

## God Came to Earth - Part 2

### Christians Know Things

During the Babylonian Captivity, 606 to 536 BC, the preparation of God's chosen people was concluding. It was time to begin preparing the world for the coming of Emmanuel, the promised Messiah. God showed Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king that conquered Israel and enslaved the people, a dream. The dream listed the rise and fall of kingdoms before the Messiah and His kingdom would come to earth. It was in the form of a statue, and God showed the prophet Daniel the interpretation of the dream.

*"The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them"* (Daniel 2:32-34). Along with other visions in Daniel chapters 7 and 8, the nations are identified as Babylon the gold, Persia the silver, Greece the bronze, and Rome is the iron and clay. And then there is the stone which hands of men did not cut, nor could men control. That stone is the Messiah, God coming to the earth, and the cornerstone of the church (Ephesians 2:19-22).

During the days of the kingdom of iron, *"The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy"* (Daniel 2:44-45). Each nation, in turn, contributed something to the preparation of the world to spread the Word of God when the Messiah set up His kingdom.

Babylon was defeated by the combined empire of the Medes and Persians, Daniel chapter 5. As the Babylonians caused Israel to forget their idols, the Persians helped restore the Temple and Jerusalem. Isaiah, around 700 BC, prophesied that Cyrus, king of Persia, would release the captives, return them to Jerusalem, and cause the restoration of the Temple and Jerusalem's walls. *"It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the Temple, 'Your foundation will be laid'"* (Isaiah 44:28). Because of the decree written by Cyrus, in 538 BC, all succeeding kings of Persia helped Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah to rebuild the Temple, conduct all sacrificial worship requirements, and secure the city of Jerusalem.

The Persian Empire was defeated by the Greeks, as foreseen in Daniel chapters 7 and 8. A portion of the vision was explained to Daniel this way, *"The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king"* (Daniel 8:20-21). History knows the goat as Greece and the horn as Alexander the Great. History also knows that his kingdom was split into four parts when Alexander died. Daniel's vision included this also. *"The broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power"* (Daniel 8:22). Alexander's general Ptolemy received the portion of the kingdom that included Israel and Egypt. The Ptolemais invited 70 Hebrew scholars to Alexandria to translate the Hebrew scriptures into Greek. The resulting volume is the Septuagint, the Greek translation of scripture that Jesus and His apostles quoted from as they taught (Acts 17:2-3).

The final earthly kingdom in Daniels vision (Daniel 8:23-25), Rome. As stated in Daniel 2:44, *"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever."*

The history of the rise of the Greek and Roman empires happened between the time of Malachi and Matthew. We refer to that time as "Between the Testaments." The student of scripture can compare prophecy to the historical accounts of the nations and see that the foreknowledge of God saw all the events centuries before they happened. We can also see that some events occurred because a ruler came to power and made decisions differently than tradition dictated. The actions of Cyrus to free the captives and allow the Jews to go home, rebuild the Temple, and worship their God differed from the cruel rulers he replaced. Alexander embraced the peaceful Jews and effectively did not harm them. And Ptolemy caused the Septuagint to be compiled, and by the time Jesus came, it was spread throughout the known world on the roads made by the Romans.

God's hand appears in all aspects of preparation for Emmanuel!