**Revelation Study Guide**

**Daniel 2:1-16, 25-45 – Time of the Gentiles – Part 1**

* Our study of Revelation causes us to pause and enter a new and important section of study. We need to be familiar with the context of prophecy, so that we do not misinterpret it later.
  + We need to revisit the outline Jesus gave to John in Chapter 1.
    - Jesus told John to write this prophetic book in three parts
      * First, John wrote the things “he saw” (past tense), which referred to the brief events of Chapter 1.
      * Secondly, John wrote the things that “are” (present tense), which we refer to as the letters to the churches in Chapters 2 & 3.
      * And thirdly, John was to write the things that must happen after the things that are (future tense), which are Chapters 4 and on.
  + So far, we’ve studied Parts 1, the authentication of the book, and Part 2, the history of the Church Age found in the letters to the churches.
    - Each of the seven letters represents a period of time during the existence of the church on earth...seven periods in total.
    - Yet each description is very brief...so brief that it can’t possibly give us enough information to act upon.
    - Furthermore, the Church couldn’t appreciate the prophetic quality of these letters until the benefit of hindsight
    - So, the prophetic value offered by these letters went unused for most of the last 2,000 years
  + So why did Jesus give the Church this prophetic roadmap if it wasn’t going to be understood nor appreciated in its day?
    - The answer is because these letters weren’t given so that the early Church could know its future.
    - They were given so that the Church of the last days could awaken to its present circumstances.
    - So that those who will be alive right before the events of Chapters 4-22 would recognize the significance of their day.
  + And therefore, we are living in the privileged period that has been called to understand the signs of the times and to be ready for them.
    - But in order for us to fulfill that mission, we must understand not only our present circumstances but also our history.
    - Specifically, we must take our understanding of the Church and its seven periods of existence and place it in a larger framework.
  + The Church comes into existence at a certain point in history and it has a certain course and an appointed end as well.
    - And of course, we desire to know what comes next, and the outline of Revelation tells us more is coming after the Church.
    - But first, we must understand what came before the Church.
    - Because the events that lead to the start of the Church also explain what comes afterward.
* And to answer those questions, we must venture outside the book of Revelation and into other Scripture.
  + Beginning with an understanding of two important terms: “age” and “last days.”
    - Age (*aion* in Greek) is a long but finite time in God’s program of history.
    - Ages follow one after another, and the division between ages serve as important milestones in God’s program.
    - We can see how ages follow one another in a comment by Jesus from Mark 10.

**Mark 10:29-30 (ESV),**

**Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.**

* Jesus says we live in one age now, and in the age to come we will experience eternal life in our glorified bodies.
* So, the ending of our current age leads to the beginning of the next age coinciding with us receiving glorified bodies
* The Bible uses a second term in relation to God’s program for history: the “last days.”
* The last days refers to the final period of an age which signals the approach of the next age.
* But this term can be confusing because we assume last days will be brief, like a 2-minute warning at the end of a football game.
* But that’s not correct, because the last days are not necessarily a short period of time... for example.

**James 5:3 (ESV),**

**Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness   
against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have   
stored up your treasure!**

**Hebrews 1:1-2 (ESV),**

**God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.**

* So last days are the culminating period of an age, yet James told the Church in the first century that they were in the last days.
  + •They were storing up treasure on earth in the “last days.”
  + And the writer of Hebrews referred to his present time as “these last days."
  + •Since we know it’s been 2,000 years or so since those letters were written, clearly the last days can last a long time.
* So, what makes them the “last days?” According to Hebrews, last days are when all revelation is complete, and no more mile markers remain.
  + Hebrews says that in the past the Lord provided revelation and insight in bits and pieces
    - So as long as there was still yet revelation remaining, we could know that we were not yet in the last days...more was planned
    - Most importantly, until the Messiah had been revealed, the age couldn’t end
    - Because His appearing was the focus of the age and the culminating event
  + So, the writer said now that Jesus has appeared, and the canon of Scripture is complete, the stage is set for the end to come.
    - •And therefore, we are in the last days of this age
    - Our age can conclude without further warning and at any time
    - But even still, the last days run for an unknown period of time, which we now know is 2,000 years and counting.
* Knowing how ages and last days work in Scripture, we naturally come to ask a series of questions.
  + Questions like, what is this age? When did it begin? Does it have a name? What’s its purpose? When does it end? What comes next?
    - The answers to all these questions are given in the Bible... just not in the book of Revelation.
    - Revelation 4-22 tells the story of how this age gives way to the next
    - So, as we move out of the times that “are,” it’s especially important we understand this age before we get to the next.
  + And the first questions we need to answer are what is this age called and why did God establish it.
    - Jesus gives us this answer in a passage about the end times in Luke 21.

