

LESSON 11

Daniel 2:44-45

44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. 45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Verse 44 is one of the most important verses in the Bible, and certainly one of the most important linking passages between the Old and the New Testaments. In many ways the Old Testament slowly pulled back the curtain on the mystery of the gospel that was revealed in the New Testament. We see glimpses of the gospel and of the eternal kingdom all throughout the Old Testament — and perhaps nowhere in the Old Testament do we learn more about the church than we do here in verse

44. We will first complete our discussion of Chapter 2, and then we will circle back for an in depth look at the kingdom of verse 44.

Here in Daniel 2 we see a stone that destroys the image (while it is still a stone) and then becomes a great mountain that fills the whole earth. Yes, the meaning of the image was revealed to Daniel by God — but Daniel was already familiar with some of this imagery from his knowledge of the Scriptures.

Compare the king's dream with the exalted mountain we read about in Isaiah:

Isaiah 2:2-3 — *And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

So when was this mountain exalted? When was this eternal kingdom established? Let's look at what God tells us. Here in verse 44, we are told that the kingdom would be established in the days of "these kings."

The fifth kingdom (an eternal kingdom — not a fifth earthly kingdom) would be set up in the days of "these kings." Which kings? Either all of the kings of the vision (meaning that the kingdom would be set up before all of those kingdoms passed away) or, more likely, the kings of the fourth empire.

Any interpretation that does not have the fifth kingdom set up during this time frame is not a correct interpretation.

Many elaborate interpretations exist that try to have the fifth kingdom set up some time in the future. Generally, they have some sort of revived Roman empire that pops up some 2000 years after the first Roman empire. This is not what Daniel said!

Can we be more specific than just the days of those kings? Yes, Isaiah 2, which we just read and which uses the same imagery that we see in Daniel 2, is quoted by Jesus in Luke 24.

Luke 24:46-49 — *And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*

They were personally witnessing the fulfillment of Isaiah 2! And when would they be endued with the power from on high? Read Acts 2 — which describes the very day that eternal kingdom was established — the eternal kingdom of Isaiah 2 and the eternal kingdom of Daniel 2.

And what can we learn from the fact that it started out as a stone and then became a mountain that filled the earth (verse 35)? First, it was no less powerful when it was just a stone — that stone destroyed Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and mighty Rome! Second, we can learn the same thing Jesus would later say in Matthew 13.

Matthew 13:31-32 — *The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

Third, we have from this another indication of the timing of these events — they occurred when the church was in its infancy.

Is the rock Christ or is the rock a kingdom? Many commentators say that the rock is Christ, and there is a sense in which that is true. It is the same sense in which the head could represent both Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. Christ the king and the kingdom of Christ cannot be separated.

We see Jesus as a rock in Psalm 118.

Psalm 118:22 — *The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.*

That verse is quoted in Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10-11, Luke 20:17, and 1 Peter 2:7. We also see Jesus as a rock in Isaiah.

Isaiah 8:14 — *And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.*

Isaiah 28:16 — *Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.*

Those verses are quoted in Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:6, 8. We may even see a reference back to Daniel 2 in the description from Luke 20.

Luke 20:18 — *Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

But verse 44 is very clear on this point — the focus in this vision of the rock is on the kingdom. Verse 44 says that God shall set up a kingdom. The reason why many commentators say that the rock is Christ is because they don't want to admit that God established an eternal kingdom in the first century. (How can you have a king without a kingdom?) Verse 44 leaves no doubt — this rock is a fifth kingdom.

The first phrase in verse 44 is vital to understanding this vision because it provides a time frame. Without a time frame we get the “Nostradamus effect.” That is, any statement can be made to appear prophetic if we can choose the fulfillment from all of history. For example, Nostradamus says that a political leader and his brother will be killed. So we move that statement along the time line until it matches something and we conclude that Nostradamus was speaking about the Kennedy’s. But are the Kennedy’s the only match to that vague prediction. Of course not! A prophecy without a time frame is not worth much unless it is extremely detailed.

Matthew 24, for example, is often considered a difficult chapter, but when you consider the time frame in verse 34 the interpretation is simple.

The book of Revelation includes a time frame. It contains things that were to shortly come to pass after the time it was written. (This time frame is mentioned four times in the book!)

Verse 44 is our time frame regarding the fifth kingdom.

What is this fifth kingdom?

It was not of human origin. It began during the Roman empire. It outlasted and overthrew the Roman empire. It is an eternal kingdom from God. What else could it be? The fifth kingdom is the church.

What do we learn about the church from this vision?

The church is not a mistake or a fallback plan. It has been a part of God’s plan right from the start. Premillennialists teach that Christ came to earth the first time to set up an earthly kingdom but was unable to do so because the Jews rejected him. As a “Plan B” he decided to set up the church until he could return a second time to set up an earthly kingdom.

