

# **Rock of Ages**

**Daniel 2:24-49**

**A sermon preached by Dr. Calvin Warpula  
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Daniel is one of the greatest men in the Bible. There is not one bad thing said about Daniel in the Bible. He was faithful to God in all circumstances even though he was 750 miles from home in a pagan land. He served as Prime Minister under five kings in different dynasties.

However, the book of Daniel is not primarily about Daniel and his three Hebrew friends. It is not about Israel and its history. These stories only occupy a small portion of the book. But every chapter in Daniel is about the major theme of the book: God and his ruling and superintending in history and the affairs of governments and history. The primary message of this OT book is that God is constantly overruling and judging in the affairs of men, putting down the mighty from their seats, overthrowing unjust regimes, and growing his kingdom.

This book may be more needed than the first book of the Bible, Genesis. History is not an ever turning wheel going nowhere. History is a spiral working to a climax. This is seen in Jesus who proclaimed, "The time is fulfilled" (Mark 1:15).

This is seen in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream that no man could interpret. Nebuchadnezzar threatened all the lives of all the wise men unless they interpreted it. Daniel and his three friends prayed and God gave the dream and its meaning to Daniel. Daniel praised God for his answer (2:19). Daniel appeared before the king to give the answer. Daniel gave credit to God for the dreams and its interpretation (2:27-30).

## **The Dream**

Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a large, enormous statue, presumably of a man, that was dazzling and awesome. The head was of gold; the chest and arms of silver; the belly and thighs of bronze; and the legs of iron with feet

that were partly iron and partly clay. Then a rock, cut out, but not by human hands, struck the statue and smashed it. The statue was entirely broken to pieces; it was totally pulverized by the gigantic rock and the wind blew away all the particles. The rock became a huge mountain that filled the earth. This dream began with the time of Nebuchadnezzar and continued through the time of Jesus until the end of time. No dream ever covered so much of world history.

### **The Interpretation**

Daniel explained that the metal represented four kingdoms. Each one was less valuable than the former one, decreasing in power and grandeur (39). Gold is worth the most; then silver; then brass, and then iron. Today, gold sells for \$1300 an ounce; silver for \$28 an ounce; brass for \$2.50 per pound and iron for ten cents per pound.

However, each metal was stronger than the former one. Each successive metal was tougher and endured longer than the preceding one. Silver is stronger than gold; brass is stronger than silver, and iron is stronger than brass.

Daniel gives the following interpretation. The head of gold, the most valuable, is King Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian kingdom. Babylon is a name for power and glory. The name goes way back to the book of Genesis to the city of Babel and the city of Nimrod. Nebuchadnezzar had built Babylon into a world class capital city. The famous Hanging Gardens were here. Gold was used to decorate shrines, temples, and public buildings. The Babylon kingdom lasted 66 years, from 605 to 539 B. C.

The chest and arms of silver is the Medo-Persian Empire that conquered Babylon in 539 B. C. (Dan. 5:28). This kingdom was headed by Cyrus the Great and Darius the Mede. The Medo-Persian Empire conquered more lands and ruled from the Aegean Sea to India. This kingdom ruled from 539 B.C., to 331 B.C., a total of 208 years. This kingdom was larger geographically than Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon but it was inferior in quality of government.

The belly and thighs of brass is the Grecian empire (Dan. 8:21). This empire was headed by the famous Alexander the Great. In 331 B. C., he succeeded his father, Philip of Macedon. Alexander began to conquer lands and territories. He moved east to the Indus Valley. He sat down and cried because there was not more land left to conquer. He wanted to be called "the king of all the world." His empire extended from Egypt in the south to Europe in the west and to India in the east.

Alexander died in 323 B.C. at the age of 33. His empire lasted till 146 B. C. or until the fall of Palestine in 63 B.C. or until the fall of Egypt in 31 B.C. This means that his kingdom was larger than any of the two preceding ones and it lasted much longer, some 260 to 300 years.