**Luke 21:24 (ESV),**

**They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**

* Jesus refers to a period of history called the “Time of the Gentiles.”

○The word translated signs is *kairos* which can also be translated age.

* So, Jesus called our age the “age of the Gentiles.”
* Gentiles refers to all non-Jews, which means Jesus says we live in an age when Gentiles have a greater position than Israel
* And more specifically, Jesus says that Gentiles will have two specific advantages over the Jewish nation in this age
  + •First, the Jewish people will suffer under persecution by Gentiles, being scattered out of their land suffering death and captivity.
  + Secondly, the Jews’ capital city would be “trampled” by Gentiles
    - “Trampling” implies defilement and control of the city of Jerusalem, at least to some degree
* If this age will be marked by Jewish persecution by Gentile authorities and a trampling of Jerusalem, we have several things to consider
  + Obviously, our age, which includes the time of the church according to Jesus and to the New Testament writer, had a beginning.
    - There must have been a time in the past when these two things were not true
    - There must have been a time before Israel began to be persecuted by Gentiles and before the city was defiled
    - If we can identify that time in history then we will find the start of this age
  + And by the same token, when this age ends, these two things must also end
    - That is, the persecution of Jews by Gentiles will end, and the city of Jerusalem will no longer be subjected to Gentile trampling
    - If we can determine when these things cease, we will know the end of this age
  + And there is one book of Scripture that gives us both of these points and much more in between
    - The book is called the Revelation of the Old Testament, and in a real sense it’s a prologue to the Book of Revelation
    - It’s literally impossible to understand the book of Revelation without understanding this Old Testament book
    - It’s the book of Daniel
  + Studying the entire book of Daniel is very helpful to understanding Revelation, but there are a handful of chapters that are essential
    - In particular, Chapters 2 & 7 are the chapters that explain the Age of the Gentiles
    - Jesus gave the age its name in Luke, and we learn the details of how this age ends in Revelation
    - But Daniel gives us the beginning of the age and a spectacular overview of all that this age will contain

**Daniel 2:1-11 (ESV),**

**In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. And the king said to them, “I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream.” Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, “O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.” The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, “The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation.” They answered a second time and said, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation.” The king answered and said, “I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm— if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation.” The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.”**

* The nation of Babylon invaded the southern kingdom of Judah and captured the city of Jerusalem around 600 BC.
  + That was the first time the city had fallen to a foreign invader since King David declared Jerusalem to be the Jewish capital.
    - Babylon eventually attacked the city three times and each time it did more damage and took more of the city captive.
    - Nebuchadnezzar succeeded where others failed because the Lord granted him permission to take the city.
    - Babylon’s invasion and destruction of the city was part of a much larger plan that God was working for the benefit of Israel.
    - Yet the king didn’t understand his role in God’s plan until years later, when one of his Jewish captives, Daniel, explains it to him.
  + Daniel was among a contingent of Jews that the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, took captive as slaves and led back to Babylon.
    - The first chapter of Daniel’s book recorded Daniel’s flight to Babylon and how he came to serve the king in his court.
    - Daniel was raised up by the Lord to influence the king and protect Israel while in captivity.
    - And Daniel 1 tells us that the Lord gave Daniel wisdom ten times better than all the magicians of Babylon.
    - And in Daniel 2, we see that wisdom on display as Daniel solves a riddle for the king.
* In v.1 we hear that in Nebuchadnezzar’s second full year as king, he had dreams.
  + God has given these visions to the king intentionally, yet the Lord also made sure the king couldn’t understand the dreams on his own.
    - The Lord withheld the meaning from the king to ensure the king would reach out for explanation.
    - Nebuchadnezzar calls in all his counselors in Babylon seeking their advice.
  + These men were called to give an interpretation, but first the king proposed a test to make sure they were telling the truth.
    - He wisely required that the men tell him both the dream and the interpretation.
    - Normally, a leader would describe the dream first, then the advisor offered an interpretation.
    - Apparently, Nebuchadnezzar had seen this before and wasn’t very impressed, so this time he wanted dream and interpretation.
  + Predictably, the counselors object to the new rules, since it makes their job much harder and will expose any fraud
    - When these men protest, the king sees right through their scheme and calls their bluff.
    - He says if they can’t tell him something he already knows (i.e., the content of the dream), then how can he trust the rest?
  + In their protests they claim that only gods could reveal the things that the king seeks to know
    - And that is precisely the conclusion the Lord wanted Nebuchadnezzar to reach
    - Specifically, this was a dream that came from the Lord so it was a dream that only the Lord could interpret
    - And the Lord willed to reveal it through Daniel
* Which sets up the entrance of our hero

