

# THE “CUT” STONE

## (DANIEL 2)

Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonian Empire, had total amnesia for a dream he experienced in his second regnal year. He remained, however, deeply troubled regarding it and passionately wanted to know its content and meaning!

- The inability of the king’s wise men to reveal what he forgot led to their death decree. One can assume by then that the issue was one of desperation in the king’s mind. He sensed an absolute imperative to know what that dream or vision was (Daniel 2:28). God gave him the dream and assuredly this intense drive to know its meaning.
- That heightened emotional experience would bring contact with Daniel’s God when the seer humbly conveyed its content and purpose. The choreographed drama brought, in turn, honor to the true God and His people!

The great image the king “saw” was destroyed by a “stone.” That issue, in his “dream story,” has been enveloped in much mystery. As we will discover, *that* ancient riddle is of striking importance to God’s people today!

### Timing Orientation

In Daniel’s introductory words he notes:

- ***“But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these”*** (Daniel 2:28).
- *“Latter days” (be’aharit yom ayya) – literally, “in the latter part of the days”<sup>1</sup>*

This phrase is used fourteen times in the Old Testament. It alludes to a future that must be defined by the context. It is used most frequently in an eschatological or Messianic<sup>2</sup> setting (Isaiah 2:2, Micah 4:1, Ezekiel 38:16). Daniel’s prophecy does move forward to the period of the eschaton.

After telling Nebuchadnezzar the details of the dream, Daniel made three significant explanations:

#### **The Present:**

1. “Thou art this head of gold” (Daniel 2:38) – the onset point in the vision.

#### **Future – Messianic – Time**

2. The stone cut out of the mountain is a revelation to the king of what would occur in the **future** – the “latter days” (Daniel 2:45)....

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Stephen R.; *The New American Commentary*, vol. 18 (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), p. 90.

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

3. **When** the God of heaven, who is revealing this dream, will set up his eternal kingdom (Daniel 2:44; cf. 7:14; Revelation 11:15).

Nebuchadnezzar’s day, time, kingdom and power are contrasted against God’s day, time, kingdom and power!

A Messianic picture is that terminus or “hereafter.” That is the “future” that God wants the king to perceive. His “golden age” kingdom began the imagery – but another greater “kingdom” or “power” (the God of dreams) is at its end.

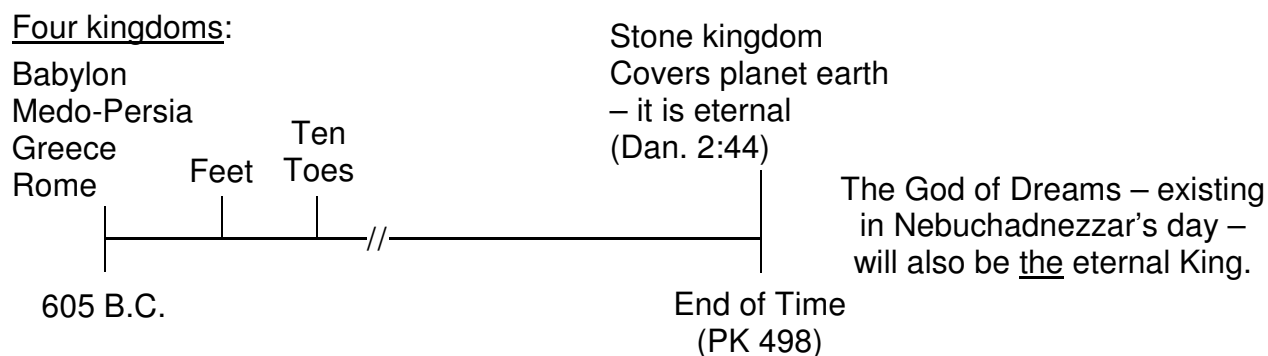
**This is fascinating.**

- God’s people (His representatives, the twelve “kingdoms”/tribes) **rejected** Him (first the ten northern tribes – then Judah and Benjamin).
- God turned to the pagan world to explain and help define His redemptive purposes.
- At the end (in the “*latter days*” into the future), the God of heaven’s “*kingdom*” will by implication have citizens who are everlasting (“shall never be destroyed” – Daniel 2:44).

