

Daniel 2:31-45 (James George Deck) 138228

The End Draweth Nigh: An Exposition of Daniel's Great Prophecy, Daniel 2, End Draweth Nigh, The

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"Thou, O 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. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. 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. 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. 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. Forasmuch 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" (Dan. 2:31-45).

In the Second Epistle of Peter we read: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

This is the only thing that can keep the mind from speculating as to the future, and so far from the word of prophecy being obscure, as some men would assert, it is "sure." Inquirers are often advised not to trouble themselves about prophecy. Are men wiser than God, who has given us the Scriptures, and who has so expressly stated "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed"? It is treating God with contempt, ignorantly it may be, by refusing to profit by the prophetic word.

Prophecy is a revelation of the glory of the Son according to the counsels of God, and, surely everything affecting His glory must be deeply interesting to every loyal-hearted Christian. The Holy Spirit shows us "things to come," for "He shall take of mine," said the blessed Lord, "and shall show it unto you." The great scope of prophecy is "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." When we open the prophetic pages, our object should be to become more fully acquainted with the Son of God, and God's counsels concerning Him. This subject is always in the heart of God — ever before His eye — the glory of that Son who glorified Him in the place of suffering and shame down here.

From the Epistle to the Corinthians we learn that God has divided the people into three separate and distinct classes, namely — "Jew, Gentile, and church of God," and these ought never to be confounded. Scripture shows what is God's object in these divisions. It is Christ in His connection with the Jews, and also with the Gentiles, but more especially with the church of God. We have a grand word about the blessed Lord in the eighth of Proverbs, where He is spoken of as "Wisdom." "I was set up from everlasting." We learn further Christ's connection with creation, from the first chapter of Hebrews. By Him and for Him were the worlds made, and without Him was not anything made that was made. The glory of the Son is the object of all God's revelations.

We must note that Daniel did not write this prophecy in the land of Israel, but in the land of their enemies; and it is written partly in Hebrew and partly in Chaldean, a Gentile language. Why was this? Because it refers to the "times of the Gentiles." In Luke we read that the Jews were to "fall by the edge of the sword," and should be led captive into all nations; and Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles — "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." God's curse is resting upon Jerusalem now, and its people are scattered, and this will continue until that which Daniel prophesied is fulfilled — the times of the Gentiles. It was because of the sins of Israel that the king of Babylon overcame them and led them captive. To Daniel was revealed, by the God of heaven, the character of these times of the Gentiles. The first and second chapters of this book, to the third verse, are written in Hebrew; but from there to the end of the seventh chapter it is written in Chaldee, and again from the eighth to the end in Hebrew. The account of the times of the Gentiles is written in a Gentile language. It is likewise remarkable that when God was going to take out of the nations a people for His name (Acts 15:14) — the church — it is written in Greek.

Let us now look at this second chapter of Daniel. We see that the power and glory were taken from the people of Israel because of their wickedness, and transferred to the Gentiles, and Jerusalem, the city of the Great King, trodden down. The great image which we purpose looking at gives us the history of these Gentile kingdoms which were to rule over the earth, till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. This chapter has been very greatly misinterpreted by those who, as they say, spiritualize the Scriptures, and especially the 34th and 35th verses, having reference, to the "stone" which is to fill the whole earth.

The king of Babylon had perhaps been thinking over what great victories he had achieved — he had conquered all his enemies, and the people, whom God had established to be a holy people to Himself, so that all the people of the earth should see that they were called by the name of the Lord and be afraid of them (see Deut. 28:1-10), he had destroyed their city, made captive her people, and even the seed-royal of David were his servants; the vessels of the sanctuary were in the house of his gods (Dan. 5:3; 2 Chron. 36:17-20). He was thinking and wondering what should take place after he was gone — (see Dan. 2:28-29) — like many another great politician. The greatest of them in our day are in perplexity as to what is coming upon the earth. They see alarming and significant signs, immense standing armies in readiness for a dreadful conflict, but they can only speculate as to the future. Well, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed and saw a vision of a great symbolic image, and he is greatly troubled, forgets his dream, which is revealed to Daniel, who also interprets what the image and the different metals composing it represent. The kingdom of Babylon is symbolized by the golden head “Thou art this head of gold.” The silver breast and arms represent the Medo-Persian kingdom, which immediately succeeded that of Babylon. Greece is represented by the brass, and the iron legs signified the Roman Empire in its eastern and western divisions. This is emphatically an iron age, everything about it has this characteristic — iron railways, and ironclad ships. The division of the Roman Empire occurred in the time of Constantine. The Mahometans of India still speak of Constantinople as Rome.