**Daniel 2:12-30 (ESV),**

**Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them. Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. He declared to Arioch, the king's captain, “Why is the decree of the king so urgent?” Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king. God Reveals Nebuchadnezzar's Dream Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter.” Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation.” Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: “I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation.” The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?” Daniel answered the king and said, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.**

* Daniel offers to give an interpretation to the king, both to save himself and his friends but also to glorify the Lord.
  + Daniel must have felt the Lord was leading him into this moment, and so he seized it by promising that his God could interpret the dream.
    - And as Daniel meets the king, he gives us an important detail about the context.
    - Daniel says this prophecy concerns things that will take place in the future, and specifically in the latter (or last) days.
    - This dream tells the story of our current age, including the period of time that we currently occupy – the last days
  + The dream comes in four parts, and the first part follows

**Daniel 2:31-38 (ESV),**

**“You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. “This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold.**

* First, we note the obvious: the dream concerns a statue, and this statue has divisions or parts that are quite strange.
  + The parts are like different statues stuck together to form a single entity.
  + And we notice that the statue’s materials change from gold to silver to brass to iron and pottery.
  + And these materials decrease in value while increasing in strength.
* Daniel describes the divisions of the statue from head to toe, and then he describes what brings the statue to an end.
  + A stone, uncut by human hands, descended from above, like an asteroid, and struck the statue at the feet.
  + Though it struck at the feet, nevertheless, the statue was completely destroyed and obliterated leaving nothing.
  + The stone remained, however, and it grew to a giant mountain that filled the entire earth.
* This is the dream, and obviously despite its simplicity, no one could imagine its meaning simply by hearing the description.
  + It could mean almost anything, but it has a specific, assigned meaning given by God.
  + Unless we know and accept the Lord’s own interpretation, we will not have the correct understanding.
  + That’s why it required God provide the decoder ring for the dream.
* Turning to Daniel’s interpretation, he first gives the meaning of the first part, the head of the statue.
  + Daniel says the head of gold at the top of the statue represented Nebuchadnezzar as ruler of Babylon.
    - Daniel tells the king that his power to conquer the nations of the world was a direct result of Israel’s God giving them into his hand.
    - And the Lord’s decree was even more comprehensive than the king may have imagined.
    - By God’s decree, Nebuchadnezzar ruled over every inch of the physical earth.
    - Jeremiah confirms Daniel’s words:

**Jeremiah 27:5-7 (ESV),**

**“It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him. All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes. Then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave.**

* Now, we know Nebuchadnezzar didn’t travel to every inch of the globe during his time as king, so can he be said to rule the entire earth?
  + God assigned to Nebuchadnezzar the authority to rule the earth, regardless of whether Nebuchadnezzar exercised that authority.
  + For a time in history, this one man was ruling all the earth and nothing could have challenged him during that time.
* But at the same time, this rule wasn’t going to last forever, for what God gives, He takes away.
  + And in a day appointed by God, Nebuchadnezzar’s rule would end.
  + More than that, Babylon’s dominance would end as well.
  + And then in a time assigned by the Lord, another power would rise up and take what Babylon had.

