

CHAPTER 12

THE GREAT IMAGE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S NIGHT VISION, DANIEL CHAPTER 2

THE GREAT IMAGE

“Thou, oh king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Dan. 2:31-35).

THE INTERPRETATION

Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold (v. 38). The four great beasts were discussed in Chapter 11. The first, a two-winged lion, represented Babylon over which Nebuchadnezzar ruled. The prophecy of the four beasts, discussed in Chapter 11, covered a different phase of this history which was the development of the little horn, showing the rise of the Papal power and of its boasting and persecutions. This great image of Nebuchadnezzar’s night vision brings out the coming of the kingdom of God, “the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”

From Bible Readings For the Home Circle we read the following glowing description of Babylon: “The character of the Babylonian Empire is fittingly indicated by the nature of the material composing that portion of the image by which it was symbolized—the head of gold. It was ‘the golden kingdom of a golden age.’ The city of Babylon, its metropolis, according to history towered to a height never equaled by any of its later rivals. ‘Situated in the garden of the East; laid out in a perfect square sixty miles in circumference, fifteen miles on each side, surrounded by a wall three hundred and fifty feet high and eighty-seven feet thick, with a moat, or ditch, around this, of equal cubic capacity with the wall itself; divided into six hundred and seventy-six squares, laid out in luxuriant pleasure-grounds and gardens, interspersed with magnificent dwellings, - this city, containing in itself many things which were themselves wonders of the world, was itself another and still mightier wonder....Such was Babylon, with Nebuchadnezzar, youthful, bold, vigorous, and accomplished, seated upon its throne.”

A second witness to the height of the wall around Babylon which seems more modest is: “Arbydenus and Eusebius say that Nebuchadnezzar built the great wall of Babylon, seventy-five feet high, and thirty-two feet wide, with a circumference of three hundred and sixty-five stadia. This was of solid brick masonry, by Babylonian bricks being about a foot square and from three to four inches thick. Nebuchadnezzar, in the Standard inscription, only claims to have repaired the old wall of the city. He erected a splendid new palace in the vicinity of the old royal residence. He constructed the famous ‘Hanging Gardens’ to delight his Median wife, Amyitis, the daughter of Cyaxares. He repaired and beautified the great temple of Bell at Babylon; and all the inscribed bricks thus far discovered in the Babel mound bear Nebuchadnezzar’s legend.”

OTHER DESCRIPTIONS OF THE WALL

“The walls of Babylon, in connection with the ‘Hanging Gardens,’ were among the ‘Seven Wonders of the World.’ Herodotus says that they were fifty royal cubits (about eighty-five English

feet) wide, Strabo and Quintus Curtius gave the width as thirty-two feet. Herodotus assigned the walls a height of two hundred royal cubits, or three hundred royal feet (about three hundred and thirty-five English feet). Ctesius gave the height as fifty fathoms, or three hundred ordinary Greek feet. Pliny and Solinus made the altitude two hundred and thirty-five feet. Philostratus and Quintus Curtius assigned the wall a height of one hundred and fifty feet. Clitarchus, according to Diodorus Siculus, and Strabo gave the height as seventy-five feet...The height and thickness of the walls gave them their strength and rendered scaling and mining utterly hopeless”—*Standard History of the World*, pp. 268-269.

THE HANGING GARDENS. “The ‘Hanging Gardens’-regarded by the Greeks as one of the ‘Seven Wonders of the World’-were the chief glory of the great palace; and constituted its pleasure-ground. This remarkable construction was a square, each side measuring four hundred Greek feet, according to Diodorus. It rested upon several tiers of open arches, built one over the other, and bearing at each stage, or story, a solid platform, from which arose the next tier of arches. The structure was seventy-five feet high, and at the time it was covered with a vast mass of earth in which were grown flowers and shrubs, and even the largest trees. Quintus Curtius says that the trunks of some of these trees were twelve feet in diameter, and Strabo states that some of the piers were hollowed and filled with earth to afford nourishment for the roots of the trees. Water, conveyed from the Euphrates through pipes, was said by Strabo to have been raised by a screw working on the principle of Archimedes. There was a layer of reeds mixed with bitumen, next a double layer of burnt brick cemented with gypsum, and then a coating of sheet-lead, between the bricks and the mass of soil, to protect the building against gradual decay by the moisture penetrating the brick-work. The garden was reached by steps. Stately apartments were among the arches on which rested the structure, on the ascent to the garden, *Ibid*, p. 268.

