



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Daniel 2:1 - 49

Divine Purpose in History and Prophecy, part XIV

Eschatology Doctrinal Studies “The Course of World Empire, I”

TRANSCRIPT

Well, it's time for us to begin. Let's open our class with prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the opportunity and privilege that we have to gather round the word of God and to ponder its teaching. We thank Thee for the promises that are contained within it. And, especially, as we begin our study for the promise of the enlightening ministry of the Holy Spirit, we pray that he may guide us into the truth, as our Lord has promised. We pray that we may be responsive to his teaching. We remember the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. They're foolishness to him. Neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned, but we remember also, the promise that for those who do know Thee, he teaches and instructs, guides and directs us, sustains us, and strengthens us, and meets our needs moment by moment and day by day, to the end of our days here upon this earth. So, Lord, we give Thee thanks for all of the provisions that are made for us in the atoning work of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, and may we be the recipients of Thy blessing this evening as we study together.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] We have been studying the “Purpose of God in History and Prophecy,” and I was going through some notes that I had, and I ran across another definition, really a short paragraph on the purpose of God that I thought was very appropriate for us, to remind us of what we're really studying. And J. Gresham Machen, one of the finest of the evangelical scholars of the last generation, wrote this some years ago. “The doctrine of an eternal purpose of God is the foundation upon which all the teaching of the Bible is really based. Back of all the events of human history, back of all the changes in the inconceivable vastness of the universe, back of space itself and time, there lies one mysterious purpose of him to whom there is no before or after, no here or yonder, to whom all things are naked and open, the living and holy God.” That's very appropriate, because that's precisely what we're trying to do, is to look into the eternal purpose of God as he set it forth in his word.

Now, I told Ms. Ray that we would be studying tonight, Daniel chapter 9, verse 24 through verse 27, but the more I thought about this series, and thought about the next study that I should undertake, it became evident to me a few days ago that I should put aside the study of Daniel 9:24 through 27 for a little bit, and turn to something that, I think, is very fitting, with reference to what we studied last Wednesday night. You may remember, we studied something that had to do with “The Course of This Age” and we looked at the parable of the, what was it? The tares and the wheat. And we used that as the background to talk about the course of this age. And we looked at things such as: the spreading of the word or the sowing of the seed, the growth of reality and the growth of unreality, the ultimate apostasy that characterizes the end of this age, and one or two other things that had to do with the course of this age. That was really a look at what is transpiring, with reference to this particular time; the period of time which we call “The Period of the Church of Jesus Christ.”

Well, it seemed to me as I was thinking about it, that what would be most suitable for us at the present time, is also to look at “The Course of World Empire,” to look at it from the standpoint of the Gentiles, as over against from the standpoint of the Church. And so tonight to compliment the other, I’d like to turn to Daniel chapter 2 rather than chapter 9, and study Daniel chapter 2, and perhaps we won’t finish tonight, and if not we’ll finish it up next week. But this is one of the great chapters in the word of God, in the Old Testament, especially, and its theme is “The Course of World Empire,” as you know from your reading of the chapter.

Now, what I’d like to do is to give a brief introduction to what we are talking about, and then I would like to read a number of the verses until we come to the significant verses that have to do with the interpretation of the dream, and we’ll try to do as much of that as we can tonight, and if we cannot do it all, we’ll finish it up next week. So this is Number 14, I believe, in our study of “The Divine Purpose in History and Prophecy.”

Oswald Spengler, who wrote that strange book that finds the clue to history and nature entitled, “The Decline of the West” said in that book, “We await today the philosopher who will tell us in what language history is written, and how it is to be read.” What we and Spengler need, is not really a philosopher. What we really need, is a prophet. And, fortunately, we have not only one, but we have a number of prophets who give us just what Oswald Spengler is talking about, except they do it as coming from God in heaven himself. Now, the prophet that I think particularly deals with this question is the prophet Daniel, and the chapters of this book are chapters in which he expounds that very fact. He expounds what is transpiring in our human existence and, particularly, the course of world empire. What we read in Daniel chapter 2 is a visualized portrait of the course of world empire, and its catastrophic demise in the last days of the period of time before the kingdom of God.