In what part of the prophetic symbol of the image are we now? Doubtless in the feet; part of iron and clay — the divided state of the kingdom, partly strong, and partly broken or brittle. “They shall mingle themselves with the seed of men, but shall not cleave one to another.” This no doubt has reference to the monarchic and democratic rule within what once formed the Roman Empire. We do not yet see developed the ten toes, which will be found at the close of the times of the Gentiles. What the ten toes mean may be seen in Revelation 17:12-18, under another symbol, namely, ten kings or kingdoms, who have one mind given them to give their power and strength unto the beast (the Imperial head or monarch of the revived Roman Empire), in open hostility to the Lord when He comes to take unto Him His great power and reign, as the great King and universal Lord. Now His kingdom is in mystery, but by-and-by it will be in open manifestation. What will be the state of the world when He thus comes? There will be the open apostasy from Christ, and the reign of the Man of Sin, spoken of in Second Thessalonians.

The great whore, Babylon the Great, riding on the Beast, represents corrupt Christianity supported by and ruling the civil powers. The woman is seen seated upon the Beast and rides it, or rules and directs its course. Corruption, religious corruption, governs under the name of Christianity; and while the civil power puts the saints, who testify against the corruption, to death, it is the Woman that is really guilty and drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (Rev. 17:6). But at the end the ten kings, symbolized by those ten horns, wearied of her rule, hate her and destroy her.

This is the last and still future relation of the secular power of the Roman Empire to the Woman. These kings will hate the system of corruption, and not endure it any longer, but combine against her with one mind to destroy her. We see this mind manifesting itself now, while its full accomplishment is still future. But let us remember that, when this system of corruption is destroyed, these ten horns do not give their power to the Lamb, but are united in hostility against Him. They make war against the Lamb, and give their power to the Beast, the power of antichrist.

We have seen on a small scale a specimen of this hatred, not only against the corruptions of Christianity, but to Christ Himself, in France, at the time of the famous French Revolution, once the most Popish country in Europe, and the faithful supporter of Rome. It abolished under infidel influence all the forms and institutions of Christianity, turned its churches into places of amusement, called death an eternal sleep, robbed the National Church of all its properties, and on one grand occasion they carried a handsome abandoned woman, voted as the Goddess of Reason, through the streets of Paris into the Chamber of Deputies, and there worshipped her as the God of France.

The Roman Empire as a united empire was broken up by the barbarian kings, but never divided into ten kingdoms under ten kings — subject to and confederate with the Beast. These ten horns receive power as kings one hour with the Beast. They are of one mind, and agree and give their kingdom to him — which the barbarians never did. It may be added that interpreters have also sought for the ten horns in the western part of the Roman Empire, which is like looking for the ten toes upon one foot of the image instead of both.

We would draw special attention to the stone cut out without hands which smites the image, and becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth. Some say this stone is the gospel. What! does the gospel destroy Gentile dominion, and consume the kingdoms? No, it is not the gospel, but the kingdom of heaven, which Christ is going to set up in manifestation at His coming.

It will be interesting to trace through Scripture the references made to the “stone.” The first Scripture we will look at is in Genesis 28. Jacob took a stone for his pillow, and in his sleep dreamed, and saw a ladder set up on the earth and reaching to heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it. In the morning he set up this stone for a pillar, and said, “This stone shall be God’s house.”

The Lord tells Jacob that in “his seed” shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. In the first chapter of John’s Gospel we see this same referred to by the Lord, verse 51, and the heavens open upon this “seed of Jacob” — the Son of Man and Son of God. Jacob, when dying, blesses his sons, and says of Judah, he “is a lion’s whelp.” “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be;” but speaking of Joseph and the mighty God of Jacob, adds — “from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel.” In the 118th Psalm we read — “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” The prophet Isaiah tells us in the 8th chapter, “He shall be for a sanctuary; for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and many among them shall stumble and fall and be broken.” We see at this day the truth of this; the ten tribes are lost to knowledge, and the Jews scattered. In the 20th chapter of Luke we read of the husbandmen who cast out the beloved and only son, the heir, and killed him; and the Lord Jesus, in applying this parable, said, “What is this then that is written? The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” Romans 9:31 Shows unmistakably that the stone is Christ. Paul says of Israel that they attained not to the law of righteousness, “for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offense; and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.” As a nation they fell upon that stone and have been broken to pieces; while in Daniel, it is the stone falling upon, and breaking to powder. In the 4th of Acts the Apostle Peter applies this great truth about falling upon the stone, when he charges the rulers of the people with the crucifixion and rejection of Christ, saying, “This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner; neither is there salvation in any

