

Higher Praise Christian Fellowship

Wednesday Bible Study

July 22, 2009

When Jesus was taken up into heaven, after his resurrection, the angels said:

Act 1:9-11

“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

Paul wrote with confidence:

1Thessalonians 4:13-18

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then **we** which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

Why did the Holy Spirit let write Paul that “we” speaking of those who will be alive at Christ’s return?

Because that “we” can be made ours and belongs to every Christian since Jesus ascended to the Father till he comes back. We are not here waiting for the time of our death, but “Looking for that blessed hope, and the

glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;” **Titus 2:13.**

This has to be kept in mind when studying Bible prophecies. All we need to know is that Jesus is coming back.

EGYPTIAN KINGS			BIBLICAL REFERENCE	
		1530	birth of Moses	
Dudimose				
1450 – 1446		1447	15 Abib - Exodus (Numbers 33:3-4)	
		1446		
			Times of the Judges	
			Saul is king	
Akhenaton	Amenhotep III	1048	David (1011-971)	
		1023		
		1012		
1023-1007	1048-1012	1011	Salomon (971-931)	
		1007		
		971	Kingdom divided	
		968		
Ramses II		943	Israel – North	
		931	Judah - South	
943 – 877		922	destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 BC	
		877	Destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC	
		722		
		605		
		586		

1447-968

480 years between the Exodus and the beginning of the building of the temple in Jerusalem by Salomon

I Kings 6:1

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

I am convinced that the descriptions of the kingdoms given in the Bible by Daniel the prophet in his Old Testament book and John the apostle in the Revelation, so wonderfully coincide as to practically complete and interpret each other.

The so called "Times of the Gentiles" to which our Lord Jesus openly referred to, began with the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar and will last till His return. Luke 21:24, "... and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Daniel, in his perspective of the VI century before Christ, sees four world empires to appear on the world scene till God himself will put an end to man's efforts to create a perfect government. It'll be the beginning of Theocracy.

John lives in the I century AD. The first three kingdoms have risen and fallen, so he sees the fourth kingdom only and the end of its arrogance by the very hand of Jesus

KINGDOMS	DANIEL 2 THE IMAGE	DANIEL 7 THE 4 BEASTS	DANIEL 8 THE 2 BEASTS	REVELATION 13-17 THE BEAST
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Prospective of the prophet DANIEL

VI Century BC

BABYLONIAN EMPIRE	HEAD	A LION		mouth of a lion
Daniel 2:37-38 - “Thou art this head of gold ”, said Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar	Of fine gold	Lion with wings of an eagle		
PERSIAN EMPIRE	BREAST AND ARMS	A BEAR	A RAM	feet of a bear
Daniel 8:20 – “The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.”	Of silver			
		It raised up on one side	Had two horns – one was higher (Persia), which came up last	
		Three ribs in his mouth	Pushing westward and northward and southward	
GREEK EMPIRE	BELLY AND THIGHS	A LEOPARD	A HE GOAT	like a leopard
Dan 8:21 – “And the rough goat is the king of Grecia”	Of brass			
	Shall bear rule over all the earth	Had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl	Came on the face of the whole earth and touched not the ground	

Prospective of the apostle JOHN

I Century AD - Revelation 13:1-2

ROMAN EMPIRE	LEGS	A BEAST		A BEAST
Rev 17:9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. Rev 17:18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.	Of iron	It had great iron teeth		
	As iron ... it break in pieces and bruise	Devoured and brake in pieces		
	FEET AND TOES			
	Part of iron part of clay			
	the kingdom shall be divided (10 toes?)	Ten horns – ten kings		ten heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns - ten kings
	made war with the saints, and prevailed		Make war with the saints, and was able to overcome them	

		a time and times and the dividing of time (3 years and a half)		forty and two months (3 years and a half)
		a mouth speaking great things		a mouth speaking great things
		devour the whole earth		Power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.
	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.	The beast will be slain and his body destroyed – and the Son of man is given a kingdom which shall not be destroyed		These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them
KINGDOM OF GOD	in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom	I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.		And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

King Nebuchadnezzar's dream

Daniel chapter 2

The dream

The Babylonian king had a dream. As it happens – at least it happens to me sometimes – the dream slipped off his mind, but the awful emotions it created remained, tormenting the king's soul, maybe more because he could not remember what he had dreamt. It was a special dream though, and it is likely he knew it was so, though he could not remember it.