The secret that Daniel writes about spans about twenty-six hundred years at least. I say “at least,” because I don’t really know everything yet. You knew that, didn’t you? What Daniel writes from is from the period of time of six hundred and five BC. That’s the secret of which he talks; spans the time from six hundred and five BC and Judah’s entrance into captivity, to nineteen hundred and ninety-two plus seven years, if we’re able to distinguish those years that we were going to talk about, and will talk about after this, the years of the prophecy of the seventy sevens. So we have six hundred and five years, plus nineteen hundred and ninety-two years, plus seven years, the seven years of the time of the tribulation; the troubles upon the earth before our Lord’s return. So we have a total of twenty-six hundred and four years, plus. Now, of course, we don’t know when the last period of time that seven is to begin, and so we simply have to say, “twenty-six hundred and four plus years.” That’s the period of time that Daniel talks about when he gives us this great visualized portrait of the course of world empire and its conclusion in the last days with the coming of our Lord.

Now, Daniel’s great revelation required two things. First of all, it required Jewish national, and I would say national survival. That of course, has transpired, and today we have Jewish national survival. That is one of the greatest miracles of human history, when one thinks about it, Jewish national survival. And now that we have a country we call “Israel.” Because when I first started studying the Bible there was no country of Israel at all. And in fact, it was something that Christians rarely talked about; that is, the specific establishment of a country. When I graduated from theological seminary, there was no State of Israel. That date, as you well know, is nineteen hundred and forty-eight, May the fourteenth; when Israel became a national entity, a people. That’s a remarkable miracle in one sense, but it is simply the carrying out of the eternal purpose of God, according to his sovereign will, so the Scriptures tell us.

The second thing required by this is the re-emergence of ancient Gentile powers. In other words that the east should become significant in world history again. Now, those

of you who haven't lived as long as I, you won't realize that, but when I was going through college, when we talked about the Arabs, we talked about the most bumbling of all peoples, and as for Persians and Iraqis, and others such as that, no one paid any attention to them at all, because they were insignificant in world history, so far as we understood it. But today, that's different. We have Jewish national survival. We have the re-emergence of the ancient Gentile powers. Both of these things required by Daniel's great revelations unfolded in his book, required those things, and they are here.

Of course, the great miracle of Israel's survival has been written about, by a number of people. Perhaps the most common quotation that is often cited about Israel's perseverance is the famous statement by the German philosopher Hegel, who attempted to explain various historical phenomena, and found it impossible to account for the problem of Jewish survival. He said this, “It is a dark, troublesome enigma to me. I'm not able to understand it. It does not fit any of our categories. It is a riddle.”

I was impressed in reading Bruce Majlessis, and I notice he's been appearing on our TV screens, recently, interpreting some of the things that are transpiring in our world. And a number of years ago, I read a book by him on the philosophy of history. And I was so interested in it because I read through the book, and it's a book of substantial size, as I remember, at least three hundred pages in which he seeks to set out a philosophy of history as a historian. And I went through the book, and when I finished, I realized, I read it very carefully, because I had the flu, and I read it on the bed. And I didn't have much else to do, and so I just was lying there reading this book when I felt like it. When we got through, it occurred to me, he had never mentioned the word “Jew,” and he was writing this philosophy of world history, and never mentioned the word “Jew.” That was an amazing thing. I went back and checked it out just to be sure. There may be some place he mentioned it, but I could not remember it, and as far as I remember, I made an effort to locate a reference to Israel, but could not find it. Think of someone writing a philosophy of history, and not paying attention to Israel.

Nicholas Berdiaeff, a well-known philosopher, a Russian philosopher of a generation or so ago, said this, “I remember how the materialist interpretation of history. When I attempted in my youth to verify it, by applying it to the destinies of peoples, broke down in the case of the Jews, where destiny seemed absolutely inexplicable from the materialistic standpoint. And, indeed, according to the materialistic and positivistic criterion, this people ought long ago to have perished. Its survival is a mysterious and wonderful phenomenon, demonstrating that the life of this people is governed by a special pre-determination. Transcending the process of adaptation expounded by the materialistic interpretation of history, the survival of the Jews, their resistance to destruction, their endurance under absolutely peculiar conditions, and the fateful role played by them in history, all these point to the particular and mysterious foundations of their destiny.” What an amazing statement, and really, basically, how true it is.

