**DANIEL CH. 2**

**THE GREAT IMAGE.**

**DAN. 2:1-49.**

**“In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar” ……… In the first chapter of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and besieged it. It is fairly universally agreed that this assault on Jerusalem was in 607 or 606 BC. Thus the captivity of Judah began in the year 606 BC. It is important to note that it “began” in the year 606. Through a process of sieges, deportations and finally the full and complete destruction of the city and the temple, a total of about 20 years elapsed. Since Judah, for all practical purposes, was under the control of Babylon from 606 BC, the captivity is reckoned from that year. There were several “puppet” kings over Judah during the period 606 to 586 BC, but their reign was controlled by Babylon. The last of these kings was Zedekiah, who had to watch as his sons were slain before his eyes. Then his eyes were put out and he was taken captive to Babylon, where he apparently died.**

**As a point of interest we note here that Daniel was among the first to be deported to Babylon, in the year 606 BC. At that time, Daniel must have been in excess of 20 years old. Also, Mordecai, another great figure of the captivity, was carried to Babylon about 598 BC. (See Est. ch. 2). Ezekiel also was carried about this time.**

**Daniel and his 3 companions, Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego, upon being deported to Babylon, were selected for training to serve among the “wise men” of Babylon in the kings’ palace. Their training was for a period of 3 years (Dan. 1:5). Then (ch. 2:1) in the 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar, the king has a very astonishing and troubling dream. Compounding the mystery of the dream, he forgot what it was. This is a strange occurrence, having a dream that is so significant that it greatly troubles the king, and yet he cannot remember a single detail about it. Since it later becomes obvious that it is God who has given Nebuchadnezzar this phenomenal dream, I think it is also obvious that God blocked out his memory of the details, thus leaving the revelation of it to Daniel making it so much more powerful before the king. If this dream occurred in the 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar, and if Daniel’s training to be a wise man was to take 3 years, then he was still in training when the dream occurred. Early in the days of captivity, shortly after the first captives are brought to Babylon, this dream occurs.**

**We should note here an important perspective about this dream. God is not running a local newspaper, reporting on the politics of the time. God has thousands of people who are captives, many of them, like Daniel, God fearing people. He is working on their behalf. God has an overall plan to carry out while his own people are held captive in a foreign land. The Babylonian Empire, and others, have a direct impact on his people. As this plan unfolds God initiates activity of the plan by giving Nebuchadnezzar this dream, then blocking it out of his mind. When Daniel later reveals to the king what the dream was and what it means, God is exalted and Daniel is raised to a position where he can greatly serve God and his people, even though they are captives in a strange land.**

**Nebuchadnezzar was so troubled by his dream that he could not even sleep. So he called for the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers and Chaldeans, to show him what the dream was and what it meant. These so-called wise men asked the king to tell them the dream and they would subsequently show him the interpretation. Of course we know that these wise men had no real source for obtaining the meaning of the king’s dream or any other for that matter. But if the king would tell them the dream, they would interpret it for him. Who wouldn’t, in some fashion, for the king’s sake provide some kind of interpretation for what the king would tell them he had dreamed. But the king could not tell them. The dilemma for the wise men was that if they hatched up a false theory for the dream and told the king, the king would recognize if it was wrong by the account they gave him.**

**As the king pressed them for answers, they also pressed the king for the dream, telling him that no one had ever asked such a thing of any wise man before. The king, already troubled and frustrated, got angry with the wise men and ordered that all of them should be slain. This included Daniel and his 3 friends. They set out to round all of them up and when they got to Daniel, he wanted to know what the problem was and what all the rush was. Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard told him about the kings dream, and why he was going to slay all of the wise men of Babylon.**

**Daniel went in to the king and asked for some time and he would shew the king the dream and the interpretation. (Talk about having faith). Having obtained some time from the king, he went to his house and made the situation known to his 3 friends. Together, they begged for their lives through the mercies of the God of heaven. There is no other source to turn to. Either God hears their prayer or these young men will be short lived.**

**God did hear their prayer. In a night vision, God revealed the secret unto Daniel. “Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven”. No one else in all the great empire of Babylon has a clue as to what the king’s dream or its interpretation is. A lowly Hebrew slave, captive of Babylon, a servant whose life mattered little to them and one who, up until now, has no status or position by which he can negotiate for his life. He has already proven himself before God, however, that he will not bow or forfeit his loyalty to God, not even for his own life. And while there is no doubt that God, and God alone, can deliver them in this crisis, yet the loyalty, faithfulness and righteousness of Daniel should never be discounted or diminished. God did not select a heathen unbeliever to reveal this life saving secret to. He revealed it to a trusted and obedient servant. That is just how God works.**

