

Robert Vannoy, Major Prophets, Lecture 24

Daniel 2 – Vision of the 4 Kingdoms Statue & Smashing Rock

3. Daniel 2 & 7

a. Death of Magicians/wisemen and Daniel Receives Revelation

Number three in your outline is Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. Daniel 2 is the first chapter in the book that contains a great many predictions. It contains an incident where king Nebuchadnezzar has a dream and he forgets it, and then he asks his wise men to interpret it for him and not only interpret it, but also tell him what the original dream was. Look at chapter 2, verse 10: these wise men, the Chaldeans, say, “The astrologers answered the king, ‘There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men.’ This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon.” So he makes that request and Daniel asks the king for some time and says that he will give the king the interpretation.

So, you read in verse 19, “During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said: ‘Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.’” Then the secret is revealed to Daniel in verses 31-35. He tells the king the dream. He says, “You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue--an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure 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 baked clay. While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.” So you have in verse 31-35 the dream.

b. Interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's Statue Dream

Then in chapter 2, verse 36-45 you have the interpretation: "This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron--for iron breaks and smashes everything--and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands--a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy." So there is the interpretation.

1. What 4 Kingdoms Are Described: 3 Views

Now, it's clear in this vision, or dream, and its interpretation you have four kingdoms. First the image of the head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs and feet, legs are iron, feet part iron and part clay. The question is: What do they depict? What are the political kingdoms that are symbolized here? Then, what is this stone that smashes the image and destroys it? Now, again there are three basic views for its interpretations. The question is: What kingdoms do the parts of the image refer to

and what is represented by the stone? There are three different answers to those questions.

a. Critical Approach: Climax is in the Time of Antiochus Epiphanes (ca. 165 BC) and the Large Stone is the Jewish Uprising

The first is that the climax of the vision—the large stone—is in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. This is the critical view. Advocates of that approach would say the climax is in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes about 165 B.C. This vision is depicting the succession of kingdoms after Nebuchadnezzar until you get to Antiochus Epiphanes. So just like chapter 8 leads up to Antiochus Epiphanes, and chapter 11 leads up to Antiochus Epiphanes, so it's the same in chapter 2.

The stone cut without hands is a Jewish uprising that will gain deliverance from Antiochus. So that brings you into an area of prophecy, where the Jews will destroy Antiochus and set up a kingdom that will fill the whole earth. Now critical scholars would say that's what's in the mind of the one who wrote the vision of the image in chapter 2. He's depicting history and predicting the overthrow of Antiochus and establishment of a kingdom that will fill the whole earth. Of course, we would know that whoever wrote this was mistaken because the Jewish uprising may have gotten rid of Antiochus, but it did not establish a kingdom that filled the whole earth. So there are things which did not go exactly as were expected.

Now look at page 42 in your citations. This is taken from N. W. Porteous. The first 3 paragraphs are from page 46 and the last one from page 47. Here is the way he develops this view. He says, "There is no doubt at all as we have seen about the identifications of the first kingdom it is the neo-Babylonian empire. The great majority of modern scholars likewise agree that the fourth kingdom is that of the Greeks. That this view is correct might be difficult to demonstrate on the basis of chapter 2 taken by itself, but when the parallel visions of chapter 7 and the visions in the concluding part of the book are taken into account, a case can be made which can convince anyone who is not committed to another view in spite of the internal evidence of the book itself."

Here is an interesting statement. “It is undoubtedly true, that when men look back from the vantage point of early Christianity, they saw a tremendous event in the founding of the church—the fulfillment of the promised triumphant of God’s kingdom as was foreseen by Daniel. But all this should not prevent us from looking fairly and squarely at what the book itself says.”

And this is from page 42 in the citation: “As we shall see, the evidence points unmistakably to a date which may be very closely determined within the reign of Antiochus Epihanes, but the completion of the book as we have it now makes it clear the climax of history was regarded as being imminent at that particular time. That the expectation was not literally fulfilled is a fact which has to be honestly faced.”

Moving to page 47, “If the fourth kingdom is Greece, it’s clear the third must be Persia, and then there seems no choice but to regard the second kingdom as the apocryphal Median Kingdom, the existence of which joins the Babylonian and Persian periods. There is absolutely no trace of an independent Median Kingdom in contemporary records. The Median Kingdom of actual history that has played its part in destroying Nineveh in 612 B.C. was incorporated into the kingdom of Persia in 550 by Cyrus when he defeated his enemies. It is only in the book of Daniel, and in writings dependent upon it, that we meet the mysterious and baffling Median Kingdom, which is seen as a historical blunder.”