The premillennialists have a severe logical problem with their interpretation of Daniel. First, they say that Jesus wanted to create an earthly kingdom in the first century, but failed to do so. But they also say that Daniel talks about the delayed

kingdom. Now, how could it be true that the need for a delayed kingdom was unexpected, yet Daniel predicted it? Thus, they teach that the church is the result of a failed plan. JESUS CHRIST DID NOT FAIL IN ANYTHING HE DID. EVERYTHING WENT EXACTLY ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN. Is the church a mistake? Listen to Paul:

Ephesians 5:25-27 — *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

Acts 20:28 — *Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son.*

This fifth kingdom is the church of Jesus Christ, and it will demolish and outlast any human organization just as Daniel says it will. This includes every man-made organization that calls itself a church. And this brings us to another important point that we learn from Daniel about the church.

The church is not a divided kingdom. There is one and only one stone in this image. The kingdoms shatter into pieces, but the stone does not. There is one church and only one church. This is not a popular theme these days, but it is the truth. This message may not make us very popular, but we must continue to proclaim it. The church is unique and distinctive.

Ephesians 4:4-5 — *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism.*

1 Corinthians 10:17 — *Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*

Colossians 3:15 — *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.*

John 10:16 — *And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.*

If God had wanted two churches, he would have made one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles. Listen to how Ezekiel describes this fifth kingdom:

Ezekiel 37:22-27 — *and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.*

The church cannot be split! God has set up an eternal kingdom that cannot be divided. If someone tells you that the church has been split, don't believe them. There is one church and it cannot be divided.

The church is not of human origin. In verse 34, we see that this stone was cut out by no human hand. This stone is not from man. The church is not a product of the Restoration movement. Many of us are Christians because of the preachers who came out of the Restoration movement, but the church predates the Restoration movement by 1800 years. The church is not a denomination. Read what Paul had to say when denominations first started to form:

1 Corinthians 3:11 — *For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

The church is powerful and eternal. It completely demolishes and replaces its opposition.

Is this how we see the church? Here is how God sees the church:

- It is eternal.
- It is powerful.
- It is beautiful.
- It is not man-made.
- It is more important than any earthly kingdom.
- It is the focus of all human history.
- It is aggressive and active. It is not changed by history; it changes history.

Is that how we see the church?

Or do we see ourselves as just a footnote? As powerless to affect the world as it rushes by? As just another man-made religious group? As something that is swept away by the kingdoms of this world rather than the reverse?

One of the buildings I saw in Rome was St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican Square. It is the largest church building in the world, 614 feet long, 145 feet high in the aisle, and soaring to 435 feet inside Michelangelo's dome (which is itself 139 feet across). The basilica has enough interior space to accommodate 60,000 visitors. It is one of the most beautiful buildings in the world.

That is how men view the basilica with *physical* eyes — but how does God see it? How should we see it with our *spiritual* eyes? Shouldn't we view it as God does?

More importantly, how does God see us? How do we look when viewed by spiritual eyes?

The Bible answers that question for us. God sees his church for what it is — the indescribably beautiful eternal kingdom of Christ that will sweep away all of the

man-made kingdoms of this earth. As beautiful as St. Peter's cathedral is to those who visit it, the church of Christ is infinitely more beautiful.

If we want to be the people God wants us to be, our first step must be to see ourselves as God sees us. How can we be powerful if we ourselves as powerless? How can we be the beautiful city of God if we ourselves quite differently?

Yes, it may sometimes look as if human institutions and man-made kingdoms are in control — but they are not. God is in control, and God's kingdom will outlast and destroy every man-made organization that has ever been or ever will be — be it a man-made government or a man-made church.

One of the other things I saw in Rome was the ruined palace of Claudius, one of the first century Roman emperors we will meet later in the book of Daniel. Claudius likely thought his kingdom would be eternal, but it was not. Those first century dynasties are long gone, but the eternal kingdom of God remains.

I fear that we sometimes suffer from an inferiority complex — but how is that possible in light of verse 44?

Daniel 2:44 — *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

THAT'S US! DO WE BELIEVE IT?

Daniel 2:46-49

46 Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet

odours unto him. 47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret. 48 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

The end of Chapter 2 is a truly remarkable scene! One commentator has written:

The despot who but an hour before had ordered the execution of all his wise men was prostrating himself before this foreign captive from a third-rate subject nation! Even though he opposed the wisdom of the Chaldeans, this absurd monotheist [Daniel, as the Babylonians no doubt saw him] had somehow found the right answer.