**In Vs. 20-23, Daniel rejoices in God and his wisdom and might. In an obvious expression about the dream, now revealed to Daniel in a night vision, he notes that God “changes times and seasons (politically), he removes kings and sets up kings”. He praises God who knows what is in the darkness. Then he gives God direct praise because he had “made known unto me now what we desired of the: for thou hast now made known unto us the king’s matter”.**

**V24-25. Empowered by the revelation of God about the dream, Daniel goes To Arioch, whom the king had ordered to destroy the wise men of Babylon, and told him he was ready to go before the king with his dream and its interpretation. Arioch hastened to bring Daniel before the king and we should give special attention how Arioch presents Daniel to him. I have found a man of the captives of Judah. Not a doctor of divinity; not a Seminarian; not a theological professor or a man wise in the lore of the Chaldeans. Just a captive, slave, servant from a country we destroyed, plundered and now hold in servitude to Babylon. Why does God always choose the foolish things of this world to confound the things which appear to be mighty?**

**V26-27. Then Nebuchadnezzar turns to Daniel, who he called, Belteshazzar, his Babylonish name, and asked him two specific questions. (1) Are you able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen? (2) And can you tell me the interpretation of it?**

**We have already seen that God has revealed this dream and its interpretation unto Daniel, so he was, indeed, able to answer both of the king’s questions. But Daniel did not say to the king, sure, I know the answer. Instead Daniel answered the king more wisely. He told the king that the secret he has demanded, you know that there is no wise man, astrologer, magician or soothsayer in Babylon, that can give you the answer. Then, he does not say, but I can answer it for you, thereby elevating himself above the wise men of Babylon. The truth is, Daniel, also a wise man of Babylon, could not answer the matter either.**

**V28. But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets. With this one statement Daniel disqualifies his own ability and at the same time gives all the glory to God for the revelation of the dream. So often we will take what God has done for us or revealed to us and arrogate the glory to ourselves, as though by our searching and intelligence, we found the answer to the deep secrets of God. Not Daniel! And it was not only because this was an instance of such deep mystery and intense scrutiny. This was the character of this man, Daniel.**

**He continues his answer to the king by getting right to the heart of the dream. This God of heaven maketh known to Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. That is, in the days hereafter. Then he tells the king, this is what your dream and your visions are about.**

**V29. Daniel impresses on the king the idea that God that reveals secrets is making known to him things which shall come to pass hereafter. There are two important thoughts here. (1) King Nebuchadnezzar, you are special. God is showing you something he has not shown to anyone else. Nebuchadnezzar would feel proud of this significance. (2) Daniel is stamping on the king’s mind that it is the God of heaven (the Hebrew God) that is revealing this to the king. Thus God is set on high for he is the revealer of all this mystery, therefore he is the great God.**

**V30. Here Daniel specifically confirms what we have already said about him with these words: “As for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living”. And this is not just self deprecation, it is the truth. Daniel did not unravel this secret by his learning and wisdom. It was an act of God divinely revealing it to Daniel in a night vision. In the Christian world today we put so much emphasis and dependence upon the learning, education and training of theologians, and very little, if any, on divine revelation. This is a great passage of scripture for us to re-emphasize again, that the deep secrets and truths of the word of God are not fathomed by human intellect, understanding and research, as important as that is. (And we should strongly emphasize here that it truly does require a lot of study, research and seeking on our part, in connection with God’s part of divine revelation. In other words God is not going to reveal truth to those who show no passion or effort on their part). In the final results it is understood only by the revealing power of God. And when God reveals something otherwise unknown to you, it never exalts you, but always makes you very humble. God alone is the revealer of divine secrets. Thank God that is so.**

**V31-35. In these verses, Daniel relates the entire dream to Nebuchadnezzar, in all of its detail. Daniel did not relate these details to the king apprehensively, frightfully, hoping he had it right. He told the king what the dream was because the God who had first given it to the king, and then blotted it out of his mind, was the God who also made it known to Daniel. I would presume that as Daniel began relating what the king’s dream was, that it came back to him. Just keep in mind that God has a greater purpose in mind than just telling the future to the king, or even raising Daniel high in the kingdom. God has in mind all of his captive people and is looking out for them. He also has in mind his people far down the road. So, Daniel, piece by piece, tells the dream to the king.**