Well, Daniel chapter 2 is one of the great chapters of the Bible. No question about that, and surely one of the most important of the prophetic chapters of the Bible. “It proclaims,” J. H. Pember used to say, “With thrilling power that the end of the age is near.” I think probably he would have been wiser to say “may be near” but, nevertheless, it surely is a thrilling chapter.

Now, I’d like to read the first twenty-three verses, which are verses that have to do with the revelation of this great dream or vision that came to King Nebuchadnezzar.

“Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign,” and incidentally, I’m reading from the New King James version, so there may be some differences, and I finally finished my little assignment that I had to write some notes on a section of this, and I don’t know how long I’ll keep reading it, but I like this Bible. It has a lot of good information in it, and it has a red cover which I like, so I may keep it for awhile. But I’m reading from it, so you’ll understand that it may be different from yours.

“Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams, and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him.”

The term “troubled” is a term that in Aramaic means “smote himself,” so obviously he’s agitated.

“Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, and the charismatics, to tell the king his dreams.” No, I just added that. [Laughter] My eyes get blurry some times but. “So they came and stood before the king. And the king said to them; I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream. Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic.”

This is something of a parenthesis, because from this point on. chapter 2, verse 4 through chapter 7, this book is written in Aramaic. The opening chapter to verse 4 is written in Hebrew, and then from chapter 8 through chapter 12, the last chapter, that is Hebrew also. Now, what is important about it, you’ve heard this before I know I hope you remember, what is important about it is that these chapters which are written in Aramaic, the language of the Persians, for example, and the Chaldeans, this language is the language of Gentiles, so to speak; the Hebrew, the language of the Jews. And it so happens that this section, 2:4 through chapter 7 and the last verse of that chapter, has to do primarily with prophecies that touch the Gentile world. So it’s very fitting that we should be reading Aramaic here, that is translation of Aramaic, as over against Hebrew.

“O king, live forever. Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, ‘My decision is firm. If you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces and your houses shall be made an ash heap.’” Those were vigorous days. “However, if

you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore, tell me the dream and its interpretation.’ They answered again and said, ‘Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation.’ The king answered and said, ‘I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm. If you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you.’” And that’s the ash heap. “For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time is changed, therefore, tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me the interpretation.’

The Chaldeans answered the king and said, ‘There is not a man on earth who can tell the king’s matter, therefore no king, lord or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer or Chaldean. It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.’”

Well in that sense, they were really right on with good theology, because that’s precisely what transpires.

“For this reason, the king was angry and very furious, and gave the command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men, and they sought Daniel and his companions to kill them.”

Evidently, Daniel was in a stage of training in Babylon, and so he was not sought out and taken at the beginning, but ultimately of course, his life was at stake.

“Then with counsel and wisdom, Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. He answered and said to Arioch, the king’s captain. ‘Why is the decree from the king so urgent?’ Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel, so Daniel went in and asked the king to give him

time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek the mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.”

That’s an interesting statement that he calls God, “the God of heaven” because that would mean that he’s over the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the Babylonians worshipped the sun, and moon, and the stars, and so he with courage calls God, “the God of heaven.”

“Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision, so Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said ‘Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his. 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. He reveals deep and secret things. He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with him. I thank you, and praise you, O God of my fathers.’”

Notice the connection. “O God of my fathers.” He recognizes his connection with the messianic promise line; those promises that go back to Abraham, especially, and have been reiterated down through the years. So he calls God the “God of his fathers.”

“‘You have given me wisdom and might, and have now made it known to me what we ask of you, for you have made known to us the king’s demand.’ Therefore, Daniel went to Arioch whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went out 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.’”

Incidentally, to give you some idea of Daniel in that he is, while a follower of the God of heaven, nevertheless, he has compassion for those false prophets and wise men, and first of all asks that the king not kill the wise men.

“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?’ 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, but there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets.’”

Isn't that interesting? First thing he does, is be sure that Nebuchadnezzar and the others who were there know where the source of the light that has come to him has come from, to know that fact. He doesn't stand up and say, “Well, the other night I was praying over this matter, and I received this illumination and here it is.”

But he makes the point, that it's “God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has made known to Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head upon your bed are these: 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. 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.”

