

Daniel 2:24-45

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 captives 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 know 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 fragile.

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 break in pieces and consume 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."

History is the stage on which the drama of God's work of Redemption is being played out. That is the reassuring truth that we are taught in the Scripture. Every event in human history small and great, going back in time all the way to the garden and the fall of man and then extending on down the years till the return of Christ, has been part of God's plan for redeeming fallen mankind.

Now that is not the way that the world by and large looks at history. To the world, the vitally important stuff is the rise and fall of empires, war and peace, elections, politics, the economy, scientific advances, and who wins the super bowl and is in first place in Nascar and Formula 1. They view Christianity as something that only helps or hurts you as you are going about the important things in life.

Unfortunately a lot of professing Christians buy into that misconception. Christianity for them is a Sunday activity or a box you fill in labeled religion when you check-in to the hospital. Sure they go to church most Sundays, but even there, even as they sing or listen to sermons they are thinking about work or friends or vacation or just the trivia of everyday life. The really important things that dominate their thinking are work, sports, and relationships with people – not their relationship to Jesus Christ.

But what Nebuchadnezzar's dream showed was not only future events, it shows us what is really important and how to really understand history. It tells us that the things of this world are passing away, they are here for a moment and then gone, and that the things that are really important are not the things of the earthly kingdoms, that are ultimately just dust, what is really important is the eternal heavenly kingdom. So if you and I are living our lives putting the world first, then our priorities are exactly upside-down. I mean after all, what should concern you more, where you work for the next 20 years, or where you will spend eternity?

Please believe me, the best or worst job on earth, is nothing in comparison to heaven or hell – no matter how much the job may seem like one or the other.

Nebuchadnezzar had been worrying as powerful men do about the future. That's the funny thing about wealth and power, few men actually enjoy it. They spend the first part of their lives constantly working to get what they want, and then once they have it, they spend the remainder of their lives worrying about holding on to it. Anyway, that evening, the Lord showed Nebuchadnezzar what would happen to his empire, and then to all the empires that followed it. But unfortunately, the king didn't understand the terrifying vision he had had, and none of the so-called senior wise men could tell him what it was, or how to explain it, so in his rage, he ordered them all killed.

So it look like Daniel and his friends, because they too were counted among the wise men of Babylon were going to die an early death. But God had different plans. He was the one who sent the dream and now He is the one who will use it to exalt Daniel. Daniel and his friends pray, and God tells Daniel both the dream and its interpretation. So Daniel is able to go in to his first major audience with the king since he graduated from wise man training with top marks, with something that no other servant of the king could provide.

Now that could have tempted Daniel to take the credit to himself. After all, that is what Arioch did, verse 25: ***"I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the***

interpretation." *He* didn't find anyone, Daniel went to him, but that doesn't stop him from taking the credit.

But when the king asks Daniel about it, Daniel is quick to give all the glory to God. In fact he goes over board to say this isn't something men *can* know, and its not because he himself is wiser than all men. He says that it is because he serves the God of heaven. As an aside, I hope you make that your practice as well, after all what gifts do you have that weren't given to you by a gracious God? Has someone complemented you on how "together" your life is? Well who put it together? You?

Daniel tells the king that what he saw was to tell him what would happen in the days to come, and the vision covers a period from his empire on, but in particular it revealed the great mystery that was to come in the last days. Which as we shall see was the coming of Jesus Christ and the growth and final triumph of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now in Nebuchadnezzar's dream there was a single statue with 4 main parts, each different part of the statue symbolized a different worldly empire, they are connected because they succeeded one another, and because they are all part of the same worldly system.

The head was of Gold, that as we are told symbolized the Babylonian empire. It was gold because the power of Nebuchadnezzar was given directly by God and because the Babylonians had an essential unity that none of the following empires had.

The second part was the empire that destroyed Babylon and succeeded it. This was the empire of the Medes and Persians. It is less successful and unified than Babylon and consists of two main parts, the Medes and Persians, unified – two arms one chest. Although Nebuchadnezzar will be dead by the time they take over many years later, Daniel will still be alive, and will serve their king Darius as well.

The third part of the statue are the belly and thighs of bronze. This symbolizes the Greek empire, which after many years of war with Persia will eventually destroy it under Alexander the Great. The Grecian empire is even less unified than Persia however, being made up of many states, held together in a series of loose but constantly warring confederations.

Finally they have the legs of Iron, symbolizing the Roman republic and early Roman empire, it is appropriate that this part be of Iron, as this was the first empire that started entirely in the Iron age, and was militarily the strongest of them all. Rome of course conquered Greece and the remnants of Alexander's mighty empire, the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties founded by Alexander's two greatest generals. You'll remember Cleopatra, she was a Ptolemy. Anyway, as we travel down the legs, that is as the Roman empire aged, it becomes weaker and weaker, until the Iron is mixed with clay. This probably symbolized the fact that in its later years the Roman empire became increasingly fractured. The Romans tried to unify the world under one Roman yoke, but the various parts of the Empire, especially the Germans and the Barbarians in the East, refused to be unified. These tribes were brought in, but were not subdued or really assimilated, and they made Rome militarily weak and vulnerable. Hence the strong Iron became mixed with Clay, and gradually the entire empire degenerated.

But then we have this most important image, a stone - not part of the image – and cut without hands, which symbolizes that this kingdom is not made by man, but God, comes and it strikes the last empire on its feet and breaks it into pieces and then in the end these worldly kingdoms become so much dust in the wind. Then this kingdom of Heaven that shall never end grows till it fills the world.

Now who is the stone that grinds to dust of which the dream spoke?

Well turn if you would in your bibles to *Matt 21:42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?"*

43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

44 "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

Jesus identified himself repeatedly as that stone which the builders rejected. That stone which was scorned and rejected, which seemed so weak, that had none of the military power or wealth of the earthly kingdoms, and yet was far more powerful, the power of God and the foundation of a church that would go on to the present day and in to eternity.

Paul picked up that theme in Acts 4:10 "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

11 "This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'

He is that Stone that crushed the worldly empire, mighty Rome tried hard to stamp out the faith, the full weight of imperial persecution fell upon His followers again and again and yet they were the ones who were broken in the end. Rome fell, but Christ's kingdom continued. And here we have a prophecy of that 603 years before his birth.

The application of all of this is obvious, or should be at least,

First, how could these things have come to pass if God were not in control of history?

God is in control of history, the one who orders all of its events, who raises up kings and casts them down again?

Daniel 2:21 And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding.

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

Why did these things come to pass, that redemption might be accomplished.

Second, it is only if we acknowledge God's plan that we will ever understand this world, and be able to live in the next.

If we don't its kind of like watching a play that will never make any sense.

I mean imagine it this way, A man by the name of Mr. Worldly goes to see a murder mystery. He is only paying attention to the actors, the costumes, and the backgrounds while the other one named Mr. Christian is listening to the dialogue and following the plot. As the play is unfolding Mr. Worldly sits there asking "why are they in a library?" "why does that man have a gun" "Why is that actor dressed

like that?" "Why did that actor go away and another come in?" "why is he in a court-room?" He becomes more and more frustrated, because it all seems to be random change. The plot, the story is what gives meaning to the events of the stage.

We need to realize that this world is like a vapor it is stage dressing:

So Many people end up despairing because they don't realize that.

1 Peter 1:24 because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away,

25 But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

And therefore what are we living for:

Matt. 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: