

The Rise & Fall of Earthly Kingdoms

What was God's purpose in revealing the battle between the two kingdoms?

Within the books of Daniel and Revelation we find the core issues of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Satan's master plan is to set up his kingdom here on the earth as an everlasting kingdom, believing his to be superior to God's. We read of his desire to exalt himself above the throne of God, sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God, and receiving all worship. In Daniel and Revelation, we see the prophetic, panoramic view of the epic battle between two kingdoms, Jerusalem and Babylon—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. These books lay out for us the principles of both kingdoms. They reveal the temporary ascendancy Satan has gained through his succession of earthly kingdoms, which have adopted his principles of self-exalting, self-serving force. They also reveal the Victor, whose principles of self-lowering, self-sacrificing love will prevail, as demonstrated at the cross and again ultimately through His bride, the church.

Does Babylon exist today?

Babylon has come into the churches of God just as Babylon besieged Jerusalem. The worldliness and wickedness of the world has been adopted by God's people. Why has this happened? Because we worship other gods, the gods of wealth, fame, idleness, pleasure, entertainment, God has given us up to our choices and Satan is allowed to come into the church and besiege it. Just look at the history of God's first denominated people, Israel, when they started worshipping the pagan gods of the heathen, God had to honor their choice and remove His protective care over them.

Psalms 34:7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.

Psalms 81:8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; 9) There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. 10) I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. 11) But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. 12) So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels. 13) Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! 14) I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.

Daniel reveals the battle between two gods:

Not only does the history of the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms reveal the battle between two cities, Jerusalem and Babylon, it is a battle between two gods. In other words, "will the real god please stand up".

Daniel 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2) And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

Who were the gods of Babylon? There are many names of different gods in the Bible, but they all represent one, Baal, the sun god. Daniel was named after Nebuchadnezzar's god, Belteshazzar. Bel or Baal, the sun god.

Daniel 4:8 But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, saying, ...

Ezekiel who was a contemporary of Daniel, reveals the god whom Israel was worshipping and why the Lord allowed her to be overthrown by Babylon.

Ezekiel 8:13 He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. 14) Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. 15) Then said He unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. 16) And He brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

2Kings 23:5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

We find the principle that nothing can be done against the truth but for the truth as we watch the “play-counter-play” between God and Satan.

2 Corinthians 13:8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

The historical story in Daniel 2 shows us the wise and merciful way that God chooses to save the heathen as well as those who claim to be called by His name. God is no respecter of persons and He would that all would come unto Him and be saved.

A major theme in this chapter as well as in the whole book, is the personal involvement of God in the affairs of nations, of kings and individuals, and that He cares for and works for their salvation with all longsuffering and diligence.

As we study this chapter we will also discover that the principles and ways of Satan are revealed for what they are—a feeble attempt, scarcely managing his assumed kingdom, let alone the universe which he aspires to rule. The prophecy begins with the kingdom of Babylon ruling but ends with the kingdom of God ruling. This is a common theme throughout the book of Daniel.

King Nebuchadnezzar receives a dream

Verse 1

Nebuchadnezzar has a dream and is troubled. He had been contemplating the future of his kingdom (verse 29), and God revealed the future to him showing him the end of all earthly kingdoms and the setting up of the everlasting kingdom. God wanted to convict Nebuchadnezzar of his pride, ambition and self exaltation and give him opportunity to become acquainted with the true God—the only Saviour.

Nebuchadnezzar manifests the same sins as Lucifer in the very beginning of the great controversy. By his besieging Jerusalem, taking the Hebrews captive and stealing the holy vessels from the temple, he was in essence saying that he and his gods were more powerful than Israel and Israel's God. But God is about to reveal to him who really is in control, and whose kingdom principles are enduring. So what Satan meant for evil, God used for good—not only for Israel but for Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon as well.

Verse 2-9

Nebuchadnezzar forgets the dream and commands the Chaldeans to reveal the dream as well as the interpretation. God has given him the dream and caused him to forget it so that the Chaldeans can be exposed as frauds and God can be exalted. Nebuchadnezzar's forgetting the dream prevented the Chaldeans from inventing a false interpretation. The Lord is teaching the lesson that wisdom and understanding can only come from Him. See Dan 2:20-22.

Isaiah 47:13, 14 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.

Verses 5, 6

The king threatens them with death if they do not do so, and on the other hand he offers them gifts, rewards and honor if they can show and interpret the dream.

Nebuchadnezzar is again revealing the principles of Satan's kingdom, that of force and coercion. Here is another move in the play-counter-play between Christ and Satan. Satan is attempting to kill God's servant Daniel by motivating the king to make a death decree. However, God again wins because Daniel is brought into a place of recognition and placed in a prominent position giving him an even greater opportunity to testify of God and His eternal principles.

