

“The Kingdoms of this World”

Daniel 2:24-49

²⁴ Therefore Daniel went 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; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation.”

²⁵ Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, “I have found a man of the sons of captivity of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation.”

²⁶ The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?”

²⁷ Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, “The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. ²⁸ But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: ²⁹ As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. ³⁰ But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your heart.

³¹ “You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. ³² This image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

³⁶ “This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. ³⁷ You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; ³⁸ and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. ³⁹ But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. ⁴¹ Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. ⁴² And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. ⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall crush in pieces and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. ⁴⁵ Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. ⁴⁷ The king answered Daniel, and said, “Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.” ⁴⁸ Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. ⁴⁹ Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

During the last couple of sermons, we have seen Daniel, after his victory over the food and the wine that would have defiled him, being once again put to the test. This time, the test was a test over his life. King Nebuchadnezzar had sought the meaning of not only the interpretation of his dream, but the contents of his dream. The task, an impossible one for man, was a task that only

God alone could solve. Daniel, who had an outstanding view of God and God's providence went to the Lord in prayer, and we are told in the early portions of this chapter that "*the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision.*" The immediate response of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego was to Praise God and give Him thanksgiving for what He had done.

After that we begin to see the wheels set in motion to reveal to the King that they had an answer to his dilemma. Now there are several details in the early part of this passage that I believe are important and worth noting, but the bulk of what we will be speaking about today is the dream and the interpretation of the dream. This dream of Nebuchadnezzar was a glimpse at, what to us is history, but to Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel this dream was a survey of world events for the next 600 years plus.

After their prayer was answered, Daniel went to Arioch, the very man who had come to arrest him and have him executed along with the other wisemen of the Kingdom. It is very interesting that none of the wisemen of the Kingdom had the answer to the dilemma, and yet Daniel spoke up for them. He requested "*Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon.*" There is certain disagreement about what this mean. Obviously, Daniel was speaking on behalf of the wisemen, but was this a directive to spare the wisemen outright or was this a request for a "stay of execution," while he presented the matter before the King. Whatever the answer there is a valuable lesson that is learned from this passage. The only wisemen mentioned in all the land of Babylon were Daniel and his companions, and yet because of their faithfulness the rest were spared. Daniel did not have the answer to the dream in himself, he knew the answer to the problem could only come from God, and when it had been revealed Daniel wanted all to see and believe that there was a God in heaven who revealed the deep things.

I want to skip to the The last verses of the text which tell us: ⁴⁶ *Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him.* ⁴⁷ *The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret."* ⁴⁸ *Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon.* ⁴⁹ *Also Daniel petitioned*

the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

Clearly, after this trial was over, Daniel had once again under trial and testing responded and remained faithful to God, and God has again placed him in a position of honor. Daniel who was at first faithful in little things will be given the opportunity to be faithful in much greater things. His companions are also honored with him. We will talk more about this later, but notice we also see in response to the interpretation of this dream that Nebuchadnezzar recognizes that Daniel's God is the God of God's and the Lord of Kings and the revealer of secrets. This is not indicative of a changed heart, but Daniel's faithfulness has now testified to the King as to who God really is.

So now back to the dream and its interpretation. When he was brought before the King, and I believe the King already knew who Daniel was, because Daniel had been presented to him at the end of Chapter 1. Remember on examination by the King Daniel, and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were found in all ways to be ten times as excellent as any other wisemen. The king asked Daniel *"Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?"* Daniel's answer does not point to himself but points to God,

In Daniel's response we need to notice that his answer to the King is that there is no wise man, there is no astrologer, there is no magician, and there is no soothsayer that could possibly tell him his dream, but Daniel directs Nebuchadnezzar's attention to the God in heaven who reveals secrets. This statement is very similar to the words of his prayer just a few verses earlier, when he thanked God for *"revealing deep and secret things:"*

³⁰ But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your heart.

Over the next five verses Daniel then tells the dream to Nebuchadnezzar.

³¹ "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome.

I love the descriptive adjectives in this first verse. After this verse alone we can probably get a glimpse as to why this dream bothered Nebuchadnezzar so much.

The image itself is described as great. It's splendor was excellent, and its form was awesome. This description itself does not really let us know why it bothered him so much, but when we know the full dream and we see what happened to this great and awesome image we can see why it was so troubling.

³² This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.

In verse 34 notice the direct way that Daniel addresses the King. He is telling him his dream and of specific note is that while Nebuchadnezzar saw the great, excellent, and awesome image, and he was wondering what it could all mean, Daniel tells him that "you watched while a stone was cut without hands, which struck the image on its feet and brought down the whole awesome thing.

