

Briefing Document: The Fall of the World – Lesson 2

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Executive Summary

This document synthesizes the historical and prophetic analysis of the "Times of the Nations" as presented in the study of Daniel 2 and related visions in Daniel 7 and 8. The central theme explores King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue, which serves as a chronological panorama of world empires. The progression of metals—from gold to a mixture of iron and clay—illustrates a steady deterioration in the quality and unity of earthly governments. The sequence identifies four major world powers: the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Grecian Empire, and the Roman Empire. The analysis concludes with the "Final Kingdom," represented by a stone cut without hands, which signifies the return of Jesus Christ, the destruction of all earthly nations, and the establishment of an eternal kingdom that fills the earth.

The Crisis of the Forgotten Dream

The narrative begins with King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who was troubled by a dream he could not remember. He demanded that his wise men—magicians, astrologers, and Chaldeans—not only interpret the dream but first describe the dream itself. Failure to comply carried a sentence of death and the destruction of their homes.

The Inability of Human Wisdom

The king's advisors admitted their powerlessness, highlighting the supernatural nature of the request.

- *"There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean"* (Daniel 2:10).
- *"It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh"* (Daniel 2:11).

In his fury, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the execution of all wise men in Babylon, including Daniel and his companions.

Divine Intervention through Prayer

Daniel intervened by requesting time from the king and subsequently organizing a prayer meeting with his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They sought mercies from the God of heaven concerning the secret. The dream was revealed to Daniel in a night vision, allowing him to explain that God had orchestrated the king's forgetfulness to place Daniel in a position to reveal the future of the nations.

The Interpretation of the Great Image

Daniel described a massive image of excellent splendor and awesome form. The statue was composed of five distinct sections, each representing a successive world empire.

The Head of Gold: The Babylonian Empire

Nebuchadnezzar himself was identified as the head of gold. As a pure monarchy, this empire represented the highest level of wealth and absolute power.

- *“You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory. . . you are this head of gold”* (Daniel 2:37-38).

The Chest and Arms of Silver: The Medo-Persian Empire

Following Babylon, a second, inferior kingdom arose. The two arms and shoulders represented the dual unity of the Medes and the Persians.

- **Historical Context:** The empire fell during a feast led by Belshazzar, where the handwriting on the wall (*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*) signaled the end of the kingdom. The Medo-Persians conquered Babylon by rerouting the Euphrates River and entering the city under the walls while the leadership was incapacitated.

The Thighs of Bronze: The Grecian Empire

The third kingdom, represented by bronze, was Greece. This empire was established by Alexander the Great, who conquered the Medo-Persians with remarkable speed.

- **Prophetic Detail (Daniel 8):** Alexander is depicted as a male goat from the west moving so fast his feet do not touch the ground. He smashed the two-horned ram (Medo-Persia).
- **Division of Power:** Following Alexander’s death at age 32, his empire was divided among his four generals into four kingdoms, though none held his original level of power.

The Legs of Iron and Feet of Clay: The Roman Empire

The fourth kingdom was characterized by iron, a metal that breaks and shatters everything. This represents the Roman Empire, known for its military dominance and "iron men."

- **A Divided Kingdom:** Just as the statue had two legs and ten toes, the Roman Empire was eventually divided (Eastern and Western) and was characterized by internal decay.
- **The Final Form:** The feet and toes, composed of iron mixed with ceramic clay, indicate a kingdom that is partly strong and partly fragile. This mixture suggests that the final form of human government will be a "ten-fold confederacy"—ten kings who arise from the Roman sphere.

The Stone Cut Without Hands: The Eternal Kingdom

The "Times of the Nations" conclude not through gradual improvement, but through a sudden, cataclysmic event. Daniel 2:34 describes a stone cut out without hands that strikes the image on its feet, crushing the iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold into chaff that the wind carries away.

Characteristics of the Final Kingdom

1. **Divine Origin:** The "stone cut without hands" refers to Jesus Christ and His virgin birth, emphasizing holy instrumentation rather than human effort.
2. **Total Destruction of Earthly Rule:** The stone smashes the Gentile world powers completely.

3. **Eternal Duration:** Unlike the previous four empires, this kingdom will never be destroyed.

4. **Universal Scope:** The stone becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth.

- *“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44).*

Conclusion: The Current State of Nations

The contemporary world is viewed as being in the final stages of this prophetic timeline. The Roman Empire did not fall to a single conqueror but disintegrated due to internal corruption and decay, much like modern nations. Prophecy indicates a future revival of this power in a ten-nation confederacy under the authority of the Antichrist (the "Beast") for a brief period before the return of Christ. The study affirms that the "dream is certain and its interpretation is sure," providing reassurance that God remains in control of human history.

Scripture References (NKJV)

- **1 John 4:11:** *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*
- **Daniel 2:19:** *Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.*
- **Daniel 5:25-28:** *“And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”*
- **Daniel 2:45:** *“Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”*
- **Revelation 17:12:** *“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.”*