Verses 10, 11

By stating that the gods do not dwell with flesh, the Chaldeans verify by their confession that they are not in contact with the gods and therefore they are unable to show or interpret the dream.

Verses 12-16

Nebuchadnezzar discerned their deceptions and was convinced that they did not have the learning and power that they claimed to possess and commanded that they be killed. Daniel hears of this and requests time and an opportunity to reveal the dream to the king with the interpretation.

Verses 17-23

Daniel exhibits that he has a relationship and a faith in God that He will reveal the dream and the interpretation. He seeks his companions to solicit the God of Heaven along with him. They do not neglect the praise due God for His tender mercies in revealing the dream.

Verse 21 "He changeth the times and the seasons"

Acts 1:7 And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.

We will find this to be significant when we read of the antichrist's desire to change the times, (Daniel 7:25), another play in the controversy between Christ and antichrist.

Verse 21 "He removeth kings and setteth up kings"

As we discovered in the first study on Daniel chapter one, the mechanisms by which God gave Judah into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar reveal the reaping and sowing principle. We will find that the same principle applies to the judgment of Babylon for God is not a respecter of persons. The wages of sin is death and it applies to everyone.

Verse 22 “He revealeth the deep and secret things”

God not only purposed to strengthen the faith of His people through the gift of prophecy, but to expose the phony bologna claims of the magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers to whom the king sought to reveal the dream and the interpretation.

Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Psalms 25:14 The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant.

Proverbs 3:32 For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but His secret is with the righteous.

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.

Verse 24 Daniel pleads for the lives of all the wise men

Even though Daniel knew that the wise men were fakes, he represented the thoughts and feelings of the God in heaven when he pleaded for their lives. Later in Daniel 6 we find these same men who were jealous of Daniel laying a trap to destroy him.

Verse 25

We see that Arioch had not the same humble spirit that we find in Daniel and he takes credit for having found one who will interpret the dream.

Verses 26-30

Here we find the interactions between Daniel and the king. The king is hopeful that Daniel will be able to reveal the dream, give the interpretation and set his mind at rest. Daniel is quick to give credit where credit is due and does not take any glory to himself, a characteristic principle of the kingdom of God.

Verse 29, 30

Daniel explains to the king that the dream is God's answer to his contemplations of the future of his kingdom. God takes the opportunity to reveal to Nebuchadnezzar saving truths calculated to save him from his worst enemy--self, and to faithfully rise to the high and lofty responsibility for which God has raised him up. At the same time, God reveals the inevitable rise and fall of nations that refuse to implement the principles of His kingdom and assures His children of the everlasting kingdom of righteousness that will fill this earth. Praise God!

The vision of chapter 2 is the first vision in the book of Daniel, and it is of great significance. It can be likened to a skeleton with each succeeding vision adding on the flesh, layer after layer. A correct understanding of this chapter is an essential orientation in order to anticipate the structure of all the other visions in Daniel. All the succeeding visions of Daniel as well as Revelation will fit into the time line of this first vision.

As we look at Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation, we want to remember that this first vision sets a sequential pattern of the rise and fall of world empires which concludes with the everlasting kingdom set up on this earth, and is a template for all subsequent visions in the book of Daniel. This method of interpreting the prophecies is called the “historicist” view and allows us to always know where we are in the scope of time.

Daniel and Revelation reveal the core issues of the great controversy—the principles of the kingdom of God versus the principles of the kingdom of Satan. As we behold the character of our God, we become changed into the same image thus fulfilling the main objective of the prophecies—to re-create in man the image of God. When we combine this *experience* with knowing where we are in the scope of time—we will go forth with a powerful “present truth” message that will swell into the loud cry and the whole earth will be filled with the glory of God.

We will find as we look closely at each of the visions of Daniel that great emphasis has been placed on the fourth kingdom “dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, diverse from all the beasts that were before it” (Daniel 7:7). This kingdom exemplifies the principles of the kingdom of Satan more so than any other kingdom, and it viciously attacks Christ, His saints, His truth, and His sanctuary.

The remarkable accuracy of twenty-five hundred plus years of history foretold in advance through Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream brings compelling credibility to the Bible as trustworthy evidence of God’s unfailing faithfulness in communicating valuable truth through His prophets.

Verses 31-35 Daniel reveals the dream to Nebuchadnezzar

The king saw a great image. The head was of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass or bronze, the legs of iron, and the feet and toes of iron and clay. He then saw that a stone was cut out of the mountains without hands and smites the image on the feet and the whole image crumbles and blows away.

The stone then becomes a great mountain and fills the earth.

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