The fourth kingdom is the one of iron. Its legs were of iron and its feet of part clay and part iron. This is the Roman empire that began in 146 B.C. when Rome began to expand. Rome conquered Corinth in Greece 146 B. C. and Palestine in 63 B. C. Rome ruled Egypt after the battle of Actium in 31 B. C. This kingdom, represented by the iron, lasted longer than any of the others, The Roman kingdom fell in A. D. 476. If we date the beginning from the conquering of Corinth in 146 B.C. then that is 622 years. If we date the beginning from the fall of Palestine in 63 B.C, then that is 539 years.

This kingdom has its strength and its weakness represented by the iron and the clay in the feet. The weakness of Rome was that she loved pleasure, dissipation, and luxurious living. Rome was conquered by barbarians because of the moral weakness of the people. Rome ruled the longest but it was weak in many points.

A factor which contributed to Rome's downfall was the migration of Germanic and Slavic peoples from the interior of Europe into areas controlled by Rome. There was intermarriage and intermingling.

[John C. Jeske, Daniel. People's Bible Commentary. St. Louis: Concordia, 1992, p. 43].

This was a melting pot experiment but the empire's unity was weak and it could not hold together. Its iron was mixed with brittle clay because Rome tried to force an external cohesion into a united kingdom. Rome's weakness was that it had no internal unity. One reason for the next picture's success, the stone cut out of the mountain that became a large mountain, "is that it unites men individually to its king, and so binds them to one another" [Alexander Maclaren, "The Image and the Stone," Expositions of Holy Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker, reprint 1974, 6:52].

Another reason for the fall of Rome was Christianity. "The message and the outlook and the life of the Christian community condemned the corrupt Roman Empire and hastened its fall." (Jeske, Daniel, p. 43].

The rolling stone that smashes all these empires, grows to become a mountain, and endures forever. This is God's kingdom. It is cut without

hands. This kingdom is heavenly versus the human origin of the first four kingdoms. This means that this kingdom is the work of God (2:44). It was during the days of the Roman kings (2:44) that the God of heaven set up his kingdom, represented by the large rock that smashed all the preceding kingdoms and the kingdom of Rome. The NT emphasizes that during the days of the Roman kings that Jesus was born. Note what Jesus said in Mark 1:15: “The time has come. The kingdom of heaven is near. Repent and believe the good news.” Luke clearly sets the birth of Jesus during the time of the Roman kings. Hear Luke chapter 2, verse one: “In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.” Luke chapter three, verse one, ties Jesus into history: “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea” –this would be about A. D. 25-26—“the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.”

The thought and message of the kingdom dominated the teaching of Jesus. Jesus began preaching by proclaiming, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt. 4:17). The kingdom of Jesus is not an earthly kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom of love and truth. When Jesus was being tried before Pilate, he told the ruling governor, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were my servants would fight, but my kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36). Jesus lived, taught, ate, breathed and died in view of the kingdom. His entire life was about the kingdom of God. The word “kingdom” dominates the book of Matthew, our first gospel. The word occurs 34 times in this book. The keys of the kingdom were given to his apostles (Matt. 16:19). The kingdom was entered by a new birth (John 3:3, 5). We are to eat and drink with him at his table in his kingdom (Lk. 22:29-30). Some would not die until the kingdom came with power (Mark 9:1). If the kingdom has not come, then there are people living on the earth that are more than two thousand years old.

In Acts chapter 2 following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles of Jesus Christ and they began to preach that Jesus is Lord and Christ. The gospel message converted three thousand that day. This historic day was “the beginning” (Acts 11:15). All kingdom references before Acts 2 point forward to that day and all kingdom references past Acts 2 point backward to that day. The apostle Paul says that believers are now in God’s kingdom (Col. 1:13). Philip preached the kingdom and the name of Jesus (Acts 8:5, 12). Paul spent two years in Rome preaching the kingdom of God (Acts 28:31). The apostle John says that we are now in the kingdom (Rev. 1:6, 9).

The church is the people of the kingdom. Jesus said he would build his church and then he immediately said he would give his apostles the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:18-19). Paul addresses his letter to the church in Colossae and says they are in the kingdom (Col. 1:2, 18; 1:13). John says we are now in the kingdom and then he writes to seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1:6, 9; chapters 2 and 3).