THE RIVER EUPHRATES FLOWED THROUGH THE CITY. The Euphrates divided Babylon into two almost equal parts. Its banks were lined all the way with quays of brick laid in bitumen, and were also guarded by two brick walls skirting them along their entire extent. Each of these walls had twenty-five gates, corresponding to the number of streets extending upon the river. Outside each gate there was an inclined landing-place, by which the water’s edge could be reached. Boats kept at these landing-places conveyed passengers across the river. The river was also crossed by a bridge consisting of a number of stone piers erected in the channel, firmly held together with fastenings of iron and lead, and connected only during the day by wooden drawbridges, on which people passed over, and which were removed at night to prevent the use of the bridge in the dark. Diodorus gives this bridge a length of five stadia (about one thousand yards) and a width of thirty feet. He also says that there was a tunnel under the river, connecting its two sides, and that it was fifteen feet broad and twelve feet high to the spring of the arched roof.” *Ibid*. p. 266. And such was the golden city, the glorious capital of the Chaldean Excellency, the head of gold.

THE SECOND WORLD POWER

“And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee...” (Dan. 2:39, first part). This terse remark does not begin to tell the dramatic story of the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the king of the Medo-Persian Empire. “Cyrus renewed his march upon Babylon in the spring of BCE 538, crossing the Tigris without opposition and soon appearing before Babylon. The Babylonian army under Nabonadius himself was here drawn up to oppose him. In the battle which ensued the Babylonian king was thoroughly defeated, the greater part of his army seeking refuge inside the walls of the capital, while he himself with a small body of troops fled for safety into the important city of Borsippa, a short distance southwest from Babylon.

“In the meantime, the Babylonian crown-prince, Belshazzar, or Belshar-uzur, the son of Nabonadius, and the grandson of the illustrious Nebuchadnezzar-supported by the counsels of his mother and the officers of the court-for a time successfully resisted all the Persian assaults, so that Cyrus, almost reduced to despair, resorted to a stratagem whose failure might have cost him dear. Leaving a corps of observation behind him, Cyrus, with the bulk of his army, marched up the course of the Euphrates for some distance, and dug a new channel, or channels, from the river by means of which a part of its water could be drawn off. Cyrus awaited the arrival of a certain festival at Babylon, when the entire population would be engaged in drinking and revelry. The festival on this occasion was held with more than usual pomp and magnificence, and Belshazzar gave himself up entirely to the delights of the season, entertaining a thousand dignitaries in his palace. The rest of the population was occupied in feasting and dancing, and in the midst of drunken riot and mad excitement the siege of the city was wholly forgotten, and the usual precautions were neglected. The Babylonians abandoned themselves for the night to orgies characterized by a strange mingling of religious frenzy and drunken excess.

“While this was going on inside the city during this eventful night, the Persians were silently watching outside at the two points where the Euphrates entered and left the walls. They anxiously and cautiously watched the gradual sinking of the riverbed, to discover if their silent movements would be observed and cause alarm. Had they entered the river channel to find the river-walls manned and the river-gates locked fast they would have been caught in a trap. Flanked on both sides by an enemy they could neither see nor reach, they would have been caught at a terrible disadvantage. In such a case they would have been entirely cut to pieces without being able to make any effectual resistance, or to escape from their perilous position. But as they observed no signs of alarm, but only the shouts of riotous revelry, on the part of the unsuspecting populace, the Persians grew bolder and, when the revelry was at its height, emerged from the deep riverbed and seized the two undefended gateways. The frightened Babylonians at once raised a war-shout and spread the alarm. Swift runners hurried off to ‘show the king of Babylon that his city was taken at one end’ so says the Book of Jeremiah. In the darkness and confusion of the night a frightful massacre occurred, says Xenophon. The drunken revelers were unable to resist. Belshazzar, completely surprised and utterly helpless, ‘at the awful handwriting upon the wall,’ which appeared at this time, was warned of his danger when too late, and could offer no check to the progress of the assailants, who had the paralyzed populace completely at their mercy. A band of Persians forced their way into the royal palace and slew the astonished Belshazzar on the scene of his sacrilegious revelry. Such is the testimony of Herodotus and Xenophon, of Daniel and Jeremiah. Says the Book of Daniel: ‘In that night was Belshazzar slain.’ The dawn found Cyrus undisputed master of the mighty Babylon.”-*Standard History of the World*, pp. 256-257.