The King is likely very relieved. He is the head of gold, and although trouble is coming from this stone and from the second kingdom, it is apparently a long way off. His reaction may be like that of Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:19) when he heard that, despite hardships to come to his descendants, his own reign would be characterized by peace and security.

Did Daniel approve of the king's worship of himself? No. How do I know? The Bible doesn't say one way or the other, but I know Daniel. After all he has said, do you really think that he could have approved of someone falling down to worship him? He had already said that God had interpreted the dream and not himself.

We must understand verse 46 in the light of verse 47, where Nebuchadnezzar praises the power behind Daniel. God is "God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of secrets." Daniel is honored because of what his God has done, not because of what he has done — and I think that must be how Daniel saw it. Otherwise Daniel would have reacted as Paul did at Lystra.

Was the king "converted" in verse 47. No, and we will soon see evidence of that. Nebuchadnezzar was saying the right things, but only because he had just seen a clear and undeniable demonstration of God's power. True worship is in spirit and in truth. The king spoke the truth, but the spirit was not there.

Did the king make Daniel great? No. God made Daniel great. Nebuchadnezzar just noticed it.

The king fulfilled the promise he made in 2:6 and loaded Daniel down with gifts and royal honors, in addition to making him governor of the capital city, and ruler over the wise men. (Don't you imagine they loved that!)

Did Daniel forget his friends? Not at all. How easy it would have been to forget about his prayer partners, but Daniel did not, as we see in verse 49. Their new positions will lead to the jealousy of native officials, which results in the conflicts in Chapter 3.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

There is a lot of confusion about the kingdom of God. *What* is it? *Where* is it? *When* is it? Some equate the kingdom with Heaven, and they tell us that we are not yet in the Kingdom. Others equate the kingdom with a Premillennial Kingdom on earth that will not appear until Christ returns.

Some tell us that God intended to establish his kingdom in the first century, but things didn't go quite as planned, and so God postponed the kingdom, and in its place we have the church.

Some even tell us that the Sermon on the Mount describes how we will eventually live in this yet future kingdom, and that the Sermon on the Mount really does not apply to us today, but it might be a good idea to start living that way now anyway. You see this view in books such as *Kingdom Living Here and Now*.

Some commentators say that the kingdom and the church are the same thing. Other commentators say that the kingdom and the church are different but overlap. Still other commentators say that the kingdom and the church are completely separate things.

Some say that Jesus is reigning today. Others say that Jesus has the right to reign now, but he is not exercising that right today.

There is a lot of confusion about the kingdom.

There is also a lot of confusion about the church.

When the New Testament was written, there was (as today) only one church, but the difference is that the one church in New Testament times was not (as today) surrounded by countless man-made religious organizations also calling themselves churches.

Men today approach churches as they would food in a cafeteria line — take what looks good, and if you don't like it, just take something else the next time you go through the line.

Ravi Zacharias (author of *The Real Face of Atheism*) tells the story of a man who was stranded all by himself on an island for 30 years. When he was finally discovered after all that time alone, his rescuers noticed that the man had built three huts on the small island. When asked what they were for, he said, "One hut is where I live. The second hut is where I go the church." But what about the third hut, they asked? What is the third hut for? "That hut," he said, "is where I used to go to church."

Whatever else we can learn from the Bible about the eternal kingdom of Daniel 2:44, one thing we know right from the start — there is only one eternal kingdom discussed in that verse. While we can move from kingdom to kingdom on this earth, we cannot move from one eternal kingdom to another eternal kingdom. Either we are in that one eternal kingdom or we are not. Either we have been delivered from the power of darkness and been translated into the kingdom of Christ — or we remain in the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13). (And for those that believe the kingdom has yet to be established, notice the verb tense that Paul used in Colossians 1:13!)

As members of the Lord's church, our job is to cut through this confusion.

We know that God is not the author of confusion. Neither should God's people be the source of any confusion.

If we leave people confused and wondering what we are saying, then we have not done what we need to do in proclaiming God's word. Our job is to bring clarity rather than confusion.

How do we bring clarity? By our focus on the Bible. That is the only way to bring clarity to religious confusion.

Our goal is to look at some clear facts about the kingdom of God lifted right out of God's word. Each fact is based on a key verse about the kingdom.

These are things all who believe God's word should be able to agree about. We can think of them as firmly planted tent pegs that we can use to assist us and guide us as we explore other issues about the kingdom. And they are good starting points if we want to teach someone else about God's kingdom.

Of course, we must be careful lifting verses out of the Bible. Bibliomancy describes the practice of opening the Bible and selecting a verse at random to use as a guide for your life. We need to be careful we don't study the Bible that way. Each verse has a context, and we need to make sure we understand that context as we interpret that verse.

The term "kingdom" is used in many different ways in the Bible.

