Daniel - Commentaries by Frederick George Patterson

The Christian Shepherd: 1998, Ways of God: 2 - The Times of the Gentiles, The

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We have previously noted that the “times of the Gentiles” began when God pronounced “Lo-ammi” (Hosea 1:9) on the Jews and the Glory (the symbol of Jehovah’s presence) departed from their midst.

Just before the time when the two tribes Judah and Benjamin were carried into captivity, God sent His prophet to Zedekiah, king of Judah, and to the kings of Moab and Edom, for they were plotting to throw off the yoke of the king of Babylon.

But God’s message to them was, “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.... Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live” (Jer. 27:5-12).

It is with this Gentile power and those which succeed him until the end of their times that we have now to do.

Four Gentile Powers

In Daniel 2:31-45 we read of the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The image whose head was gold, breast and arms silver, belly and thighs brass, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay typifies Gentile power from the days of Nebuchadnezzar till its close when the Gentile kingdom is broken to pieces and destroyed.

That which is used to smite it thus is a stone “cut... without hands” (a picture of Christ). His kingdom, set up by the God of heaven, smites the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw, inflicting such crushing judgment that it becomes like chaff and is carried away by the wind. The “stone” that executed this judgment then becomes a “great mountain” and fills the whole earth.

Character of the Gentile Powers

These Gentile powers exist in different stages, each one being inferior to the previous. The “head of gold” was Babylon. The king ruled as absolute monarch with full, unquestioned authority.

The “breast and... arms of silver” refer to the Medo-Persian empire and ushered in an inferior power whose authority was not absolute. The rule of this kingdom was divided between the “satraps” and “princes” who were under the king (Dan. 6:1 JND; Esther 1).

The third kingdom of brass refers to the even more inferior Grecian power and the fourth kingdom of iron and clay, which was yet more inferior, was the Roman Empire.

The great point to understand is that the great power given to these Gentile kingdoms runs on till one great, crushing act of complete judgment (yet to be executed) carries it all away, leaving not a trace of it. The “stone... cut out without hands” replaces it and then fills the whole earth.

Christ’s Kingdom Is Not the Gospel of Grace

It should be emphasized that it is “yet to be executed” because often this kingdom yet to come, which destroys the others, filling the earth is misapplied to the gospel message. But grace or the gospel of God’s grace is never represented in Scripture as carrying out such a solemn judgment. In the first place, the image did not exist in its last state (iron and clay feet) in the beginning of the gospel-day. In the next, it is on them the blow is struck a crushing act of judgment, not grace. Further, the first act of the Stone is an act of judgment before beginning to grow and fill the earth.

Prophecy Concerning the Gentile Powers

In Daniel 7 we have prophecies relating to these four powers, previously mentioned. There they are given the character of ravening beasts. From this passage, and others, we learn that the fourth power, characterized by “iron and clay,” has not yet completely fulfilled the prophecies given of it in Daniel 7.

In summary, from Scripture we see that four great kingdoms arose, the last of which was the Roman empire, which was in existence when John the Apostle wrote the Revelation.

This empire existed, more or less, for hundreds of years until it was finally broken up. We learn that in a coming day, this Latin empire (presently no longer in existence) will be restored and, in its new form, will be the ready tool of Satan. At the end, this power will openly rebel against Christ, who will have come to take possession of His world-kingdom. The Lord Himself will put an end to this Gentile power. It is here that the history of the times of the Gentiles is closed.

F. G. Patterson (adapted)

(to be continued)