This dream came to him in a time he must have been concerned about his kingdom, for some reasons not better explained. Perhaps, he simply was worrying about what would happen from that time on. Probably, Nebuchadnezzar felt that he had reached far more than his predecessors and with very much difficulty he could have added more power or conquests to the largest and more powerful kingdom on earth, the empire that he was ruling, or even just keep it at peace for a long time. His concern was serious.

We don't know about the Nebuchadnezzar's religious beliefs. The Babylonians were a heathen people, but we tend to simplify matters which maybe more complicated. Even among heathen peoples those that were educated, those that honestly considered the true nature of a true God, must have felt that he could not be that animal or stone that they were worshipping. I don't know what this mighty king believed in his heart. He had been in contact with so many religions and traditions, who knows exactly what were his convictions? If his beliefs were different than those of his subjects, of the Babylonian nation, probably, for the sake of keeping the unity of his kingdom, he would have kept them for himself.

I understand by the harsh way he treats them that he was tired of the religious men of his time. He probably felt they were only worried with maintaining their positions and would act only to this end. He must have asked questions or needed advice before the incident we are considering, but the answers must have not been so convincing. He wanted to put them to the test.

It is good to test things. It is important to be sure that we are not fooled by people who just want something from us. There is always a way to know if what we are told and taught is true or false. The king had his chance to know if his wise men, astrologers, etc, were truly prophets of the gods they said they were ambassadors of, or ministers, or just liars wanting to maintain the privileges of the Babylonian Court.

Today's false prophets are exactly the same. Astrologers, false teachers, tell people what they want to hear. Test them and you will find them liars. Test those who lie about what the Word of God teaches: you will find them wanting. Their words may be so attractive, seductive! But there comes a time in our lives when we really consider things and we realize that we know that we have been tricked. It was enough during the good times, to calm down our religious needs, but not during the bad, because very rarely false prophets have good answers to deep questions and never solutions to heal the soul. Their only goal is power, money, privileges.

The Babylonian wise men had been put to the test by their king and found wanting.

The king was very angry. I don't think he was acting so drastically only because of that single event, but he must have realized that they had been lying to him till then. He felt tricked, cheated, by people he trusted and even trained.

Daniel learns of the king's determination and, strangely enough, he is not upset. As a strong man of God who serves His Lord with a sincere heart, he is sure he will not be forsaken, he is not alone in his struggles. Only righteous people can act with such a courage! When our conduct is according to God's word, we feel secure in Him, we fear nothing. John the apostle said that and every true Christian knows it is a fact. Non Christians can't feel the assurance of God's peace - that so evident a fact that it needs no further discussion. Whether the reader has peace from God or not, it is a matter he and he alone knows. What I want to say here is that, if he doesn't have peace, if he has looked for peace everywhere but has not found it yet, it is only because God and God alone can give peace. The words of Jesus on this subject are so powerful and so simple at the same time: in Him alone is true peace!

Daniel's prayer is answered, he learns from God of the dream and of his interpretation. Why? Because, as he clearly states from the beginning, it was a God-given dream, "But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.", v.28

Daniel first tells the dream. Imagine the surprise of the king, as the prophet unfolds it exactly as he had dreamt it!

The prophet himself gives the interpretation of the dream to the king: the great image, in its parts is a symbols of man's rule over the earth. The image had the shape of a man and the various parts of his body, the head, his breast and arms, his belly and thighs, legs and feet, with the materials each part was made of, intended to represent four kingdoms, which will appear on the world scene, before divine intervention will put an end to man's vain efforts.

These four kingdoms will cover the so called "Times of the Gentiles", to which our Lord himself made reference. Luke 21:24, "... and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

The first world empire: Babylon

The head of gold, as the prophet himself says, represents the neo-Babylonian empire, of which Nebuchadnezzar was the best representative king. After him, decline would follow, as maybe this powerful king himself already feared.

With words that resemble those of Daniel, Jeremiah wrote: "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that [are] upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him." – Jeremiah 27:5-7.