By now it is clear that **this God** rescues, gives dreams, has a prophet, recognizes Nebuchadnezzar and will set up a future kingdom. This would happen in **some future** for which God would later give Daniel stunning timing prophecies.

Contextually, that represents the eschatological future when the “*Kingdom of God*” emerges (2:41-45). The phrase “*in the latter days*” parallels the New Testament expression “*in the last days*” (Acts 2:17, II Timothy 3:1, Hebrews 1:2, James 5:3, II Peter 3:3).<sup>3</sup>

This is graphically shown as:



The “cut stone time” refers to when there is a “decisive kingdom change” on planet earth – when some new “era” begins.<sup>4</sup> The dream moves forward and, intriguingly, refers most “specifically to the events that bring the whole period to a close”<sup>5</sup> (referring to that eschatological end).

<sup>3</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> Collins, John J.; *Daniel* (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN – 1993), p. 161.

<sup>5</sup> Goldingay, John E.; *Daniel – Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 30 (Word Books, Publisher – Dallas, TX), p. 49.

A penetrating thought – the Qumran community saw this *acharith* “end-time” word used by prophets also as “mysteries” that “are going to come upon the **last generation**”<sup>6</sup> – the very time of the end.

### **Characterizing the Stone**

**“Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands” (Daniel 2:34). “Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands” (2:45).**

This imagery is a major **time** transition within this prophecy.

The historic image, its kingdom, feet and toes are literal (earthly – man-ruled). The stone “*cut out without hands*” moves the narrative away from history to a future “spiritual era.” God uniquely steps into the “latter days” with this stone metaphor.

Daniel reminded Nebuchadnezzar that he observed everything in this expanse of time “till” a stone was cut out.<sup>7</sup> It was a compressed history of the next 2,600 plus years.

This stone had several features:

1. Its origin was supernatural – cut out without hands – God hewed it.<sup>8</sup>
2. Its origin was from a mountain.
3. It had extraordinary power.
4. Its “impact” became worldwide.<sup>9</sup>
5. Its effects are eternal.

### **The Mountain – Source of the Stone**

The Aramaic word for “mountain” can be a **metaphor for God** – a rock (cf. I Samuel 2:2, Psalm 18:3, 32, 47; Isaiah 17:10, 26:4; Habakkuk 1:12; Psalms 19:15, 62:3, 7-8, 94:22).<sup>10</sup> It can be viewed prophetically as a kingdom or government (Isaiah 2:2, 27:13; Micah 4:1).<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, it can spiritually picture:

1. God’s enduring and immovable government. “*My holy mountain*” (Deuteronomy 32:18; Psalm 18:2, 30:7, 31:2-3)
2. An image of His strength and salvation (Jeremiah 3:23) from the hills and multitude of mountains
3. God’s righteousness (Psalm 36:6) (“like the great mountains”)

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<sup>6</sup> Habakkuk 7:1-8, 1QSa 1:1, 4Qpls<sup>a</sup> 7.3.22, CD6:11, 4QFlor 1:2, 12, as quoted in Collins, p. 161.

<sup>7</sup> Hardinge, Leslie; *Jesus Is My Judge*, (American Cassette Ministries; Harrisburg, PA, 1996), p. 114.

<sup>8</sup> Steinmann, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>9</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>10</sup> Steinmann, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>11</sup> Whitcomb, John C.; *Daniel* (Moody Press; Chicago, IL; 1985), p. 46.

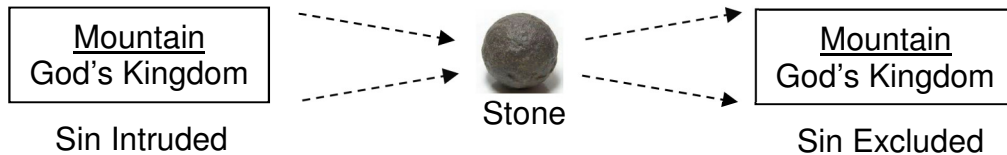
The stone becomes a “great mountain” (Daniel 2:35) – and that is identified (by implication) as a kingdom “which shall never be destroyed” ... “it shall stand for ever (Daniel 2:44)...” At first blush, this appears confusing.



The spiritual purpose of such an amazing vision must be sought. What is God’s eternal “for ever” kingdom objective? To have a sinless universe!