other." Luke, in the 4th chapter, records how the Lord at the commencement of His ministry entered into the synagogue at Nazareth and read out of Isaiah, the 61st chapter, down to "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord," closing the book in the midst of a sentence, having only a comma between it and "the day of vengeance of our God." He omitted this latter clause because He had not then come to preach the day of vengeance, but the "acceptable time." This acceptable time is passing away, and the day of vengeance prophesied of is at hand. In the 1st Epistle of Thessalonians we have the Lord coming for His church, to gather His redeemed people to be with Himself, both the living and dead; but the world, which saw not His ascension, will not see the rapture of His saints. In the 2nd Epistle we get His coming with His saints, "in flaming fire taking vengeance." The world will see Him then coming in power and great glory — that is what "the falling of the stone" sets forth. He will put an end to Gentile dominion and set up His kingdom: then the throne of His father David will be set up at Jerusalem, the kingdom restored to Israel (Acts 1:6), and the people of Israel gathered together again under His rightful and peaceful scepter. Then all the blessed promises made to them throughout the sacred Scriptures will be fulfilled, His kingdom shall extend from the river unto the ends of the earth — "shall fill the whole earth" (Psa. 45; Psa. 72; Isa. 11). The stone, observe, falls upon the feet of the image.

When the four kingdoms are revealed in a vision to Daniel, the man of God, it is under the symbol of four savage beasts. The kingdoms of the present day are all represented on their banners by birds or beasts of prey. In the vision seen by Daniel, the kingdom of Babylon is represented by a lion with eagle's wings; the Medo-Persian kingdom by a bear; the kingdom of Grecia by a leopard. The fourth kingdom, the one we are the most interested in, was "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had iron teeth ... and it had ten horns." This is the last state of the Roman Empire. We have not seen the development of the ten horns, which are explained to be ten kings which shall arise in that Empire, who unite to give their power unto the Beast (the Imperial Head of the Roman Empire). In the book of the Revelation we get the same thing taught under similar symbols. The Beast is seen here to rise out of the sea (the nations — in contrast to the Beast of verse 12, which rises out of the earth — that is, the land, a Jew, who is the Antichrist). It has seven heads (perfection of power and authority), with names of blasphemy upon them. The dragon gives him his power (Satanic). This is the last state of this Empire, the fourth — and be it remembered, there were to be but four Gentile Beasts, and this fourth was to be succeeded by the kingdom which was to be an everlasting kingdom; a throne which the "ancient of days" gives to the "Son of Man" (Dan. 7:9,13,14,22). But prior to this there is to be a time of trouble such as never was before, or shall be after, on the earth. An infidel Satanic power will be dominant when the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel. We cannot enter into all the details of this "man of sin," and of his destruction, with all associated with him: they may be read with profit at leisure from God's own book.

Those who are of the church of God will have been previously translated or raised up into the glory with Christ, while the terrible and awful actings of the Beast and his false prophet are going on in the earth. It is exceedingly solemn when we think of the times in which we live — on the very eve of the manifestation of this antichrist. The great image represents Gentile dominion on this earth, and the head, breast, thighs, and legs have had their fulfillment, and we are now, as to time, in the feet, the iron and the clay, the divided state of the Roman kingdom. There is but the toes to be developed, and upon these toes is to fall "the stone" which is to crush and destroy Gentile dominion. The great question for each to ask is — Do I belong to the image or the stone? Peter wrote, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house ... Unto you therefore which believe He is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient." The foundation stone on which the living stones are built is laid in heaven — and not (as a Roman Catholic priest said to me) in Rome. They suppose the church to be built upon Peter. The Lord said to Peter, "Thou art Peter (Petros), and upon this rock (Petra) I will build My church." If we study the sure light of prophecy, we see we are very near the coming of our Lord Jesus for His saints; it may be this very night; it cannot be very long. Oh that we may be found "waiting" for Him, in separation from everything disapproved of by Him — that we may meet Him with joy and not with shame. The Lord bless His people with this grace, for His Name's sake.

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