The second: Persia

Another kingdom would take the Babylonian's place in the world scene. The breast and arms of silver, represent the Persian Empire. Of this the only comment made by the prophet to the

king is that it will be lesser than his kingdoms. Cyrus was the most representative king of this second world power. Of him we find mention in the Scriptures. Because, as God, through his prophets, spoke of the Babylonian flood on His people as the punishment for their sins, he also promised the fall of this kingdom and the rise of another one, who would have restored and freed Israel.

Jeremiah prophesied and it came to pass exactly the way the Lord said it would: “And this whole land shall be a desolation, [and] an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, [that] I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.” – Jeremiah 25: 11-12

The prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled: After 70 years of captivity, Babylon was conquered by the Persians never to be restored again.

Cyrus issued a decree that let the Jewish go back to their land and rebuild their nation. The year is 536 BC.

II Chronicles 36:20-23 reads: “And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: [for] as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD [spoken] by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and [put it] also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which [is] in Judah. Who [is there] among you of all his people? The LORD his God [be] with him, and let him go up.”

The third: Greece

Eventually, even the Persians had to give in to another world empire, the Greek's. The year is 332 BC.

The belly and thighs of brass are the Greek Empire of which it is said that “ shall bear rule over all the earth.” Such definition fits better to no other empire. Alexander the Great –says the legend - cried at the age of 33 because he had no more lands to conquer for his empire. When Alexander died, he had no descendants, so his kingdom was divided among his four generals, the diadochi. Such an event will be further described in more specific prophecies of the same Daniel.

The rise of a kingdom from the West, was an unparalleled event in history till Alexander the Great. Until then, all the empires had originated in the middle-east and Egypt. Such a detail is not passed unmentioned by Daniel himself in another part of his book. So, please, if willing to know more about this kingdom, I invite you to consider the prophecies of Daniel chapters 8, 10, 11 and 12, where more details about it are revealed.

Worth mentioning because of even longer consequences than those connected to the military conquest, is the spread of the cultural and linguistic Greek world. Such phenomena is called Hellenism. Because of the extension of the conquest of Alexander, the diffusion of the Greek language was so large that, three centuries later, when Jesus and the apostles lived, it was still predominant throughout the Roman Empire. It can be easily compared to today's English, always

present in international documents, transactions and treatises, business, and new technologies terminology. Even if the Roman empire's language was Latin, even some Roman inscriptions were in Greek, even on Roman coins. This fact is very notable if we consider that the New Testament in its original language was written in Greek, as a document written today with the specific intent to be understood by people everywhere in the world would be written in English –like this very article you are reading! The hand of God is in human history: what a wonderful way God prepared so that the world could receive the Gospel!

The forth kingdom: Rome

Then came the forth kingdom, Rome, the Roman Empire, of which the prophet gives a very vivid description: “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.” No better description can be given of the devastating power of the Roman conquest. The Roman empire would include lands as far as today's England, France, Germany, Romania, Middle-East, North-Africa, the whole then known world. No army, no reign could resist the Romans!

Some commentators have seen in the two legs division of the statue, the division occurred at a certain time in Eastern and Western Roman Empire, but though I don't feel to put too much stress on that, I understand that at the same time it is very difficult to consider it a simple coincidence.

Something more is said of this forth kingdom. Though it is clearly stated that the description still applies to the forth kingdom, the prophet adds: “his feet part of iron and part of clay.” And adds to that in his interpretation: “And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's 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.”

The writer of this article - along with many commentators, both of today and of the past-believes this *phase* of the forth kingdom to be referred to an event which has not yet taken place: the Revival of the Ancient Roman Empire.

In the book of Revelation it is clear that the world system over which the Beast and the False Prophet –world political and religious leaders - will rule is the Revived Roman Empire. Of such incredible thing, the whole world will be amazed, as writes the apostle John in the book of Revelation: “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and is to come.” – Revelation 17:8.

I had to change the KJV in this text. It translates “was, and is not, and yet is”, which is due to a printing mistake in the Textus Receptus. The correct text is translated above.

Attempts to restore the Roman Empire are not without parallels in history: the Sacred Roman Empire and Mussolini's dictatorship in Italy, are two worth mentioning.