Well, now, I want to stop and go back for a moment, and say just a few things before we look at the dream and its interpretation. If Revelation is the XYZ of Bible

prophecy, then Daniel chapter 2 has a claim to be called the ABC of Bible prophecy. So this is a good place to start a study of biblical prophecy. It's broad. It's very significant. The course of world empire is very significant for understanding what's happening in our society today, for that matter. Now, it all arose out of the fact that Nebuchadnezzar was lying on his bed, having run out of sleeping tablets, and so he had to think about his kingdom. And he, obviously, was disturbed about it, because there were things that would normally trouble any king, and a particular one in those days of brutal slaughter. And Daniel says to him that, “He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.”

And so I think it's probably right to say, that Nebuchadnezzar was lying on his bed and thinking about what was going to happen to his kingdom; what would happen in the future, and what would happen after he had gone. And so in this royal insomnia, like Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther, he has great concern over the future. I would dare say, that almost every king has thought precisely as Nebuchadnezzar has thought. What's going to happen when I go? What's going to happen in the future? And I imagine George Bush is thinking about that too. He has about ten more days or so, to think about what's going to happen in the future, and I would imagine that he lies on his bed at night, and asks that question too. And I'm sure that Bill Clinton likewise does, and it would be wonderful if we could be sure that they were looking to the Lord, and looking for direction and guidance from him.

You see, there's one other principle, another fact one sees here, is the fact that the fortune tellers, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, they don't know the future. They cannot prophesy, and so, consequently, the Lord God is the source of knowledge concerning the future. We have many people today in the Christian Church, even in the Evangelical Church, who claim to be prophets. You see them. You see them on your TV screen, some of them. You may even know some of them. You may have even sat and heard them lecture, and acknowledge that they believe that they're

prophets today. But they don't put themselves to the test of declaring the future. Not a one of them. Not a single one of them dares to do that. They wouldn't dare risk their reputation on a prophecy, but yet they affirm that the prophetic gift is alive.

When I was teaching at Trinity Divinity School, and talked about prophecy as a temporary gift, so far as we can tell, although there're indications that in the last days, there may be prophecies. But at the present time, that so far as I could tell, there were no prophets around. I would sometimes have students come up, a few of them, and say, “I do believe in prophecy, and at our church we have prophets.” And I was always interested in being as kind as I could, and in asking them, “What kind of prophecies are being made in your church?” One young man who was a very good student, and I asked him that question, and we began to discuss it. I said, “Do you have any prophecies?” He said, “Yes, I have a book of them.” And I said, “Would you bring them to me, and let me read the prophecies that are being given in your church?” And so he brought me the book, and it was a number of pages, and I read the prophecies on a page or two, didn't have time to read all of them, but they were all little prophecies that might be true of almost anything that might happen in the future. I remember also in another occasion, I asked for a specific prophecy, and the individual said, “Well, last week we had prophecies in our church last Sunday, and one of the prophecies was, that the Lord was going to give us a great blessing next Sunday.” That was the prophecy.

Many of the prophecies are couched in the language of the Bible, to give them a sense of the authority that the word of God communicates when we use speech. But there are no prophets. There are no individuals who can tell us what the future is. Now, if a person says, “But the prophets also gave moral exhortation,” that's true, but the prophets also gave light on the future. Both of those things characterize the true prophets, and so it's perfectly legitimate to ask them to also give us information concerning the future. These individuals, these feudal Chaldeans and wise men have their descendants in our midst today.

Daniel, the prophet of God, the true prophet of God, is given the key to the inner meaning of history in these words. You'll notice in verse 32, he talks about the image's head; verse 35, he speaks about the image, and gives further details. So what I'd like to do now is to look at the dream itself and then make some comments concerning it. I could imagine that, perhaps the first thing that went out from Nebuchadnezzar after Daniel had told the dream was, “Send out an order. Stay the execution. Stop the killing of the wise men.”

Now, Daniel says in verse 24 through verse 30, he says, I think I put down the wrong things here in my notes, but let me check. “As for you, O king,” this is verse 29, “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. But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me,” and well, we've read that. Now in verse 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.” And, incidentally, this was largely true to the experience of people at that time. Figures of immense size were not exceptional in the ancient East. The Egyptian collosae, for example, were world famed. Herodotus tells us of a golden statue of Baal at Babylon which was twelve cubits high. Jastro recounts Godea's dream of a man whose figure reached from earth to heaven. The Egyptian collosae were often from fifty to sixty feet. So Nebuchadnezzar did have acquaintance with the giant kinds of images. But he says now in verse 32.