That’s why John the Baptist began the forward announcement: “the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3:2). Jesus began His ministry preaching “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17).

Can we now embellish our diagram?



**The Stone Defined Further**

The timing of the stone, cut out of the mountain, has deepening significance.

- The sequence reveals that it comes **after all** the other kingdoms have arisen.
- That includes the iron/clay feet and ten toes.

The image symbols **represent empires – kingdoms**. The clarity of Babylon through to Rome parallels the “beast” symbols in Daniel 7. The feet and toes of iron and clay follow Rome and is felt to be a weak mixture of church and state – especially under the complex history of papal Rome.

- This history is precise and shows the end of **that** church–state power to be in 1870, when the Italian government, under King Victor Emmanuel II, captured Rome (the last of the papal lands). It was annexed as part of Italy on October 2.
- The “stone” of this dream/vision must strike **after that time**.

Thus – the **literal history** extends from 605 B.C. to 1870 A.D. The loss of those papal lands means that the rest of the “image story” moves forward to the time of the end, surrounding the eschaton, as previously discussed. This, however, raises a major and interesting issue!

## Stone Damage

We now move away from the earthly kingdom applications. In the end-time picture the king's image still stands – **complete** (head to toes).

Look carefully at the following verses.

- “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 threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them” (Daniel 2:34-35).
- “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” (Daniel 2:45).

The “stone” destroys the whole image – all at the same time.<sup>12</sup>

This simultaneous destruction is an interesting dilemma.

- If it were at the time of those literal kingdoms, when they actually **followed each other** as empires, they could not be broken **together!**
- If the issue is a literal demise of literal nations later in time, it would stretch the intent of that part of the prophecy.
- After the stone breaks these “nations,” concomitantly, it fills the earth as a new kingdom of God.

**A question that begs an answer:** Might there be a symbolic meaning to those empires directly related to the end of time?

- There is no other way to describe or explain what Daniel saw.
- Another, and perhaps greater, meaning for those empires, including the feet and toes, is presented in both the Old and New Testaments!

We have clues which are most helpful.

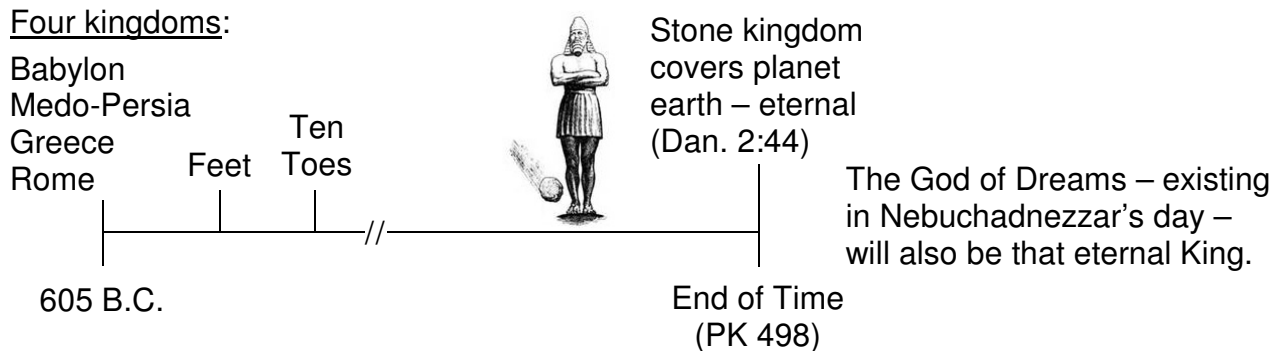
1. In Daniel 7:12 are provocative statements: “As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away (literal): **yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time** (future, spiritual).”
2. What does that mean? When in the eschatological future will these “kingdoms” be together once again?

Where might we find a symbolic meaning to those empires related to end-time prophecy? Let's think about what we've gone over:

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<sup>12</sup> Miller, op. cit., p. 91.

- Nebuchadnezzar’s **image** has two timing applications. Daniel made that clear between the recounting of the dream and its interpretation.
- This means that those empires will all come down at once – at the same time in the end-time application (having been represented together)!