Don't forget how large the influence of Rome is even to this day, being the center of Christendom for more near a billion Roman Catholics!

The belief that the fourth kingdom described by Daniel is yet to appear on the world scene, that this prophecy still requires future fulfillment, is supported by various facts.

The Roman Empire never really knew a phase that actually fulfills the words of the prophet. Even Christians living the times when the empire was still existent, were expecting something to fulfill the prophecy as a sign that the end, the second coming of Jesus, was near.

Irenaeus was a Christian bishop during the early second century, in his fifth book *Against Heresies*, he writes: "In a still clearer light has John, in the Apocalypse (Revelation), indicated to the Lord's disciples what shall happen in the last times, and concerning the ten kings who shall then arise, among whom the empire (of course he meant the Roman) which now rules the earth shall be partitioned." – XXVI.1. This *father* of the Church believes these ten kings will be destroyed by our Lord's return.

Jerome wrote in the fifth century: "All ecclesiastical writers have handed down that, in the consummation of the world, when the kingdom of the Romans is about to be destroyed, there will be ten kings who shall divide the Roman world among them", quoted by Frederick A. Tadford, *Daniel and his prophecy*, page 110.

Early Christians were expecting the Empire to be divided into ten parts and the Antichrist to appear. Such a thing has never occurred in history.

The Roman Empire has long since fallen, but the event to take place at the crush the fourth kingdom has not yet come to pass. It is also clear, from what Daniel says, that the fourth kingdom will be put an end to by the advent of God's kingdom.

I am sorry to say, because I know that such is probably the most popular idea of it, that the kingdom of the God of heaven of which is spoken in this prophecy, is not a spiritual kingdom. There is no hint to assume such a thing. I will also discuss in other articles on prophecies –God willing- some theories that imagine a spiritual kingdom to have spiritually crushed the worldly kingdoms, which cannot be the correct interpretation, for too many reasons, that will be evident to the reader himself if he considers all of Daniel's prophecies in the perspective of the New Testament, that will confirm that there is still a future fulfillment for many Bible prophecies.

This last, still future phase of the fourth kingdom is very peculiar. The iron of the precedent empire is now mixed with clay.

In his interpretation of the dream, the prophet says: "And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's 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."

Daniel himself tells us that this kingdom will be divided. Reading other chapters of Daniel we will learn that this kingdom will be divided in ten other kingdoms. Many see this division in the 10 toes of the image. These kingdoms will try to mix, to unite, among themselves, though such union will not be possible completely. Maybe, we are talking about a political union, pushed on the people notwithstanding national differences. Such a thing is happening in Europe right now, where the pressure towards unity from the political world is very strong, though national differences among European countries are always more evident. Indeed, it seems that only politics are really

interested in the unity process. With the Euro currency another important step towards Europe's unification has been taken. England and some other countries did not want to be part of the Euro nation and are still using their traditional currency. In any respect, though adhering to the European Union, England has never been so enthusiastic about it.

Many commentators, basing also on other passages in the New Testament, believe that this last phase of the fourth empire, will be a global, one-world government, ruled by the Beast, the Antichrist himself, with the help of the False Prophet, a deceiving world religious leader. The push toward a one-world government is also characteristic of our times – if such a thing will ever be possible, time will tell.

One detail must not be left without notice: Bible prophecy is not there to make us able to prophesy. It tells us about what is to happen and, in a sense of the word, we know about future events, but the details of prophecy, experience has confirmed this, is clear only as it unfolds.

Why is the message of the Bible so obscure? Why is it not made to be easily understood? Think about this: human mind can't bear too much knowledge, like the human eyes cannot bear too much light all at once. Instead of enlightenment, too much sudden light will result in total blindness. Gradual revelation, together with faith, give confidence in our God who perfectly reveals Himself and His will to his people.

So, I consider more than sufficient to know that the Bible passage we are considering gives us enough reasons to believe that before the end of this age, before the coming of our Lord, an "empire" will rise, which will carry in itself so much of the Roman Empire to be considered with right a continuing of it, its revival. This kingdom will be divided in parts, nations, who will be united, not naturally, but because unity will be pushed on them. This will be the weakness of this last kingdom, but still it will be strong as "iron" will still be present with clay. This kingdom will be the last human kingdom in history.