“The image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 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. 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.”

Now, there are three principle features in this dream or vision. Very simple. First of all, the four different metals. He mentions the gold, the silver, the bronze, and the iron, four metals. The second thing that is significant about it is the stone that was cut out without hands. Verse 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.” Now, when we think of the Bible, we think of the Bible broadly as going from Creation to the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We think of the Creation as beginning, the Cross as the climax of the promise program of the Old Testament, and then we think of the present age as an age that looks on to the second coming of Christ.

So we have the Creation, the Cross, and the Coming. And the Coming is of course, associated with just this point here; “The stone that struck the image and became the great mountain and filled the whole earth.” The Cross is the focal point of history, but these other things are significant. The Cross is the place where the promise program reaches its climax, and the fulfillment age continues to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We designate this in our own life as BC and AD. In fact, isn't it interesting that even our newspapers acknowledge the Coming of our Lord? Isn't that striking? In fact, when George Bush writes John Major, he dates it, and dates it with reference to the coming of our Lord. These are the facts of human history. The providence of God reminds us all the time all over the world, of the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's there, of course, that everything reached its climax, and in that work of our Lord on the Cross, that now has become the guarantee that everything else will come to pass in God's time.

I was reading a book by George Buttrick on prayer some years ago, and I didn't really expect to get too much from Mr. Buttrick. He was a mildly liberal man, but a very well-known man, and so I read the book on prayer, because I think it's good to find out

what your enemies are saying, as well as your friends. And I got one thing from it. I got some other things too, but I got one thing from it that I haven't forgotten. He said that, I believe as I remember, he was wandering on the street one day, and he observed some people playing chess. Now, in Hendersonville, North Carolina where I spent a lot of my summers; our family had a little place in North Carolina, and we went up and spent the summer there, and I spent the time playing golf, and they spent the time enjoying the cool weather. But Hendersonville was a town in those days, small enough so that in the summer, they put up card tables and chess tables, and particularly checkers out on the main street, and the people would gather round and play checkers all day long. You could walk up and down the sidewalks, and they were very wide, and there were checker games going on all the time; people standing around and watching.

Well, Mr. Buttrick said that he was standing around a chess game, watching the chess being played, since these are the days of Boris Spasky playing Mr. Fisher. It's very appropriate and relevant, isn't it? So he said he was watching, and then finally someone made a move, and another person standing by him said, "That's it. That's it." We know how that is in checkers, even if we can't play chess. I've never played chess, but in checkers you know you can make a certain move, and you can certainly say, "That's it. The game's over." That specific move. Well, when our Lord died on Calvary's cross and was raised from the dead, "that's it." That's the guarantee. Everything else that the word of God sets forth is going to come to pass in God's time. So the "stone cut out without hands," lies in the future that he's talking about, but it's inevitable.

And then the third thing is the great mountain. You'll notice he says, "The stone that struck the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Of course, as we read on, ultimately, we read in verse 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." And in the preceding verse he has said, "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.”

Let me just say this, we'll deal with this later on, next week probably, but one point. The other kingdoms are historical kingdoms. Let that sink in. The other kingdoms are historical kingdoms. Is it not reasonable to believe, they're historical and earthly kingdoms, I might say, is it not reasonable to believe, that this kingdom also is an historical and earthly kingdom? That seems reasonable to me.

At any rate, what Daniel has told them, is that from the time of Daniel's day on to the end, we call it the time of the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus spoke about the times of the Gentiles. He said, “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” That period of time, according to Daniel's prophecy, will have four great kingdoms. In other words, there are not going to be five. There're not going to be seven, four, four only. No more than these kingdoms. There have been individuals who have sought to have other kingdoms, Charlemagne, we all think of that. We study medieval history. Charlemagne, Genghis Khan, Napoleon had the idea, that he might have a kingdom something like this, the Keyser in Word War I, the United States of America. Well, I hope we don't have any ideas like that. But the Bible says there are these four kingdoms from the time of Daniel the prophet, Nebuchadnezzar the great king, to the time of “the stone without hands smiting the image and becoming a great mountain that fills the earth,” the kingdom of God.