³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

What was once great, what was once awesome has now been done away with and a new great mountain which feels the whole earth takes over. Now some of you are familiar with this account. But one of the things that is very obvious about this image is that the higher up on the image we are the more valuable are the metals. As we get to the bottom, the feet if you will, we have gone from Gold, to Silver to Bronze, to Iron, and finally brittle clay.

What is even more interesting is that after this stone formed without hands strikes the image, everything, not just the clay, not just the iron, not just the bronze, but everything, including the

gold become like chaff on a summer threshing floor and the wind removes them to the point that there is not even a trace left.

I have had some bizarre dreams in my life. And I have even read books on dreams and on their interpretations. One of the things that is often talked about when interpreting dreams is dreams of loss. There are often things that we value in dreams that are taken away, and even though it is a dream these dreams tend to be compelling. Here Nebuchadnezzar in awe of this image. saw it suddenly removed without a trace to be replaced by a stone that becomes a mountain that fills the entire world.

I try to imagine how I would have felt had I had a dream like unto this one. I can see exactly why Nebuchadnezzar was troubled. But perhaps something even more troubling to him was when Daniel stood before him and revealed all of the bizarre details of his dream to him. As troubling as that was though, he was not going to hear the interpretation of this dream.

Now before I get into the interpretation of this dream there are several dreams and visions in the Book of Daniel. That being said there are also different schools of thought as to how these dreams should be interpreted today. In general, if there is a difference of opinion as to how a vision is to be interpreted today I will let you know, but an amazing thing happens with this particular vision. Almost all schools of thought are agreed on what the meaning of this vision is. There are differences in certain areas, but perhaps more than any of the visions in the Book of Daniel this one has the most agreement.

³⁶ “This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. ³⁷ You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; ³⁸ and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold.

The head of Gold is King Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. This is far and way the easiest to interpret because of the last words in verse 38:

“You are this head of Gold,”

There are a couple of other things that are revealed in this section as well. Though Nebuchadnezzar is the head of God, Daniel tells him plainly that the God of heaven had given him his kingdom, power, strength and glory. Yes his Kingdom was majestic and Nebuchadnezzar ruled over all of it, but Daniel reminds him that it was given to him by the God of heaven.

The powerful and the rich very often struggle with pride. I have mentioned over and over the passage in Deuteronomy 8:18 *“And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth,”* Nebuchadnezzar is a great King, but he must acknowledge God. In Daniel 4 we will see this great King Nebuchadnezzar given the heart of a beast because of his refusal to acknowledge and honor the God of heaven.

The Second Kingdom Is Medo-Persia. Notice the description of this Kingdom given in verse 39. The Kingdom is represented by the silver and it is described as *“inferior to yours.”* That this is speaking of Medo-Persia is virtually undisputed.

As great as Babylon was, one of the things that is revealed here is that all of the kingdoms of man are temporal. The Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Medes and the Persians about 60 years after Daniel gave this interpretation of the dream. This took place in 539 BC. If you have studied the book of Daniel, one of the things you will see is that Daniel was still alive at the time of the conquest of the Babylonians by the Medo-Persians.

Historically the Medo-Persian empire was a very strong empire and yet it never reached the glory or the strength of that head of gold.

At the end of verse 39 we read about the third kingdom *“a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth”*

Again the third Kingdom is the Kingdom Is Greece. This is also one of those statements that is undisputed by Biblical scholars. The Medo-Persians ruled for about two-hundred years and then the Greeks conquered the known world under the leadership of Alexander the Great. The time of the Greek conquest of the world mostly took place during the period between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Some have called this time the period of silence, but this

period which lasted about 400 years had so much that was going on with the empires of the world, that was preparing the way for the coming Kingdom of God.

The fourth kingdom is the Roman Empire. It is talked about in verse 40: *⁴⁰ And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.*

In the description of the fourth kingdom we are not seeing a description so much of beauty and glory but of raw power. This kingdom is strong as iron and it shatters everything else. There is also described in verses 41-43 mixtures of clay with iron because of the many internal divisions and weakness in this kingdom.

⁴² And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.

What is interesting here is that everyone agrees that this Kingdom is Rome, however there are some who actually teach that this is a Roman empire that is yet to happen. The reason they do that is because they struggle with the setting up of the fifth great kingdom. And what I mean by that is the text is very clear that it is during the days of that fourth kingdom that this fifth kingdom will be set up. Listen to verse 44:

⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall crush in pieces and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

The real focus of the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had was the setting up of this 5th Kingdom. And he describes it as happening during the days of the kings which are represented by the feet and toes which are the Roman empire.