The kingdom of God

At a certain time, God's patience will arrive to an end. Why is it God so patient with men and not judging the world now, or has not already done it in the past? I venture say this is the most common question asked by skeptics to believers.

Peter answers this question. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." II Peter 3:9-10.

"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...and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth...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 for ever." This will happen at the return of Jesus Christ. In various Bible passages the Lord is called a stone or the stone, too many to consider the symbolism of this prophecy a coincidence.

Jesus himself said, "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?...And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Matthew 21:42,44.

Jesus was quoting Psalm 118:22-23, a passage referring to himself, being he the promised Messiah, those Scriptures clearly referred to. Cf. also Isaiah 28:16.

At Pentecost, Peter told the people boldly, “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, [even] by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.” Acts 4:10-11.

Jesus will crush man’s kingdoms at his second coming. We read in II Thessalonians 1:7-8, “...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus himself will destroy the Antichrist. II Thessalonians 2:8, “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”

In the book of Revelation this event is described more in detail. Revelation 19:11-17, 19-21, “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him [was] called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes [were] as a flame of fire, and on his head [were] many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he [was] clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies [which were] in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on [his] vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which [sword] proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

The return of Jesus, like his first coming, will mean judgment for the unbelieving world, but salvation and redemption for the saved. Paul referred to the return of Jesus as “the blessed hope” (see II Timothy 2:13), because a marvelous event will take place in that day, I Thessalonians 4:15-17, “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

In that day our very bodies will be redeemed: Philippians 3:21, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

But for the unbelieving world, this will mean the beginning of judgement. I Thessalonians 5:2-3, “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” Peter adds, “But the day of the Lord will come as a

thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” – II Peter 3:10.

Truly the stone, Jesus, will crush upon the kings of this world and destroy them. The same stone that is salvation for many, will be judgement to the world.

I am sorry reader if the truth hurts. It is a useful pain, if like the pain of birth, it can bring forth new life in you. If you do not know God and Jesus as your personal Savior, please realize you need to escape God’s sure punishment for the unsaved. How sad when the Bible says that men perish “because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” That is all that it takes to be saved, receive God’s love in Jesus Christ. John 1:11-12, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on his name.” It is not a matter of merits, but God’s grace and it is as simple as the Bible says it is. “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” – Romans 10:9.

Dear reader, I know this discussion is on Bible prophecies, but, let’s tell it the way it is, if you are not saved, you are reading of nothing else but of your future judgment along with all those who disobey God. The only way these words and events can be a hope for you, is if you are a true Christian waiting for the second coming of Jesus.

I Tessalonicesi 1:9-10, reads : “... ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, [even] Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

Conclusions

Let us go back to our text.

The stone has destroyed the image, God himself will intervene as man’s government on this earth will prove to be of no use to the helpless human condition. We can’t help but notice how this is contrary to what is believed today! Man feels he is at the beginning of a new era of peace and prosperity for all mankind, as religions, world governments, tend to unite for peace and justice for everyone on the planet.

But man forgets, “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” – Psalm 127:1. Man’s efforts for peace, joy, happiness, prosperity, without God are vain and impossible to become true.

Consider the image, her feet. The image stands on feet made of clay - It is eventually and inevitably going to fall! Feet made of clay could never bear the weight of gold, brass and iron. The symbolism is clear: man cannot be successful in his efforts without God.

Notice another very interesting detail, the materials the statue is made of, and the decrease of value in contrast to the increase of strength as one kingdom follows the other. Gold is of more value than silver. Silver is of more value than brass. Brass is of more value than iron. No matter what man believes, there is no evolution in human history! The process is exactly the contrary. We are more technologically advanced than the generations that were before us, but it is at least very doubtful that we may be considered better. God in His Word says we are not and if we consider the facts with due honesty, we’ll admit he is right. If we put aside the blind optimism and the enthusiastic

political plans, famines everywhere, wars, drugs, pornography, violence, immorality, is what we see today in the world we are living in.

I like the way Daniel comments this prophecy: “ the great God hath made known ... what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream [is] certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” This is the appropriate end for our discussion on this subject, hoping the attitude of the reader, knowing what he has now learned, will be the same of that pagan ruler of old.