Well now, let's turn to the interpretation of the dream. We'll try to do just a little bit of it, verse 36 through verse 49. “This is the dream.” And I imagine that Daniel, because he surely would have seen on the face of Nebuchadnezzar, that he has seen the dream that I saw. I can imagine he said this with a great deal of divine God-given satisfaction. “This is the dream; now we.” Notice “we.” Not “I.” “We.” Evidently, bringing Hananiah, Mishael in with him; his fellow Hebrew servants and friends, with him

in the vision, so far as we know, was given to Daniel only, but now “we will tell the interpretation of it before the king.”

Now, Nebuchadnezzar was a Gentile. Daniel, of course, is the prophet of the nation Israel. So we would be right, I think, in just surmising that, what we are reading about here is about Gentile kingdoms; what our Lord talks about. “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” They’re still trodden down. They don’t have that Temple area. They cannot erect their Temple there, and so they’re still being trodden down to this day. So we have a clue there that we are talking about the Gentile world empire. So when you say, “The Course of World Empire,” we mean the course of Gentile world power. First of all, verse 37 and verse 38. “You O king are a king of kings; for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory. 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.”

Now, you can see from the description that is given, that Nebuchadnezzar has what may be called a “universal kingdom.” These are not just little kingdoms over local territories; small territories. We’re talking about universal empire, and then he adds, “You are this head of gold.” So the first of the kingdoms of the four is the kingdom of Babylon. That’s very fitting in one sense because we go back to Genesis chapter 11, and, of course, Babylon is the first attempt to have a general kind of authority among individuals, and the desire to reach to heaven and establish their own kingdom is there, it began at Babylon and now here, Babylon.

Now, Babylon was a monarchy, and so this kingdom is a monarchy. And the fact that Daniel says, “You are this head of gold” suggests an evaluation of it. In other words, gold is very precious, and this was a great, a truly great kingdom. “You are this head of gold.” Then he says, “But after you shall rise another kingdom, inferior to yours.” Now,

that is important. Notice the “inferior,” because we marked deterioration in these four great world empires. “After you shall rise another kingdom, inferior to yours.”

Now, we know from history, that the Medo-Persian Empire arose after the Babylonian Empire, and as a matter of fact, arose by over coming the Babylonian Empire. So if the Babylonian Empire may be dated 605 to 539 BC, then the Medo-Persian Empire may be dated 539 BC to 331 BC. There’s a difference between the two. In the case of Babylon, we have a monarchy. In the case of Medo-Persia, autocracy, suggested later on by chapter 6 in verse 15. We won’t look at it, but in the case of the Medo-Persian Empire, there is a double sense to it. That’s why we get the term “Medo-Persia,” and in the image vision itself, there were two arms, and these two arms evidently, represented the kingdom of Media, and the kingdom of Persia. And then he adds, “A third kingdom of bronze.” Now, the third kingdom we know from history, as well as, and by the way, we’re not going through the whole of Daniel, but if you go back to Daniel chapter 7 and Daniel chapter 8 and then of course, Daniel 9, but particularly 7 and 8, details are filled in. Right now, this is the broadest of the prophecies, and you’ll just have to take my word for it. If you doubt, well then read Daniel 7 and Daniel 8.

The third kingdom, is a kingdom of bronze; the Grecian Empire. This was something like aristocracy; that is, a military power, and weaker than the others. Weaker in character. Maybe greater in strength, for Alexander was a great king, but weaker in character, and that kingdom may be dated 311 BC to 146 BC, although there’s a little problem of dating the end of the Grecian Empire.

The fourth empire, is then described in verse 40. “And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, in as much as iron breaks in pieces and shatter everything, and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crash all the others.” Now, that’s a very interesting statement. “Will crush all the others. Whereas, you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided, a kind of composite kingdom; yet the strength of iron shall be it in, just as you saw the iron mixed

with ceramic clay.” Now, notice verse 41 to verse 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.” Now, there is a distinct gap in time spelled out in a moment, and then is the rest of the prophecy of Daniel between verse 41 and verse 42, and Daniel picks up again on the toes of the feet here, and will give more details with reference to it. “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. 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.”