 **a. You saw a great image, bright, excellent, stand before thee. The form was terrible, or great and terrible.**

 **b. The image had a head of gold;**

 **c. His breast and arms were of silver;**

 **d. His belly and thighs were of brass;**

 **e. His legs were of iron;**

 **f. His feet part of iron and part of clay.**

 **g. Then you saw a stone cut out without hands.**

 **h. This stone struck the image upon the feet of iron and clay and broke them to pieces.**

 **i. The entire image, with its gold, silver, brass, iron and clay, was broken to pieces and the wind carried them away like chaff.**

 **j. And the stone became a mountain and filled the whole earth.**

**What do you suppose the king and all of his people gathered there were thinking? No doubt they were dumbfounded, staggered, amazed and frightened. Plus, the king must have been saying: “That is exactly what I dreamed”.**

**Step back for a moment and reflect on the “Principals of Prophecy”, especially on the principal of symbolism. Here we have a great image made of 5 different materials in descending order of their value. This is an amazing display and usage of symbolism in the most obvious fashion. No one interprets this great image to be some literal giant in the earth, but as symbolic of powers and events represented by the various materials, as we shall shortly see.**

**Then there is the part of the stone ---- cut out without hands, that smote this great image on its feet (not its head) and crushed it. Then the stone became a mountain big enough to fill the whole earth. What amazing, dramatic symbolism. Now Daniel will interpret this for the king.**

**We can easily see the principal of symbolism so vividly employed in this image, used to portray the message God is revealing. At the same time, another principal of prophecy we have discussed was the “key verse principal”. As Daniel begins to interpret the dream for the king, he began by pointing out that Nebuchadnezzar was a “king of kings”. Daniel describes it as the God of heaven giving him power, strength and glory. Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian kingdom was a universal empire. That is, it ruled the earth above any others. Then Daniel tells him (V38), “thou art this head of gold”. Gold, the supreme metal represents the kingdom of Babylon and its king, Nebuchadnezzar. In other words, gold symbolizes the Babylonian Empire.**

**V39-43. The pattern of the symbols is set, with Babylon represented by the head of gold. This was followed by arms and chest of silver, which Daniel interprets as “another kingdom inferior to thee”. This is followed by a third kingdom of brass. Then there follows a fourth kingdom strong as iron, which devolved into iron and clay that represents a divided non-cohesive kingdom. In all there are 4 empires depicted by this great image. And we know that Babylon was the first one. We also know (V39) immediately following Babylon would another kingdom arise represented by silver. In other words, they are not separated from each other and scattered over time with no connection, but were 4 successive empires ruling the known world of their day beginning with Babylon.**

**Another of our principals of prophecy was that, “History is the only answer to prophecy”. Daniel has clearly identified Babylon as the head of gold, but he did not identify the silver, brass and iron empires as to what they represented. We must look to history to find out what universal empires followed successively after Babylon.**

**The captivity of Judah by Babylon had its beginning at about 606 BC. In the 5th chapter of Daniel is the story of the great feast which Belshazzar, king of Babylon held, with a 1000 of his lords. It was a feast of revelry and drinking. During the feast, Belshazzar commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. They took these vessels and drank wine from them and praised the gods of gold and silver.**

**This was the feast where a hand appeared writing on the wall. Belshazzar is scared to death by this hand and the writing. He set out to find someone that could interpret this that was being written on the palace wall. As you would expect, Daniel was called in and he interpreted the hand writing for the king. The words written by the hand were: “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN”. Daniel gave the following interpretation to these words. Mene: God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Tekel: Thou are weighed in the balances and found wanting. Peres: Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.**

**Dan. 5:30-31, records for us the fact that on that night Belshazzar was slain. Darius, the Median took the kingdom, being about 62 years old. Thus the great head of gold, the Babylonian Empire, is overthrown and gone. This event occurred about 539 BC. Daniel is still living and has now been a captive for about 68-69 years. He must be approximately 87 to 92 years old, and is still active and strong, as his later vision will reveal.**