In v.39 Daniel continues his interpretation

**Daniel 2:39 (ESV),**

**Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.**

* Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that another kingdom will arise to replace Babylon and then a third kingdom will replace the second one.
  + Before we look at the second and third kingdoms, let’s understand how this narrative relates to the statue.
  + The head of gold stood for the kingdom of Babylon, and then the silver breast and arms stand for the second kingdom.
* Each of these parts represents a kingdom that replaces the prior part in history.
  + Therefore, the statue represents a timeline of history, running from head to toe.
  + No two parts can exist at the same time, because one part must end before the next part begins.
  + The statue represents a timeline for our age, this age that Jesus called the age of the Gentiles.
* And now we know it begins with the head, with Nebuchadnezzar’s rise to power.
  + And that matches what Jesus said in defining the age itself.
  + He said it would be an age marked by the defeat, enslavement and scattering of the Jewish people.
  + And it would be an age in which Gentiles trampled over the city of Jerusalem.
* That’s the definition of our age, and the very first time any of those things happened was in 605 BC when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah.
  + So literally, Babylon’s invasion of Israel began our current age.
  + And that beginning is represented in this statue by the head of gold.
  + So where does our age go next?
* Daniel says the silver, second kingdom will be inferior to Babylon.
  + The inferiority of the second kingdom is represented by the lessor value of silver as compared to gold.
  + We can understand why silver is less than gold, but what does that say about the second kingdom it represents?
  + How will the Babylon’s conqueror be less than Babylon?
* To understand this question, we must know which kingdom replaced Babylon in history, since Daniel doesn’t name it.
  + And to determine which kingdom replaced Babylon, we should establish criteria for what qualifies a kingdom to be considered.
  + The criteria to be one of the kingdoms in the statue is found in the definition of the age itself.
* First, each kingdom must be a Gentile kingdom, for this is an age of Gentile dominance Jesus said.
  + Secondly, each kingdom must be the most powerful kingdom on earth in its day since it replaces the previous world power.
  + Thirdly, each kingdom must defeat its predecessor.
  + And finally, it must assume control over Jerusalem.
* In effect, we’re saying that each world power in this state must hold two properties: Babylon and Jerusalem.
  + Since the first world power was Babylon, then it stands to reason that the kingdom to replace Babylon must defeat the capital city.
* And of course, Jerusalem is always to be trampled.
* So now we look at history, and we find only three more kingdoms that meet these criteria, which makes understanding Daniel’s interpretation easy.
  + The second kingdom is that of the Medo-Persians, who replaced the kingdom of Babylon in 550 BC.
    - This kingdom was formed by the alliance of the Medes and Persia, represented by the two arms of the statue.
    - Some have taken to drawing the arms crossed to represent the union of these two powers, though Daniel never says how the arms are set.
  + Medo-Persia grew in power until it challenged and defeated Babylon under Cyrus the Great.
    - The kingdom was strong enough to defeat Babylon, but according to the statue it was less majestic.
    - Medo-Persia was less majestic than Babylon because the Medo-Persian king was not as powerful as Nebuchadnezzar.
  + He had checks on his own authority that the Babylonian king did not suffer.
    - In particular, the Medo-Persian laws stipulated that a king could not reverse the decisions of prior kings.
    - So the rule of a Medo-Persian monarch was like silver compared to Babylon’s gold, because it wasn’t as absolute.
    - Nevertheless, the Medo-Persians will defeat the Babylonians and the Age of the Gentiles marches onward.
* In v.39 Daniel also says that a third kingdom will assume power over the world.
  + That kingdom will replace the second, and will likewise exhibit lessor majesty in its rule.
    - Based on our criteria above, the next kingdom to qualify for the statue was the Hellenistic Empire of Alexander the Great.
    - Alexander extended the Greek empire out of central Europe and into the East, defeating the Persians in 330 BC.
  + He is represented by bronze because the leader of the Greek empire was far less powerful than either the Medes or Babylonians.
    - He competed with the leaders of city-states within the empire and with land aristocracy.
    - Ultimately, the sovereign enforced his control through a powerful military that could impose his will.
    - So while the Greek King was strong enough to defeat the Persians, he ruled with less power over his subjects.
  + Notice that this section of the statue begins with the belly, as a single piece but as the period ends, it’s divided into two thighs
    - And that detail also reflects the nature of the Hellenistic Empire of Alexander the Great.
    - Alexander the Great died barely four years into his reign but not before he had conquered much of the known world.
  + At that point, he had no heirs, so his kingdom was dissolved into four parts assigned to his four generals.
    - Two generals in the Western end of the Empire formed an alliance against the two generals in the East.
    - This created an east-west political divide that still exists to this day.
  + The concept of the Western world and the Eastern world originated in this division, and the statue’s legs reminds us of that historical effect.
    - Just as the legs never rejoin in the statue, so will this East-West divide remain through the end of the age.
    - Even today we still speak of the East and West politically
* Daniel’s interpretation sped past the second and third empires because they were not important details in this timeline.
  + They must be covered, of course, but only because they occupy points along the path that leads us to more important things.
    - Primarily, they lead us to the fourth kingdom and to the end of the statue.
    - The fourth kingdom gets the most treatment in Daniel’s interpretation.

