

The Kingdom of God on Earth - 8

What the king of Babylon saw in his prophetic dream sent from God was “an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance.” This is how the kingdom of men appeared to the human mind. Nebuchadnezzar, represented by the golden head, used his remarkable ability in organizing massive engineering and architectural projects - dazzling to his subjects and filling the king with inordinate self-esteem - “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built ... by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty!”

This work tamed the local parts of the Euphrates river, harnessing it for both irrigation and expanded agricultural output. Many trade arteries were rerouted through Babylonia and the city of Babylon became a world centre. The hanging gardens became one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The gardens did not actually ‘hang’ but were instead roof gardens laid out on a series of ziggurat terraces that were irrigated by pumps from the Euphrates River - all, it is believed, to console Nebuchadnezzar’s wife, because she missed the mountains of her homeland in Media.

The last king of Babylon was Nabonidus, who leaving Babylon for military reasons, appointed his son Belshazzar as viceroy. Babylon was conquered by the joint armies of Darius of Media and Cyrus of Persia, and world power passed to the united kingdom of Medo-Persia.

Daniel described the the silver chest and arms of the image as another inferior kingdom that would arise. The Medo-Persian empire was inferior to Babylon’s in wealth, luxury and magnificence, but not to Babylon’s 70 year duration. The Medo-Persian empire continued for 203 years until its power was superseded by that of Greece.

In 333 BC at the battle of Issus, the power of Persia was broken by Alexander the Great of Greece. After this time a new system of colonization spread as far as India, taking with it Greek education and language to the world at large. God who “rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses” - Daniel 4:25, is accomplishing more than simply being a king-maker. He is also shaping conditions in the world of mankind which move events towards the final phase of universal divine government.

Alexander took great interest in the exploration of his conquered lands, directing those under him to provide detailed reports on previously unmapped and uncharted regions. The reports that Alexander had acquired motivated an unprecedented movement of scientific research and study of the Earth, its natural physical qualities, and its inhabitants. It was from those circumstances that work on establishing the great library in Alexandria was begun by King Ptolemy I Soter about 295 BC.

A large budget was provided in order to “collect, if possible, all the books in the world.” One of those was the Hebrew scriptures, which are now the books of the Old Testament in the Christian Bible. The translation of the Septuagint was performed one part at a time during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. This Greek translation was still in use much later, in the widely scattered synagogues outside the Holy Land, while the apostles were preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Greek was the international language of the time somewhat like English now is, and provided a wide audience for the Gospel in most of the civilized world of that time.

Alexander died while his son was too young to succeed him, and his empire was divided among four of his top ranking officers. By 64 BC Rome had annexed much of it into the iron phase.