**Before moving on to the next great empire, represented by the arms and chest of silver, let us reflect a little more on Babylon. The empire came into its ascendency about 626 BC, under Nabopolassar. He ruled until Nebuchadnezzar became king in 607-606. Nebuchadnezzar first besieged Jerusalem in the 3rd year of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah. Josiah, it can be shown, died in battle in either 610 or 609. He was succeeded by a son, Jehoahaz, who only lasted 3 months, and then Jehoiakim became king of Judah. Therefore, it was slightly more than 3 years from Josiah’s death, when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem the first time. After about 20 years, and various battles and sieges, Nebuchadnezzar’s army finally destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC. Nebuchadnezzar continued until about 562 BC, when Amel – Marduk took over. He only reigned for about 2 years, and Nergal – Sharezer followed him until 556 BC. Following him, Nabonidus reigned until 539 BC. Nabonidus spent a good portion of his reign at an oasis resort, worshipping the moon god, Sin. He left his son, Belshazzar, in charge in Babylon. He it was that was slain the night the Medes and Persians took the city, killing Belshazzar. In two weeks, Cyrus, the Persian, entered the city and arrested Nabonidus, who had returned there.**

**Approximately 150 years before Nebuchadnezzar was cast down for 7 years to eat grass like an ox, Isaiah saw his downfall and ultimate defeat. Is. 13 and 14, provides a description of the fall of Nebuchadnezzar. Not too long after his death, the empire of Babylon also fell. That once mighty kingdom with walls around the city wide enough for several chariots to ride abreast on the top; with those beautiful hanging gardens and a powerful army, fell from its lofty heights. Its city later destroyed and became the habitation for owls, rats, snakes and a waste land, plowed like a field. Today, 55 miles south of Baghdad, there is only a hill where Babylon once stood so proud.**

**THE ARMS AND BREAST OF SILVER SYMBOLIZE THE MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE. It became the largest kingdom the world had seen up to their day. Cyrus, several years before his conquest of Babylon, had gained control of the Medes. Now with the conquest of Babylon, he names himself, “King of Persia”. The year is 539 BC. The Persian Empire continued until 336, though in its later years it became much weakened. Even though Cyrus the Persian was the superior, yet there was also a median element in the empire. Darius the Median ruled the province of Babylon, along with Cyrus the supreme ruler of the kingdom.**

**Several significant events occurred during the reign of the Persian Empire. Some of them are as follows:**

 **a. They conquered Babylon by diverting the Euphrates river and going under the two iron gates into the city.**

 **b. In the first year of Cyrus, he made a decree allowing the captive Jews to return to Palestine. He even provided funds to aid in the rebuilding of the temple.**

 **c. Under a later king, Ezra and Nehemiah, returned with other captives, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.**

 **d. Is. 44 and 45, prophesies that Cyrus would come and “open the two leaved gates”.**

**Daniel’s visions and prophecy of chapters 9-12, came to him under the Persian Empire. The story of Mordecai and Esther, occurred in the days of the Persian Empire. All of the visions of Daniel were received during the Babylonian and Persian empires. Our current study of the great image was the first vision and it came to Daniel at approximately 605-604 BC. All the rest, chapters 7-12, were given to him at the end of the Babylonian Empire and the beginning of the Persian, some 65-66 years after the first one.**

**THE THIRD UNIVERSAL KINGDOM, SYMBOLIZED BY BRASS, WAS THE GRECIAN EMPIRE. Phillip the Macedon, had a son, named Alexander. Trained by the great Aristotle, he became a general and a foreign diplomat under his father at the age of 18. When his father died, Alexander, at the age of 20, set out to conquer the world. He never lost a battle and by the young age of about 32, he had made Greece the 3rd universal power in succession.**

**Alexander the Great, had bouts of Malaria; he drank heavily, and these no doubt contributed to his downfall. One month before his 33rd birthday, he died, with territories he yet planned to conquer.**

**There was no one capable of filling the shoes of Alexander the Great, so the empire of Greece divided into 4 sections, ruled by Alexander’s 4 generals. These territories were: Cassander ruled in Macedon; Lysimachus in Thrace; Seleucus in Mesopotamia and Persia; and Ptolemy I Soter, in the Levant and Egypt. They ruled what had been the Grecian Empire for about 50 years, after which the empire became a weakened power. During its later days, another kingdom was rising in the Mediterranean world, that would soon rule with a rod of iron. In theory the Grecian Empire lasted about 190 years. In practicality, it only lasted during the reign of Alexander the Great, one of the greatest military commanders to ever live. The Grecian Empire began in 336 BC, and ended when Rome defeated Carthage in the last of the Punic wars, in 146 BC, and thereby became the next universal empire of the world.**