Some teach that Jesus came to establish the kingdom of Daniel 2 but because the Jews rejected him he postponed the kingdom and instead set up the church. According to these teachers, there is not one single prophesy in the OT about the church. They claim that there is a two thousand years plus “great parenthesis” in Daniel 2 between verses 41 and 42. However, the church was in the eternal purpose and plan of God (Eph. 3:10). It is not an accident or the result of a postponement of the kingdom. God is faithful and never makes a mistake or fails in his mission. If Jesus failed the first time he came, how do we know he will not fail the second time he comes? The theory is false. We have already received a “kingdom that cannot be shaken” (Heb. 10:22).

Presently, the kingdom is filling the earth. Everywhere the word is going disciples are made. Christ and his kingdom have reshaped the world. Think with me of the power of the kingdom of God.

Twelve poor men spoke, and the world was shaken and the kingdoms remoulded. The seer had learned the omnipotence of ideas and the weakness of outward force. A thought from God is stronger than all armies, and conquering conquerors. By the mystery of Christ’s incarnation, by the power of weakness in the preachers of the cross, by energies of the transforming Spirit, the God of heaven has set up the kingdom. ‘It shall never be destroyed.’ Its divine origin guarantees its perpetual duration. The kingdoms of man’s founding, whether they be in the realm of thought or of outward dominion, ‘have their way, and cease to be,’ but the kingdom of Christ lasts as long as the eternal life of its King. He cannot die any more; and he cannot live discrowned. Other forms of human association perish, as new conditions come into play which antiquate them; but the kingdom of Jesus is as flexible as it is firm, and has power to adapt to itself all conditions in which men can live. It will outlast earth, it will fill eternity; for when he ‘shall have delivered up the kingdom to his father,’ the kingdom, which the God of heaven set up, will still continue. [Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, 6:52-53].

When Jesus comes again, we will enter into the final and eternal state of the kingdom of God. Jesus will deliver the kingdom to God the father (I Cor. 15:24). Paul says the Lord will protect him and deliver him into the eternal kingdom (2 Tim. 4:18). Peter says that by obeying and serving the Lord we will have “a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:11). The last book of the Bible, Revelation, pictures the victory of God’s kingdom in the final day (Rev. 11:15, 17-18).

### **The Aftermath**

When Daniel delivered the king’s dream and its interpretation, the king fell before Daniel. He gave praise and glory to the God of Daniel who had shown himself superior to all the 4000 deities of the Babylonians.

The king promoted Daniel. He made him a high ruler and gave him many gifts. Daniel was promoted to serve in the royal court as the king’s chief assistant. Daniel’s friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were also promoted. The faithfulness of Daniel and his three friends in chapter one was now rewarded. God “honors those that honor him” (I Samuel 2:30).

### **Conclusion**

Three basic truths emerge in this chapter:

1. God is sovereign in world affairs. God is ordering world history according to his plan. The whole of history is in the hands of God. History really is “his story.” God sets up kings and God removes kings. When Daniel explained the king’s dream, the other three kingdoms did not exist. God knows the future and revealed to Daniel what would happen in the world. Every earthly government is headed for ruin. God had the first word in creation and he will have the last word in judgment.
2. God has a plan for the world. This plan centers in redemption, the coming of a savior-king into the world and God rules in the hearts of men through the gospel story. Those who believe in Jesus will share the ultimate victory with God when “every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11).

3. All investments in earthly kingdoms are temporary at best. The things of this earth will eventually be pulverized and ground to powder. They will not last. We should lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven because all earthly treasures will end in ruin and destruction (Matt. 6:19-21). We should seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness in all things (Matt. 6:33).

God cares for you, too, as an individual. His plan is for you to accept Jesus as the Christ and live for his glory now and live with him in glory forever. Today is the day for you to submit to the kingship of Jesus. When Philip preached the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, people believed and were baptized. That's the way to accept Jesus as Lord and King. That's what people did on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. Like them, you can believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior, turn from your sins, and be baptized in his name. God will forgive your sins and give you the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38).

Will you submit yourself to Jesus in turning from your sins, trusting him with all your heart, and being baptized in his name? Today is the only time you have. Tomorrow, if there is a tomorrow, may be too late. Come now, while we stand and sing.

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