THE LESSON FROM THE FALL OF BABYLON

There are really two lessons to be learned from the drunken end to this first and most glorious civilization to rise in the East.

1. The first is that the rise and fall of kings is caused by that God of the heavens who guides the course of nations, establishing those he will and placing kings of His choice, and when wickedness comes to the full that He destroys nations at will. A dramatic example is found in a story of Nebuchadnezzar who dreamed a dream which troubled him (Dan. 4:1-17), which Daniel interpreted as “...they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule” (Dan. 4:25-26).

That was the warning, but Nebuchadnezzar failed to give heed, and later boasted of his own prowess. "At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (vs. 29-32).

That same hour it happened, just like the voice said, "till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like bird's claws" (v. 33). Nebuchadnezzar learned his lesson that God rules in the heavens and on earth (vs. 34-35 state), "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (v. 37).

2. GOD DESTROYS NATIONS WHEN THEIR CUP OF INIQUITY IS FULL. This time the punishment fell upon Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar; the immediate sin to be told here, though it was but a culmination of the sins of a people who had become very wicked: "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink; therein...They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote" (Dan. 5:1-2, 4-5). Daniel was called for and interpreted the writing, Cyrus being outside the walls, laying siege to Babylon, "And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (vs. 25-28).

But it is with the second word that we have to deal: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

Describing the moral state into which the inhabitants of Babylon had fallen: "They 'coveted with an evil covetousness,' as we are informed by the Jewish writers Habakkuk and Jeremiah. The 'shameful custom' which Herodotus relates, requiring of every Babylonian woman, rich or poor, high-born or humble, prostitution as a religious duty in the great temple of Beltis at Babylon once in her life, was probably dictated by this spirit of greed, for the purpose of attracting strangers to the capital; as was also the custom of selling the marriageable virgins at public auction which Herodotus also mentions. Quintus Curtius, the Roman writer, also says that the avarice of husbands and parents induced them to sell the virtue of their wives and daughters to strangers.

"Both sacred and profane writers continually dwell upon the luxury of the Babylonians. We are informed by Isaiah that the 'daughter of the Chaldeans was tender and delicate,' 'given to pleasures,' disposed to 'dwell carelessly.' Ezekiel tells us that her young men made themselves 'as princes to look at-exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads.' Nicolas of Damascus relates that these young men painted their faces, wore earrings, and dressed in robes of rich and soft material. Polygamy prevailed extensively. The pleasures of the table were indulged in to excess, and drunkenness was a general vice. Rich unguents, so celebrated by Posidonius, were likewise invented. The tables were loaded with gold

and silver plate, according to Nicolas of Damascus. In short, the Babylonians utterly abandoned themselves to self-indulgence and luxurious living, reveling in the utmost licentiousness” p. 263, *The Standard History of the World*.

THE THIRD KINGDOM OF BRASS

“AND ANOTHER THIRD KINGDOM OF BRASS, WHICH SHALL BEAR RULE OVER ALL THE EARTH” (Dan. 2:39, last part). The history of the rise of the Grecian Empire has been described in Chapter 11 and needs no further treatment at this time.

THE FOURTH KINGDOM STRONG AS IRON

“AND THE FOURTH KINGDOM SHALL BE STRONG AS IRON: FORASMUCH AS IRON BREAKETH IN PIECES AND SUBDUETH ALL THINGS: AND AS IRON THAT BREAKETH ALL THESE, SHALL IT BREAK IN PIECES AND BRUISE. AND WHEREAS THOU SAWEST THE FEET AND TOES, PART OF POTTERS’ CLAY, AND PART OF IRON, THE KINGDOM SHALL BE DIVIDED; BUT THERE SHALL BE IN IT OF THE STRENGTH OF THE IRON, FORASMUCH AS THOU SAWEST THE IRON MIXED WITH MIRY CLAY, 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” (Dan. 2:40-42).

In Chapter 11 we have shown that the fourth empire was Rome. The statement that the feet and toes were part of iron and part of clay shows that when the time of the fall of the Roman Empire arrived, that weaknesses had crept into the Empire due to the long years of luxury and the giving of the people to excesses of all kinds and a breakup of family life so that it is reported that parents were plotting against the children and children against their parents. Babies were left at the foot of a heathen statue in the center of Rome to be eaten by the wild dogs that infested the city. The life in the court was one riotous orgy after another, so that rulers vied in who could provide the most excesses to the people. Christians were burned at the top of high stakes while Nero drove his chariot by the light of burning Christians. So the warlike spirit of the iron legions of Rome was sapped by the near universal love of pleasure of the grosser sort. This characteristic was passed on to the toes, the ten kingdoms of which it is said that they were partly weak and partly strong.

“AND WHEREAS THOU SAWEST 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 IS NOT MIXED WITH CLAY” (v. 43). The clause “shall mingle themselves with the seed of men” refers to the many marriages between royalty of the various kingdoms in order to cement peaceful relations between nations. But this proved a vain mirage, and the inbreeding produced, for instance, a series of demented and feeble-minded Spanish nobility.

NEW KINGDOM SET UP BY GOD IN DAYS OF THESE KINGS

“AND IN THE DAYS OF THESE KINGS SHALL THE GOD OF HEAVEN SET UP A KINGDOM, WHICH SHALL NEVER BE DESTROYED: AND THE KINGDOM SHALL NOT BE LEFT TO OTHER PEOPLE, BUT IT SHALL BREAK IN PIECES AND CONSUME ALL THESE KINGDOMS, AND IT SHALL STAND FOREVER” (v. 44).

This is the same kingdom that is told of in Dan. 7:27 and which was discussed in the previous chapter. At that time it was shown that this kingdom is the church brought forth in 1830. Here we have a second witness for the time of the bringing forth of the Church of Christ: the kingdom of God on

earth. A careful study of Chart 9 along with the phrase, "in the days of these kings," establishes the exact year of the return of God's kingdom to earth. This phrase tells us that when all fourteen kingdoms are in existence at one time as independent kingdoms, that in that very year the kingdom of God, which has been lost to earth throughout the dark ages, will be restored in power and authority to the earth. The fourteen kingdoms include the four great world empires: Babylon, Greece, Medo-Persia, and Rome, and the ten-toed kingdoms of Austria, France, England, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Bavaria, Wurtemberg, Naples, and Sardinia.

Note on Chart 9 that through the long centuries after the rise of Babylon, kingdoms came and went. Following Babylon was Medo-Persia, then Greece took over, and next Rome. Then both Medo-Persia and Rome came on the scene at the same time. Thus on through the millennia, but never did all stand at one time until in the years 1829 and 1830. For in 1829 something new is added to the picture. Greece obtained her independence from Turkey after being in bondage for one thousand eight hundred and sixty-eight long years. What nation expects to come forth from obscurity after so many hundreds of years? But Greece did. And the very next year, the powers of the world met in London and legally accepted Greece into the world family of nations. But, the kingdom of God made a parallel appearance in 1829; the Church of Christ came into unofficial existence through the preaching of the early elders of the church. And on April 6, 1830 the church was organized according to the laws of the land, and became officially recognized. And it was "in the days of these kings", those two years out of the millennia when this was possible for the establishment of the kingdom of God, for in 1831 the image started to break up with the bid for separation of Holland from the combined nation of Belgium and Holland. The Church of Christ is the only Church to fulfil this prophecy of the setting up of God's kingdom (church), for only one other church came forth in that year, but not with the God-given order of first apostles, elders, priests, and teachers, and not being called of God as was Aaron.

What is the prophecy? "the kingdom...shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms" (v. 44). At the end of World War II, there were 78 nations in the world; since World War II, 74 new nations have established independent status, making 152 in all. This was in 1975. And thus we have a second and a powerful witness for the coming forth of the kingdom of God in the year 1830 AD.