**THE 4TH UNIVERSAL KINGDOM, SYMBOLIZED BY IRON AND IRON MIXED WITH CLAY, WAS THE ROMAN EMPIRE. As iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things, so was this 4th kingdom destined to be. And such was the history of the Roman Empire as it rose to greatness in the Mediterranean world. The Roman Empire became larger in territory than the others and subdued and controlled many nations and tribes of people. It also lasted longer than any of the previous empires.**

**The village of Rome was a little farming village when it began in approximately 750 BC. It did not rise to any power until centuries later, when the Grecian Empire weakened, Rome was on the rise. From about 264 BC to 146 BC, Rome engaged in 3 wars, known as the Punic wars, with the once powerful Carthage. In 146 BC, Rome finally defeated Carthage and destroyed the city, thus reaching a position of supreme power in the world. They are known as Punic wars because the Latin term for Carthaginian is Punici.**

**Therefore the reckoning of Rome as the 4th universal empire has its beginning at this point: 146 BC. It was a power that was diverse, large, longer lasting, more renown, and in many ways so vastly different than previous empires. One of the ways it differed from the others was the many countries all under one government. This is a distinction because there were so many cultures, so many levels of people, from the well educated to the barbaric, spread out over such a large territory that it made it difficult to govern uniformly. Of course there were some advantages in this diversity; but there were more disadvantages, and these later contributed to the ultimate downfall of the empire. The iron mixed with the clay would not bond and neither was there a permanent bond between the many cultures and classes of people. The result was fragmentation and ultimate division of the empire. One of the reasons for the ultimate fall of Rome, was the barbaric wars advanced by various tribes of people. These ultimately divided, weakened and caused the final fall of Rome in 476 BC.**

**Daniel said (V41) that the feet and toes, part of potters clay, and part of iron, represented a divided empire. The “feet and toes” represent the later time of the empire. The legs were of iron, representing the days of its greatest strength. The Roman empire was at the apex of its power around 150 AD. From there it began its decline. The “feet and toes” mixed with iron and clay shows how the empire was (V43) mingled with the seed of men, but shall not cleave one to another.**

**During the 4th century AD, through a period of decline, division, wars and struggles, the empire divided into eastern and western territories under emperor Theodosius, in AD 395. The western empire was ruled from Rome and eastern empire was ruled from Constantinople. In 476 AD, when the western Germanic mercenary, Odoacer, Seized power in Rome, instead of being the “Roman Augustus”, he chose instead to be a “viceroy” under one emperor and that of Constantinople. Thus, in 476 AD, ancient, pagan Rome, in her 622nd year, ended. A pagan Roman empire, ruled from the city on 7 hills, had fallen. The Roman Empire, as such ceased to be.**

**However, this is not the end of the story of the great image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. In fact, it can successfully be argued that the real purpose in the great dream is yet to be revealed from Daniel’s interpretation. Daniel continues his revelation to the king in V44: “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed”. Then in verse 45: “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”. Look back to V34, which tells us that this “stone” would smite the image “upon his feet that were of iron and clay”. Not in the head of gold, or Babylon; not in the arms and breast of silver, or Persia; not in the belly and thighs of brass, or Greece; and not even in the legs of iron, or the early part of Rome, but in the feet of iron and clay.**

**This stone is said to represent the kingdom that the God of heaven shall establish, that will smite this (imperial) image in its feet; destroy it and fill the whole earth. How can it be said that the kingdom of God would destroy or vanquish the great image and its daily control of the earth, and set up the everlasting kingdom of God to replace it completely. In this unfolding drama, we are about to witness an amazing phenomenon of history. Here is how it happened.**

**During the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius (AD 14-37), a man came from the Galilean town of Nazareth, unto John the Baptist who was preaching and baptizing in the Jordan wilderness. That man was Jesus Christ! But he was more than just a man from Nazareth; much more. He was the God of heaven in human form, come down to man, as a man, to purchase our redemption at calvary and to establish his eternal kingdom on earth among men. Roman powers, oblivious as to his stature, nor could they care less about his mission, being as they were, saturated with their own daily pagan rituals and sacrifices to hundreds or thousands of pagan gods, did not see in this obscure Galilean, the end of the Roman empire.**