- In Matthew 8:12, Jesus refers to faithless Jews as the children of the kingdom.
- In Matthew 12:26, Jesus tells us that Satan has a kingdom (Another eternal kingdom of sorts! But not one you want to be a part of!)
- In Matthew 12:28, Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God had already appeared.
- In Mark 9:1, Jesus said that the kingdom would appear in the first century.
- In Luke 21:31, we are told that the kingdom would come with the destruction of Jerusalem.
- In Revelation 11:15, we find that the kingdom would come with the judgment of Rome.

Are these statements contradictory? Of course not. They all are just speaking of either different kingdoms (such as Satan's kingdom) or different aspects and manifestations of the kingdom of God.

In one sense, the kingdom appeared when the king appeared. This is the sense that the word is used, for example, in Luke 17:21 — “for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” Jesus said that prior to the establishment of the church in Acts 2.

In another sense, the kingdom appeared when the king came in judgment against Jerusalem and against Rome. Those judgments were specific manifestations of the king coming in judgment.

In yet another sense, the kingdom will appear when the king comes again to claim his own at the final judgment.

In Matthew 6:10, in what we often call the Lord's Prayer, Jesus said that we should pray, “Thy Kingdom come.” I have heard people say that we should not pray that way today since the kingdom already came in Acts 2. But I think that is taking a much too narrow view of the kingdom. Yes, the kingdom came when the kingdom was established in Acts 2. But the Bible also tells us that the kingdom came when Jesus came in judgment in AD 70 — and the great final judgment of the world has not yet come. And Matthew 12:28 tells us that the kingdom came when the king appeared — and Hebrews 9:28 tells us that our great King will appear a second time. So, yes, we can continue to pray, “Thy Kingdom come!”

The Kingdom of God

Why should we study about the Kingdom of God?

A central theme of Jesus' teaching (and some say *the* central theme) was the kingdom of God. He spent much time talking about it, and many of his parables were directed toward it.

Matthew 6:33 — *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

The word “kingdom” appears 342 times in the KJV. Of those appearances, over a third (127) are in the gospel accounts. By comparison, the word “church” appears three times in the gospel accounts, and the word “grace” appears five times in the gospel accounts. Clearly, the kingdom was very important to Jesus. Shouldn’t it then be of the utmost importance to us?

Fact #1: The Kingdom of God is Universal (Psalm 103:19)

God is King over all because God is the creator of all.

The first reference to a kingdom in the Bible is an indirect reference and occurs in Genesis 1. I say indirect because it does not mention the kingdom directly but instead shows God giving man dominion over a part of his kingdom.

Genesis 1:26 — *Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.*

God must have dominion to give us dominion.

The first key point to understand about the kingdom is that God is king, and the entire universe is included within his kingdom. If we ever find ourselves saying that God is king over some things or some people and not king over others, then we must have taken a wrong turn somewhere. God is king over all creation, and all creation is subject to him.

David tells us that God is king over the whole earth.

Psalm 47:2 — *a great King over all the earth.*

Psalm 103:19 — *The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.*

Psalm 145:13 — *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.*

Psalm 29:10 — *The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood, And the LORD sits as King forever.*

That last verse is important because it tells us that God is still King even when the world is in a mess. Some people today argue that Jesus cannot be reigning as King because the world is in such a mess. But wasn't the world in a mess at the time of the flood? God reigned (and rained!) as king then. Isaiah 37:16 connects God's kingship with his having made heaven and earth.

These verses from the Psalms were written during the monarchy of Israel. That is, King David tells us that God is king. Why is that important? Because it tells us that God did not abdicate his kingship when he set up earthly kings over Israel. God reigned then and he reigns today as King over all the earth.

How God reigns may change, however. At one time, God reigned through King David. Indeed, the throne of David and the throne of Solomon are also called the throne of God. Today God reigns through the Messiah.

Even during the monarchy of Israel, God reigned over all the kingdoms of the earth. Did you ever wonder why Jonah went and preached to Nineveh? Nineveh was full of Assyrians, not Jews. God reigned over Assyria just as he reigned over Israel.

From this we have a very important truth about the kingdom of God — God is king over all without regard to whether they accept him as king. God rules the righteous, God rules the ungodly, and God rules the indifferent. God has a special relationship with the righteous, but he rules over all.

Transgressing the royal law of God does not mean that God is no longer your king. It just means that you are no longer his faithful subject.

In the same way today, Christ is king over His church — but he is not king just over the church. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He has all authority in Heaven and on earth. Jesus reigns over the entire universe and everything and everyone in it.

Colossians 1:16 — *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*

How could Jesus not be everyone's Lord and King? Jesus is both Lord of all and King of all. That is what it means when he said to be King of kings and Lord of lords.

1 Timothy 6:15 — *Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.*