Those two verses, 42 and verse 43, are verses that follow a gap between 41 and 42, and the gap we know, at least, we think we know from history, is the period of time in which we are at the present time. So between verse 41 and verse 42, if you’ll go over, and read it over and over again, I think you’ll see that, what the text does is to pick up something from verse 41 and then go on from there with some further details that have to do with that period of time.

In other words, there is a suggestion here, that there is a two-fold character of the fourth kingdom. That is, Rome follows Greece, the kingdom of Greece, but the suggestion of this is, because remember, the kingdom goes all the way until the “stone cut out without hands smites the image.” That has not taken place yet -- and the kingdom of God over the face of the earth. So from that fact then, we, I think, are able to realize that what we have with reference to the fourth kingdom, is a two-fold aspect to it; an earlier state of it, and a later state of it. And later on, in the remaining chapters this again is filled out in more detail.

There are many illustrations that a person might give of this. Probably you know that the first capital of the United States of America was not Washington. The first capital, as I remember, was New York, except it was not New York, it was New Amsterdam. And all of those Dutchmen that came over, people like Roosevelt, that’s a good old Dutch name, and others. New Amsterdam was the United States of America in the beginning.

Well, let's just imagine that some country attacked us in those days, and drove the Americans who had landed on this particular continent, drove them all the way out to what is now Kansas City, for example. Would we say that the kingdom is no longer the kingdom of the United States of America?

Well no, we wouldn't say that, any more than we would have said that, well, the Chinese discuss this at the present day. Formosa claims to be the kingdom of China, because their leaders were driven to the island of Formosa. The same thing with the free French, remember. In the Second World War, the free French were driven out by the Germans, but they still claimed to be the French empire or kingdom or country. And so, likewise, if those men were driven out to Kansas City, we'd still be the United States of America, because the things that make up a country, are things that would still be true of the country there. We would say that, it would be truly United States of America, because it had an unbroken connection with the past. It would consist of the people of the same stock and race, with the same constitution, the same type of government, the same culture, the same ideals, the same outlook of life. These are the things that make up a nation, so that would still be the United States of America, but they would have been driven out of their territory. In fact, if they were driven as far as Kansas City is now, they would have been outside of the United States in the early days altogether. So what we are leading up to here is that the two-fold stage of the Roman Empire is of a similar kind of thing.

Now, we have just a few moments, and, I think, I've come to a place where we probably should stop. There are some important features here that we need to deal with in the remainder of the exposition of this chapter, and what I would like to do, is to talk about these features. We'll talk about the important kingdom. We'll talk about its nature. We'll talk about the two legs of the image, and we'll talk, of course, about the meaning of the toes, and the kings, and the division into the eastern and western perhaps, aspects of the kingdom, and then the installation of the kingdom, when “the stone cut out without

hands strikes the image,” and things like that. But we’ll save that for next week, the Lord willing, and deal with it then.

Now, we have a moment or two, and I’d be happy to try to answer any question that someone might ask, if you ask it loud enough, so that I can hear it. Yes sir. The what? I’m sorry. Yes, it does appear that they were. From an earlier statement, it appears that they actually had begun the process of killing the wise men. There is a debate over that, but the statement earlier, I think, if you’ll read through it carefully again, you’ll see where it is. I’ve forgotten the exact verse it is, but the implication is that, they had begun to at least round them up, and go through the procedures necessary to kill them. ...

Well, the question is, “What kind of power and glory has God given to Nebuchadnezzar?” And I think it’s the power and glory of being this ruler over this universal empire. (Question) Well, this is a delegated kind of glory, obviously. As a matter of fact, the Apostle Paul says from on occasion said, “God was glorified in me,” and so it would be, no doubt, in that delegated sense that God has given them glory. One more question. Well, let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the prophecies of the word of God, and we thank Thee for the enlightenment that we have, and for the encouragement to study the prophecies, that we may understand the things of which we ourselves are a part. Enable us Lord to understand what Thou wouldst have us to understand about “The Course of World Empire.” Especially, Lord, we give Thee thanks for the assurance, as Daniel was told that the interpretation is sure and certain to be fulfilled. We give Thee thanks now.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.