secrets of Daniel* (The Review and Herald Publishing Association; Hagerstown, MD 21740; 2000), p. 30.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29, Herodotus 1:181, 183; 3.1-7.

Just six years before this, Jeremiah had warned the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon that Nebuchadnezzar had been granted sovereignty over the entire earth. (Jeremiah 27:6-7, 14).¹⁰

Yet, “Daniel emphasized the sovereignty of his God over the kings of the earth, even Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest king of the day.”¹¹

The word “*king*” also means “kingdom” in prophecy. Daniel continues: “*after you*” another kingdom will arise (vs 39). From Nebuchadnezzar’s reign to Babylon’s fall would be 605 to 539 B.C. His illustrious reign during that time was its first 43 years.¹²

The chest and arms of silver would be inferior in value to Babylon (vs 39). This would be the Medo-Persian Empire.

Daniel does not say what the word “*inferior*” means. The implied rating does allude to the value of each metal. Subsequent kingdoms, including Greece and Rome, ruled larger territories than the Babylonian Empire. Therefore, geopolitical areas should not be entertained.¹³

There is another important metallic insight: value in a moral sense. Vice and corruption increased with each subsequent kingdom. Daniel seems to have been suggesting that the sinfulness of the world would continue to increase until the culmination of history. Certainly, the last phase of the fourth empire, described in detail later in Daniel, reaches the height of blasphemy, cruelty, and evil.¹⁴ The chest and arms do not solely relate to the Persian kingdom as some expositors have concluded. Babylon and the Persian Empire had been contemporaneous. Cyrus, the king who conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., was actually a Mede. He became, however, the king of the Persian Empire after a battle in 550 B.C., formally taking the throne of both Media and Persia in 546 B.C.

- Daniel refers to this kingdom as that of the “Medes and the Persians” (5:28, 6:8, 8:20). A century later the book of Esther confirms this (Esther 1:3).
- The culture of Medo-Persia was “*inferior*” to that of Babylon. When they assumed power, they adopted the Babylonian civilization.
- Their monetary system was based on silver.

The supremacy of the Medo-Persian Empire lasted from 539 B.C. (the fall of Babylon) to 331 B.C., when the last king, Darius III, was defeated by Greco-Macedonian armies.¹⁵

The bronze Empire that followed Medo-Persia was Greece. In 332 B.C. the armies of Alexander the Great marched against that second empire and brought it down. It remained a world empire until 146 B.C. (185 years).

¹⁰ Whitcomb, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹¹ Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

¹² Whitcomb, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

¹³ Steinmann, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

¹⁴ Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

¹⁵ Doukhan, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

- The prophet Ezekiel refers to bronze as the principal metal for their coins. It was used in their helmets, shields, and even weapons.
- This bronze armor of the Greek soldiers' contrasts with the military of Medo-Persian soldiers who wore simple woven gowns.¹⁶

Alexander the Great stretched the boundaries of the kingdom of Greece as far as India and Persia. Greek culture flourished to the remotest parts of the world. He encouraged intermarriage among native populations to spread its unique way of life. Alexander had married a Persian princess.¹⁷

“Then there will be a fourth kingdom, one strong like iron. Just like iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything, and as iron breaks in pieces all these metals, so it will break in pieces and crush the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay” (Daniel 2:40-43 – NET vs 40, NIV vss 41-43).

The strength of this kingdom is emphasized by the iron. Its violent power is depicted by *“it will break in pieces and crush others.”* This may be explained by each previous empire being absorbed by its conqueror.¹⁸ Among some scholars there has been debate as to what this kingdom represents. Josephus (Ant. 10.10.4) identified it as the Roman Empire.¹⁹ After reviewing Daniel 7 and 8 and Revelation 13 and 17, Whitcomb favored this understanding.²⁰

- It has been popular among evangelicals to identify the divisions of the Roman Empire into the eastern and western parts (represented by the two legs) and the ten toes as states that emerged from the Roman Empire.
- “However, it should be noted that legs and toes in chapter 2 are not numbered in Daniel’s description of the statute (2:31-35). Neither does Daniel’s interpretation (2:36-43) include a reference to the number of legs and toes or indicate that these numbers would have any significance.”²¹ Yet, they are implied. There is merit to note this application in the final eschatological view of this prophecy!

The feet and toes are described as a mixture of iron and clay. A transition in time reveals that the Roman Empire did weaken. This section suggests that verses 40 to 43 are of primary interest to the prophet. The text does not describe the feet and toes as new kingdoms. They belong to the iron legs. Part of the kingdom will be strong and part weak. Yet, the iron and clay are distinct entities and will be important later.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, referencing *Herodotus* 7.61-62.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹⁹ Lucas, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

²⁰ Whitcomb, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

²¹ Steinmann, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

“The Roman Empire dominated the world from the battle at Carthage in 146 B.C. to its division into East and West in 395 A.D. (approximately 500 years later). Many expositors conclude that the fourth kingdom is Greece. But Miller, in quoting J. H. Walton, notes: ‘The evidence in the writings of the church fathers is massive and in unison in favor of the Roman view.’”²²

Daniel went on to say: “*So the people will be a mixture*” (vs 43). The relationship is a positive one – an alliance between two elements. Then “*in the time of **those kings**, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom.*” Once again, the prophecy is appealing to the end. A historical application is in evidence, then a new meaning at the eschaton when all those leaders are concurrent!

The merge of papal Rome with secular Rome appears to fit the historical meaning. The secular power then declined, and its papal authority rose with the “gift” of the Papal States.

- When the Lombards seized the city of Ravenna in Italy and on the verge of conquering Rome, Pope Stephen II turned to the king of the Franks (later France) Pippin III, known also as Pippin the Short.
- Pippin defeated the Lombard leader, Aistulf, and made him return conquered land to the papacy and then added land areas. This became a “gift” documented as the “Donation of Pippin.” (The author recognizes the historical questions regarding this record.)
- That provided the legal basis for the “Papal States,” which was formalized by Charlemagne in 781 A.D.²³

There is another fulfillment of these iron legs and feet mixed with iron and clay. Daniel 11 and 12 highlight earth’s last resurgence of the Roman antichrist power that more than rivals its fearful history.

To be continued in the November issue.

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²² Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

²³ <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-papal-states-1789449>