

so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

(44) "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. (45) This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands -- a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

"The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

The vision and the interpretation divide naturally into three parts: (1) the prediction of four kingdoms (vv. 31-33, 37-40); (2) the peculiar nature of the second part of the fourth kingdom (vv. 33b, 41-43); (3) the complete destruction of the human kingdoms and their replacement by God's new regime (vv. 34-35, 44-45).

We shall examine these sections in order, looking in each case at both the vision and the interpretation.

The Four Kingdoms

Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar: "You are that head of gold. After you, another kingdom will rise" (vv. 38-39). When Nebuchadnezzar died the second great empire did not immediately assume control. Several comparatively weak kings ruled in Babylon before the Babylonian empire was overcome by the Persians. In view of this fact, and also of the fact that the other parts of the statue represent kingdoms rather than individual kings, it is reasonable to consider that here Nebuchadnezzar represents the entire period of supremacy of Babylonian and Assyrian military