There are Christians today who are still waiting for the Kingdom of God to be set up. There are Christians today who do not believe that Christ reigns now. Their focus is on a future kingdom and so you will actually hear them speak of things like a “revived Roman Empire.” But what

the Bible teaches in this text is that it is during the days of those Kings that God will set up His everlasting Kingdom. These kings were the kings of the Roman empire when Christ came during his first advent and set up the kingdom that will have no end.

There are those who will tell you Christ does not yet rule and reign, or that Christ rules and reigns only in the hearts of believers, and yet there are several Scriptures that say the opposite, for now let us look at Ephesians 1:18-23: ¹⁸ *the eyes of your ^[i]understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all principality^[g] and ^[h]power and ^[i]might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.*

²² *And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

Some of the things to note about this kingdom which are spelled out for us in Daniel 2. It is represented by a rock that is formed without hands. It is not a man made kingdom. In Exodus 20 the same chapter where God gives Moses the ten commandments, in verse 25 we read: ²⁵ *And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it.* What man attempts to add to the Kingdom made not with hands is destructive. So often we want to model the Kingdom of God after the transitive Kingdoms of man, and yet it is only the Kingdom of God that makes the other kingdoms as chaff to blow away in the wind.

Something else about this kingdom is that unlike every other kingdom of man throughout history is that this kingdom will have no end. It begins small, it is a rock formed without hands and it becomes a mountain that fills the entire world. The image here is of a kingdom that is growing. From the moment of its conception though, there was a ruling and reigning King. And he has

directed His kingdom and will continue to direct it until the mountain of the Lord fills the entire earth.

Many of you know that I teach history. How a person views the history of the Kingdoms of the world shapes their view of history. The establishment of the Kingdom of God in history, is an event that although many of the world's kingdoms fail to notice, it is still present and growing right along side the rise and fall of every human kingdom.

The Bible tells us in Psalm 20:7 *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;
But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.*

Many people throughout history have placed their trust and their confidence in the failing Kingdoms of man. As we have seen, many of these kingdoms are glorious, and many of them are strong, but eventually their glory and their strength will be dried up and like chaff blown away in the wind. Those who place their trust in the Kingdoms of man will all ultimately be put to shame. .

Psalm 2:10-12 says ¹⁰ *Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.*

¹¹ *Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.*

¹² *Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish in the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.*

Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

As verse 45 tells us the stone built without hands; *it shall crush in pieces and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.*

All kingdoms and all empires that are not the Kingdom of Christ will ultimately fail. If one studies history one will often conclude that nations fail for various reasons. Some fail because they are militarily destroyed. Some fail due to financial or political mismanagement. Some are over-run by the barbarians at the gate. In reality though, the kingdoms of this world ultimately

fail because they refuse to kiss the Son. They refuse to bow the knee and because of this the Lord is angry and they perish in the way. The rise and fall of the great kingdoms are not accidents of history, but the providential outworking of a sovereign God on kingdoms that have turned from His ways.

In 1 Peter 2:4-8 Peter describes the way Jesus comes to men:

⁴ Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,

*“Behold, I lay in Zion
A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,
And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.”*

⁷ Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who ^[b]are disobedient,

*“The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone,”*

⁸ and

*“A stone of stumbling
And a rock of offense.”*

They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

The rock formed without hands is Christ and it is the Kingdom of Christ. It is Christ who is the stone that crushes all the kingdoms of this world because he is the stone that the builders rejected which became the chief cornerstone.

Often times when we look around, we see only defeat, but the Bible tells us that the focal point of human history is the cross of Jesus Christ. When Christ’s blood was shed on the cross, this was the beginning of the end for every human kingdom. The Bible describes in Psalm 2 the

nations raging against the Lord and against His Christ. At the cross the kingdoms of the world thought they had won, but instead of being a humiliating defeat for the kingdom of God, it was our king's greatest victory.

Since the cross of Christ, the Kingdom of God has continued to grow. According to what we see in the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, and in other places, it will grow until it fills the whole world. Through Christ's death and resurrection all of his enemies have been definitively defeated.

In Revelation 11:15-17 it says: ¹⁵ *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"* ¹⁶ *And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,* ¹⁷ *saying:*

*"We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty,
The One who is and who was and who is to come,
Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.*

Yes, we may still see remnants of their power, but as members of the body of Christ and of the mountain of the Lord we are blessed to share in His conquest as the stone that the builders rejected becomes more and more that great mountain that will overcome and fill the entire world, let us ever rejoice with the loud voices in heaven as they shout, "The Kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!

Amen.