**Daniel 2:40-43 (ESV),**

**And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.**

* The final kingdom features the least valuable and most brittle materials, which is reflected in the tendency to break and crush into pieces.
  + This kingdom replaces the prior kingdom but it does so in a unique way
* Rather than holding territory together as did the previous kingdoms, this one conquers by breaking and crushing into pieces.
  + - Just as clay and iron do not stick together, this kingdom’s various pieces combine for periods of time and then break apart again.
    - Some of these pieces will be stronger than others, resulting in an empire that is unbalanced in power.
  + Nevertheless, this combining and separating pattern does not mean the kingdom itself ends at any time.
    - It continues to exist throughout the time it experiences this confining and breaking process.
    - Collectively, the loosely associated pieces of this fourth kingdom serve the same function as the previous kingdoms in the statue
    - They persecute, enslave and scatter Israel while trampling under Jerusalem.
  + What kind of earthly Kingdom fits this unique set of details?
    - We know from history that the next Gentile power to follow Greece was the Roman Empire.
    - Roman Republic defeated the Hellenistic Empire in 168 BC.
    - Rome eventually defeated Judea in 63 BC and took control of Jerusalem and Babylon.
    - And Rome continued to expand even over the next several Centuries.
  + As Rome conquered, it transitioned from a republic to a monarchy ruled by Caesars.
    - Yet it added territory by assimilating cultures and lands without changing the culture of these lands.
    - As a result, the Roman Empire could very well be described as iron held together by clay.
    - The Romans conquered like iron, crushing those who opposed them and cutting up land into new divisions.
    - But because these lands retained their cultures, they continued to see themselves as independent of Rome.
* At this point we ask the natural question, what came after the end of the Roman Empire?
  + Well in a word…nothing, because the Roman Empire was never completely replaced, at least not like the prior kingdoms.
    - Remember, this fourth kingdom dissolves into “pieces” rather than being replaced by anything new.
    - These pieces combine for periods of time, but like iron and clay, they don’t adhere so they eventually break apart again.
    - In fact, the “Holy” Roman Empire didn’t official cease to exist until 1806!
  + That’s exactly the pattern we’ve seen over the course of history.
    - But it’s only increased in the centuries since the Roman Empire disappeared.
    - Western and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and even north Africa and Western Asia have all experienced this pattern.
    - New alliances are created and then later dissolved.
  + Given this unique pattern, as reflected in the statue, we can’t call this fourth kingdom the Roman Empire.
    - Certainly, the Roman Empire began this fourth period, but the period extends beyond the Roman Empire itself.
    - In later centuries, the kingdom was still operating, but different pieces and different unions were at work.
    - W we must understand the fourth kingdom in the way the statue represents it.
    - It’s a single entity consisting of” pieces” combining and breaking apart over history.
  + Instead of calling this fourth kingdom “Rome” we must give it a more generic title.
  + I call this kingdom the Imperialistic-Democratic Alliance.
    - This name better reflects the changing nature and identity of the actors that combine to make up this kingdom.
    - Over 2,000 years, this alliance has continued to dispossess Israel and keep Jerusalem under Gentile authority.
  + But as we reach the end of the statue and therefore the end of this timeline, things get very interesting.
    - Before the fourth kingdom reaches its end, the kingdom experiences a division into ten parts represented by the ten toes.
    - Daniel doesn’t explain what the ten toes represent here but we do get our explanation in Daniel 7.
    - But for now let’s understand how this age ends by understanding how the statue comes to an end.