### Elevating those End-Time “Kingdoms”

**Babylon** is an end-time symbol in Jeremiah 50 and 51 and in part of God’s last warning to planet earth in the second and fourth “Angels’ Cry” (Revelation 14:8, 18:2-5). It is also the name of the antichrist harlot (Revelation 17:1-7).

**Medo-Persia and Greece** are introduced through the ram and he-goat prophecies of Daniel 8 because contextually and symbolically Babylon has already fallen. Gabriel went out of his way to inform emotionally shaken Daniel that they were for the “future” (such as in the Daniel 2 imagery), specifically for the “time of the end” and the “appointed time” (8:17, 19), when sin reaches its nadir (8:23) and God’s wrath begins (8:19). There are other unique ties, but they are beyond the scope of this article. The ram and he-goat prophecy is a major introductory apocalyptic prophecy, showing that the last conflict will be between Christ and Satan. The application is stunning. Since the Medo-Persian kingdom will be destroyed, how can it represent “Ram Jesus” (study Isaiah 44 and 45 – the great Messianic metaphor Cyrus is seen).

**Rome – Papal Rome:** The Daniel 7 “horrendous beast” and “little horn” morphs into last-day prophecy, describing the eschatological antichrist. This is picked up as only the little horn in Daniel 8. The greater understanding comes in John’s apocalypse through sequential beast imagery.

1. Seven-headed beast with ten horns without kingdoms (Revelation 17:12-14).
2. Seven-headed beast with ten horns that have kingdom crowns (Revelation 13:1).

This beast represents not only papal Rome but the ten horns (in coalition with the papacy) in a geopolitical order!<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Fowler, Franklin S., Jr., M.D.; *The Last Geopolitical “Order”* (Christian Heritage Foundation; Lucerne Valley, CA; 2014).

*“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (Revelation 17:12-13).*

Daniel 11 reviews Daniel 7 through 10 with amazing historical highlights:

- Daniel 11, verses 2-20, give the key kings during the 490-year probation.
- Verses 21-29 show the first rise of the papacy.
- Verses 30-45 show the second rise of the papacy!

In the last, the king of the north plants his palace on God’s *“glorious holy mountain”* (Daniel 11:45) – interestingly, *“standing in the holy place”* (Matthew 24:15), *“sitting”* in the temple of God (II Thessalonians 2:4), *“standing where it ought not”* (Mark 13:14). But he comes to his end (Daniel 11:45) without hand (Daniel 8:25)! God’s kingdom, filled with holy people, untainted by sin – will have come!

### **How do we then understand that last-day stone?**

The Kingdom of God was present in many ways throughout the ministry of Jesus. Yet, He spoke of it as a future entity, asking His disciples to pray for its coming (Matthew 6:10; cf. Luke 11:2). When the gospel of that kingdom would penetrate the whole world, the end would come (Matthew 24:14).<sup>14</sup>

- We are informed in Daniel 7 that Jesus (the Son of man) goes to the Ancient of Days (His Father) to receive *“a kingdom” “which shall not be destroyed”* (7:14) (same language as Daniel 2).
- That kingdom was clearly “made up” by a judicial process outlined in Daniel 7:9-10, 22; Revelation 4:1-2 and 11:1.
- This is beautifully described in Malachi 3:17 as “making up His jewels.”

The “stone” becomes the “kingdom of God,” which Jesus receives at the wedding of the Lamb.

It is not the kingdom when it is cut out but clearly a “kingdom in the making.”

- The gospel goes to the world as the wedding invitation.
- The kingdom (its citizens – the remnant) “make it up” as the eternal body of saints at the end.

There are many ways the stone might accurately be depicted. It, however, has its origin in the principles of God’s “kingdom.” And whatever it is, the purity of a forever kingdom emerges.

- *“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”* (Matthew 24:14).

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<sup>14</sup> Marshall, I. H.; *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 3, “Kingdom of God in Heaven,” pp. 801-809.

- It appears wisest to identify that “stone” as the restoration message – the gospel of Jesus Christ and all the transforming power it brings to earth’s “potential kingdom citizens.”

The stone grows as people accept the gospel invitation and join that kingdom!

