

Appendix 1: Daniel 2:44

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream in which he saw a colossal statue shattered by a small stone. This vision proved beyond the wit of the wise men of Babylon to interpret. Indeed, the king had put the magicians to the test by demanding that they tell him what he had seen in his dream *before* giving its meaning. The magicians failed on both counts. Under God, however, Daniel was able to do both – to confirm the king’s dream, and then to interpret the vision. He explained that God – the God of Judah, Daniel’s God, the one true God – was going to destroy a succession of world-kings by setting up his own kingdom, an everlasting kingdom:

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 (Dan. 2:44).

Opinions are divided. Virtually all are agreed that the vision refers to Christ (Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14-15; 28:16; Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17-18; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4-8) and the triumph of his kingdom. But it is in the ‘how’ and ‘when’ where the differences of view lie.

Here is my view. Imperial Rome fell in the early 5th century. But it did not fall because of the gospel. It fell because of paganism – both within the empire and in the pagan hordes under Alaric. Nebuchadnezzar’s vision has nothing to say about this. In addition, patently the vision does not speak in terms of a steady advance, leading to a glorious kingdom. There is nothing gradual or secret about it at all. It is not a process. Quite the opposite! The vision describes a shattering – a sudden, devastating smashing – of the kingdoms of the world, an explosion, which blasts them into smithereens, leaving Christ’s kingdom standing as the sole, eternal kingdom. The only event to which this can refer must be:

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...Christ... at his [second] coming... Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For 'God has put all things in subjection under his feet'... When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:23-28).

And:

The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever' (Rev. 11:15).

This clearly harks back to Daniel's own vision of the four beasts when:

...the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.

Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him' (Dan. 7:22-27).

In other words, as I understand the vision, Christ, in his second coming, will, in an instant, put an end to all earthly kingdoms, and establish his own, everlasting, kingdom.

And, as I understand it, this is what Christ predicted:

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Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:24-28).

And John saw this in the Revelation:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever'. And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying: 'We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth'. Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail (Rev. 11:15-19).

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead: 'Come, gather for the great supper of

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God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great'. And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh (Rev. 19:11-21).

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Let Samuel Prideaux Tregelles set out his interpretation of Daniel 2:44:

Now, what does the stone so falling upon the feet of the image symbolise? It has been sometimes thought that it alludes to grace, or to the spread of the gospel; but surely if the very words of the Scripture be followed, we shall see that destroying judgment on Gentile [that is, pagan – DG] power is here spoken of, and not any gradual diffusion of the knowledge of grace... The whole image is destroyed as it were with one crash.

Now, our Lord [Jesus Christ himself] speaks of himself as the 'stone', and makes reference, or direct citation of, several passages in the Old Testament in which he had been so designated. Thus in Matthew 21:42,44: 'Did you never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?... And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder'. Our Lord here cites from Psalm 118, and alludes to the mention made in Isaiah 8 to the stone on which Israel has stumbled and been broken; and he likewise clearly refers to the destroying judgment which takes place when the stone, now exalted at the head of the corner, falls thus upon the fabric of Gentile power – 'it will grind him to powder'.

'The stone' must be taken as a definite appellation of our Lord. We see this from Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14; 28:16, Acts

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4:11 and 1 Peter 2:4,6, in all of which Christ is spoken of under this name... Impossible is it for this to symbolise the spread of the gospel; for, so far from Christians being put in the place of destroying those that bear earthly rule, they are taught submission to the powers that be as ordained of God and their place is to suffer, if needs be, but not to rebel [Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14; of course, there is a limit (Acts 4:18-20; 5:27-32)].

Thus, it is clear that the Lord Jesus is here referred to as coming again – in the day when he shall take to himself his great power and shall reign – when he shall be revealed ‘in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (2 Thess. 1:8).¹

In broad outline, this is my view.

In sharp contrast, we have John Gill’s interpretation, found in his *Commentary*:

[Christ’s kingdom] was set up in the days of his flesh on earth, though it came not with observation, or was attended with outward pomp and grandeur, it being spiritual, and not of this world; upon his ascension to heaven it appeared greater; he was made or declared Lord and Christ, and his gospel was spread everywhere: in the times of Constantine it was still more glorious, being further extended, and enjoying great peace, liberty, and prosperity: in the times of popish darkness, a stop was put to the progress of it, and it was reduced into a narrow compass; at the Reformation there was a fresh breaking of it out again, and it got ground in the world: in the spiritual reign it will be restored, and much more increased, through the gospel being preached, and churches set up everywhere; and Christ’s kingdom will then be more extensive; it will be from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth; it will be more peaceable and prosperous; there will be none to annoy and do hurt to the subjects of it; it will be no more subject to changes and revolutions, but will be in a firm and stable condition; it will be established upon the top of the mountains, and be more visible and glorious, which

¹ Samuel Prideaux Tregelles: *Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*, The Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, London, Seventh Edition, 1965.

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is here meant by its being 'set up': especially this will be the case in the millennium state,² when Christ shall reign before his ancients gloriously and they shall reign with him; and this will never be destroyed, but shall issue in the ultimate glory; for now all enemies will be put under the feet of Christ and his church; the beast and false prophet will be no more; and Satan will be bound during this time, and after that cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, with all the wicked angels and men.

I disagree, in almost every particular, with Gill's view.

² Although Gill's understanding of the millennium is not altogether easy to unravel, he held to an earthly 1000-year reign of the saints with Christ after his return (see 'Of the Millennium, or Personal Reign of Christ with the Saints on the New Earth a Thousand Years' (John Gill: *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, 1767).