**Daniel 2:44-45 (ESV),**

**And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”**

* Finally, the last piece of the puzzle, the stone falling from the sky.
  + Daniel says the stone that fell and crushed the statue is itself a new kingdom.
    - The kingdom represented by the stone is not connected to the prior Gentile kingdoms.
    - We see this because the arrival of the stone coincides with the destruction of the statue.
  + We know the statue represents the Age of the Gentiles so by definition the stone’s destruction of the statue means the end of this age.
    - And the stone sets up a new kingdom, a new age to replace the prior age.
    - Therefore, those features that defined the Age of the Gentiles must also change.
    - For example, in the Age of the Gentiles Israel was scattered, so in the next age Israel must be regathered in their land.
    - In the Age of the Gentiles, Israel was persecuted by Gentile nations, so now it must be safe and secure.
    - And in the Age of Gentiles, the city was defiled by Gentiles, but in the next age it must be free of Gentile defilement and attack.
  + We know that this coming kingdom represented by the stone cannot be another Gentile Kingdom.
    - Just as in the statue, whatever replaces the prior dominant power must itself become the dominant power.
    - So as the Age of Gentiles ends, we will enter an age when the Jewish nation will be dominant.
  + Daniel confirms this assumption for us in v.44 when he says this new kingdom will end all other kingdoms on earth.
    - Furthermore, this new kingdom will endure forever…no more transitions, hence the end of the statue.
    - And this kingdom will be set up by God Himself.
* This time God Himself will be the King on Earth and He personally sets up the Jewish Kingdom that replaces those Gentile powers.
  + Daniel says that uncut stone represents some arrival that puts an end to the Age of the Gentiles.
    - Notice that arrival comes from the God of Heaven and the stone falls from above.
    - Furthermore, the stone was uncut by human hands reminding us of a requirement in the Law of Moses:

**Deuteronomy 27:5-6 (ESV),**

**And there you shall build an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones. You shall wield no iron tool on them; you shall build an altar to the Lord your God of uncut stones. And you shall offer burnt offerings on it to the Lord your God,**

* The Lord commanded that Israel only use uncut stones for His altar.
  + The use of natural, unworked stones signified that our atonement could not be earned through our own works.
  + The altar of sacrifice would be a place where only God’s work (i.e., the Creator of the stones) was applied.
* Likewise, the uncut falling stone represents the work of God, and since it falls on the statue, we conclude that it comes from the sky (i.e., Heaven).
  + It grows into a mountain that fills the earth, and when used symbolically in Scripture, mountains represent kingdoms.
  + And here we see that pattern confirmed, since Daniel says the mountain represents a kingdom filling the earth.
  + Furthermore, that kingdom will endure forever, never to be replaced.
* So what future Kingdom is centered on Israel, follows after this age is over, and begins with a “rock” uncut by human hands falling from Heaven?
  + The only conclusion that fits the data is the Kingdom Jesus promised to set up at His Second Coming.
    - Notice the stone falls “on the feet” of the statue, indicating that the coming of Christ happens at the end of this age.
    - Therefore, Jesus is the rock returning to earth at His Second Coming.
    - And the mountain is the Millennial Kingdom He establishes for Israel after His return.
  + It will be a Jewish Kingdom, in that Jesus is Jewish and the Kingdom was promised to Israel.
    - It will replace all other ruling authorities on Earth.
    - It brings an end to the Age of the Gentiles and ushers in a new age on Earth.
    - And it will result in the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel to grant them an eternal Kingdom in their land.
  + As we stand here in history, the coming of that rock is the next milestone in God’s prophetic plan for this age.
    - That’s why the writers say we are in the last days now.
    - Everything Daniel said would happen in the Age of Gentiles has come to pass exactly as Daniel predicted.
    - Only the events of the very end remain, and so we are in the last days waiting for the end to come.
  + Where do we go next? We need to augment our understanding of the Age of the Gentiles with a few more pieces of information from Daniel 7.
    - Then with a full appreciation of this age, we can move back to Chapter 4 of Revelation.
    - And from there we begin to add more pieces to the puzzle for how this age proceeds into the things that must happen after these things.