***That kingdom fulfillment in prophecy is not formulated until the judgment (choosing its citizens) is completed.***

“In the parable of Matthew 22 the same figure of the marriage is introduced, and the investigative ***judgment is clearly represented as taking place before the marriage.*** Previous to the wedding the king comes in to see the guests, to see if all are attired in the wedding garment, the spotless robe of character washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Matthew 22:11; Revelation 7:14. He who is found wanting is cast out, but all who upon examination are seen to have the wedding garment on are accepted of God and accounted worthy of a share in ***His kingdom*** and a seat upon His throne. ***This work of examination of character, of determining who are prepared for the kingdom of God, is that of the investigative judgment, the closing of work in the sanctuary above.***<sup>15</sup>

The “sealing” of the 144,000 in Revelation 7 imagery is the immediate outcome of that judicial process. That chapter is an interlude between Seals six and seven (meaning a special review and new information commentary). What do those “citizens of the world” accept to become “citizens of God’s kingdom?” What is the representative of God’s heavenly kingdom [stone] that brings into fruition this “earthly kingdom” (body of saints ready for translation)?

When one evaluates the stone and then its global purpose, again, it has to be the ***the gospel of Jesus Christ, emanating from God’s principled government “mountain” in its end-time imagery.***

- That “future kingdom” comes from the beautiful “restoration promises” that all began in the Garden of Eden.

It will be then that the kingdom of this world will merge with the kingdom of heaven.

- *“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.... with these words: ‘We give you thanks, Lord God, the All-Powerful, the one who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and begun to reign’” (Revelation 11:15, 17 – NET).*

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<sup>15</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 428 (emphasis added).



## The “Earthly” Kingdom Transition<sup>16</sup>

“All the nations of the earth shall hear the gospel of His grace. Not all will receive His grace; but ‘a seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.’ Psalm 22:30. ‘The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High,’ and ‘the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.’ ‘So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun.’ Daniel 7:27; Isaiah 11:9; 59:19.”<sup>17</sup>

“Before man can belong to the kingdom of Christ, his character must be purified from sin and sanctified by the grace of Christ.... Christ longs to manifest His grace, and stamp His character and image upon the whole world. He was offered the kingdoms of this world by the one who revolted in heaven, to buy His homage to the principles of evil; but He came to establish a kingdom of righteousness, and He would not be bought; He would not abandon His purpose. This earth is His purchased inheritance, and He would have men free and pure and holy.... Though Satan works through human instrumentalities to hinder the purpose of Christ, there are triumphs yet to be accomplished through the blood shed for the world, that will bring glory to God and to the Lamb. **His kingdom will extend, and embrace the whole world....** Christ will not be satisfied till victory is complete. But ‘he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.’ ‘So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun.’”<sup>18</sup> The great spiritual symbolism is maintained in that amazing quotation.

Then Jesus comes to receive His bride and take her “home” to His Father’s house (John 14:1-3).

- Thus, a kingdom that is finally made up – its citizens are from all over planet earth (those who accept the gospel kingdom invitation).

- Then He takes them home.

*“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God”* (Ephesians 2:19).

*“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence”* (John 18:36).

- Soon we will be on our way to the “heavenly kingdom.” An amazing divine coalition, the mystery of godliness will then truly be finished (Revelation 10:7).

## The Kingdom of Righteousness

“Christ stood in our world as the Head of the **great spiritual kingdom** that He came to our world to establish – the **kingdom of righteousness**. His teaching made plain the ennobling, sanctifying principles that govern this kingdom. He showed that justice and mercy and love are the controlling powers in **Jehovah’s kingdom**.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Steinmann, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>17</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 827.

<sup>18</sup> White, Ellen G.; *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 27 (emphasis added).

<sup>19</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 218 (emphasis added).

“The petition, ‘Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,’ is a prayer that the reign of evil on this earth may be ended, that sin may be forever destroyed, and the **kingdom of righteousness** be established. Then in earth as in heaven will be fulfilled ‘all the good pleasure of his goodness’ (2 Thessalonians 1:11).”<sup>20</sup> “Heavenly Father, Thy kingdom come.”

That stone? The gospel of Jesus Christ – the wedding invitation – the assurance message of man’s restoration. That is the unmovable, solid “foundation stone” that the kingdom is built upon.

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<sup>20</sup> White, Ellen G.; *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 348 (emphasis added).