**To be sure, there had been a few anxious moments arising from rumors that there was another king coming, who would dethrone the Caesars. But they were so unreliable, especially as they pertained to a rumored overthrow of political Rome with her legions of soldiers. For some Galilean to establish an earthly kingdom capable of waging war with Rome was unthinkable. Even the disciples following him could not seem to understand that he was not going to restore the literal throne of David in Jerusalem and be his successor. Besides, from the point of view of the Roman rulers, even to the religious rulers in Jerusalem, all threat of such an impossible occurrence was forever ended the day some of their soldiers crucified this imposter. (Or so they thought).**

**Then news began to spread that this “Jewish carpenter” had been resurrected from the grave after being there for 3 days and 3 nights. Impossible they thought, not right under the noses of the Roman guards. So Tiberius sat on his Roman imperial throne, and Jesus, 40 days after his resurrection ascended from the earth. For certain, they thought, we are done with him now. Then there was the day of Pentecost, with people present in Jerusalem from all over the entire Roman Empire. After the amazing power of the Holy Ghost visited these Galileans on the day of Pentecost, they began to preach a disturbing, almost heretical message. They were proclaiming all over the Jerusalem area that Jesus had, indeed, been raised from the dead and that they were eye witnesses of him afterwards. In addition, they were preaching that everyone else who would become a follower of this “Jesus”, could also have a resurrection from the dead if they would become a part of his “kingdom”, and let him rule their lives (instead of Caesar). They preached against the pagan gods of the Romans and also that even the Jewish religion of their fore fathers was no longer applicable.**

**In spite of their message of “heresy”, they began to grow. Meanwhile, the Jewish religious leaders persecuted these “Christians” (as they later were called), even killing them and putting them in prison for what they claimed to believe. Nevertheless, churches were springing up everywhere, especially by the preaching of one of their converts, named Paul.**

**The Roman Empire, with their disdain for any group who taught that they had another king; another kingdom, and that it would ultimately triumph, and that all their pagan worship and sacrifices were false, soon began to persecute the Christian church also. Beginning with the emperor Nero, there was a period of close to 250 years that emperor after emperor, 10 of them in all, tried to destroy Christianity. But it still grew, and by about AD 300, Christianity was in about every corner of the empire.**

**Then, Roman emperor Constantine, in 312 AD, made a profession of being a Christian. Even though there are questions as to how genuine his conversion really was, yet the fact that the “emperor” had reportedly become a Christian, was a powerful statement. It immediately became very popular for Romans to do as their emperor had done and become a Christian also. In 313 AD, Constantine issued an edict, giving Christianity an equal footing with all other religions of the empire, thus effectively ending imperial persecution.**

**The amazing thing about all of this nearly 300 years of horrible persecution of Christians, it did not destroy it; in fact it did not slow it down. Rather it grew exponentially and by the time of Constantine’s edict, Christianity was a major force in the empire.**

**Less than 100 years from Constantine’s edict, the emperor Theodosius, in 380 AD, made Christianity the “official” religion of the Roman Empire. He went further than this by introducing sever punishments for people who disagreed with the “official version” (as distinguished from original) of Christianity. About 100 years later, 476 AD, the Western Roman Empire fell. Pagan Rome with all of her gods, temples, priests, vestal virgins and daily sacrifices, was gone. It was not until the early years of the 6th century BC, that the new official religion of the empire got its real identification and official power under the code of Justinian. (More on that later).**

**It should be noted that Christianity, by this time, had, itself, deteriorated from its former strength of spiritual purity and dedicated faith, to what historians refer to as “baptized paganism”. In other words, the Christian church had been elevated in the eyes of the world by the association of imperial support, and the net result spiritually was a serious decline in the original quality of Christianity. It had become infiltrated by pagan practices, feast days and doctrines. Yet a powerful, phenomenal change has occurred in the Roman world in the first 450 years of the kingdom of Christ.**

**The stone cut out of the mountain had, indeed, smitten the great image in its feet, and crushed it. Moreover, the kingdom of God now filled the whole earth.**

**When Daniel had finished his interpretation of the dream to the king, the king praised the God of Daniel and elevated Daniel as ruler over the province of Babylon. Also, by this dream and the interpretation thereof, we have established a foundation for much, if not all, of the visions yet to come.**