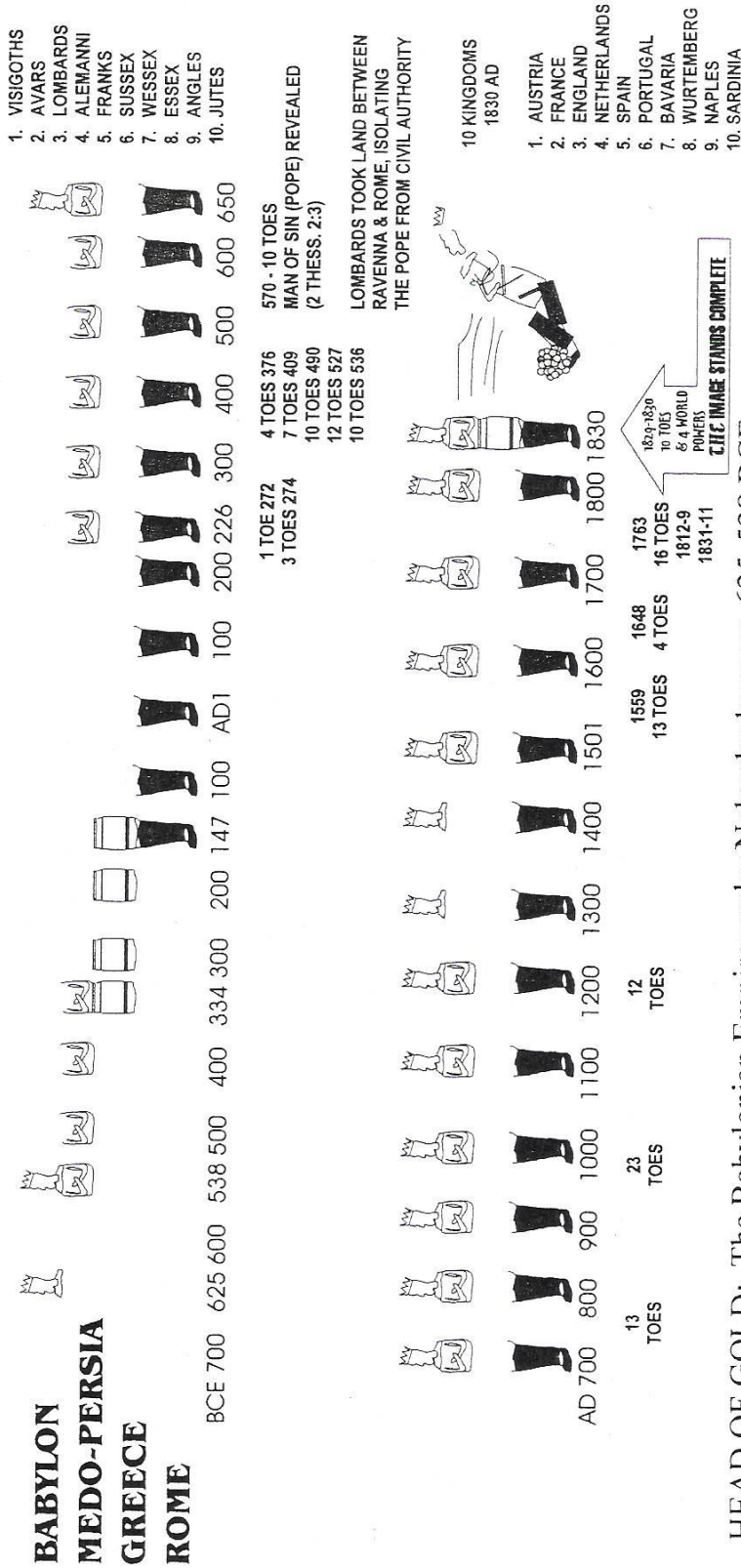
"For as much as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter; and the DREAM IS CERTAIN, AND THE INTERPRETATION THEREOF SURE" (v. 45).

Chart 9. The Great Image of Nebuchadnezzar's Night Vision, Daniel Chapter 2.

The GREAT IMAGE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

FOUR WORLD POWERS

DANIEL 2:31-35



HEAD OF GOLD: The Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar, 625-538 BCE
BREAST & ARMS OF SILVER: The Medo-Persian Empire conquered Babylon, 538-334 BCE
BELLY & THIGHS OF BRASS: The Grecian Empire conquered Medo-Persia, 334-147 BCE
LEGS OF IRON: The Roman Empire conquered Greece 147 BCE - 570 AD
TOES OF IRON AND CLAY: The Kingdoms into which the Roman Empire was divided

DAN. 2:44 "And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And it shall stand forever."
 1829-1830: The first time ever that the IMAGE was complete but never again! **ONLY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST FULFILLS THIS PROPHECY!**
 DAN. 2:45 The Kingdom of God shall break in pieces all these kingdoms. At the end of WWII there were 78 nations in the world. Since WWII, 74 new nations have established independent status, making 152 by 1975.