On top of page 43. “We possess contemporary records, and they show there is no place at all [for a Median Kingdom] between the fall of the neo-Babylonian dynasty and the assumption of power by Cyrus of Persia.”

Moving on to page 49, “It signifies first that the fourth kingdom is to be divided after the death of Alexander the Great, and the empire did break up eventually. The two successor kingdoms which were of most consequence to the Jews was the Seleucid power to the north and the Ptolemaic to the south. By the Second Century, the former, that is the Seleucid, had clearly, by the victory of Antiochus the Third, proved its superiority over its Ptolemaic rival at the battle of Paneas in 198 B.C., so much so that Palestine had passed from the Ptolemaic kingdom to the Seleucid sphere of influence. We must,

therefore, conclude the iron represents the Selucid Kingdom and the clay the Ptolemaic. Secondly, however, the mixture of iron and clay symbolizes intermarriages between the two royal families for which references will have to be made later. See Chapter 11. These intermarriages had not led to stable friendships between the two families.”

Next paragraph on page 50, “In the next interpretation Daniel comes to this mysterious stone. For it is without human agency which strikes the image on the feet, the most vulnerable part, and reduces it to a heap of fragments so small and light that they are all blown away by the wind. This is said to have happened in the days of the kings by which it is meant the kings of the fourth kingdom, not the kings of all four kingdoms. It is a result of the figure employed in the dream; namely, that the image of the fourth kingdom represents the kings were all present contemporaneously and vanished at one and the same time. This should not be pressed. Chronological sequence clearly introduced an interpretation. The grotesque growth of this stone in the dream is explained as meaning the establishment of an eternal kingdom. Jeffery Well says it is standing forever in the universality of the kingdom in time, just as the mountain’s filling the earth represents this universality in space.

That is basically the critical approach to Daniel chapter 2. The succession, you see, includes the apocryphal Median Kingdom, which will give you the four kingdoms before we get to the Greek Kingdom, and then in the context of the Greek Kingdom the mixture of iron and clay is the intermarriage between the Seleucids and the Ptolemys.

b. First Advent of Christ, Christ is the Smashing Stone

The second view finds the climax in the First Advent of Christ. Advocates of this view would say the critical view is wrong. Antiochus comes in the third kingdom not in the fourth. Advocates of this view would say Antiochus does not appear in this chapter at all. He may be in chapter 8 or 11, but he has nothing to do with chapter 2. There is no mention of him in chapter 2. This position would be: the head of gold is the Babylonian Empire, the breasts and arms are the Medo-Persian; the belly and thighs are the Greek Empire; with Alexander and his successors and the legs and feet are the Roman Empire.

Then in the time of the Roman Empire, this stone cut without hands and smites the image appears, and that is Christ. By the birth, life and death and the resurrection of Christ, you have the decisive blow struck to the human empires. With his coming a new kingdom is established that covers the whole earth.

Look at page 45; E. J. Young is the representative here. Next to the last paragraph, bottom of page 45, is about chapter 7; the first paragraph is about chapter two.

The first paragraph is chapter 2. This is on page 79 of Young: “Most Christian expositors find a reference in Christ and the progress of his kingdom.” This seems to be correct to me. “The stone, as represented not being cut out of the mountain by hands, is in order to show it is not prepared by men but by God. The blow which is delivered strikes the metals in the reverse order in which they had been first described to show its effects would not reach forward but backward on the remnants of former earthly greatness. The kingdom of God will completely triumph, and the kingdom of men as was represented by the image will be completely destroyed.” So it will be fulfilled at the First Advent of Christ.

Now, I think you can see that there are some reasons for coming to that conclusion. You have a Babylonian Empire, then a Medo-Persian, then a Greek, and then a Roman. The Babylonian, Persian and Greek empires lasted a 100, 200 or 300 years, not enormous spans of time. Then you come to the Roman Empire, and in the early period of this empire you have the coming of Christ. It might seem that if you're going to say the great stone is the Second Advent of Christ you need to extend this Roman Empire in some way to not only the present, but also into the future. The Roman Empire is out of proportion with the others as far as time is concerned.

Some Questions

But let me just pose some questions here before going on to the third view. When Daniel says in chapter 2, verse 35, that stone smites the image and he says, “It became a great mountain” and “It filled the whole earth,” what does that mean? Does that mean the kingdom that is established here is to be found in the spiritual realm with the spread

of the gospel? Does it mean in the spread of the gospel through which the whole world eventually will become Christian? That would be a post-millennial view--a view we have not been talking much about. When we look at the prophecies of Isaiah, we looked at this post-millennial view that looks at the conditions of peace and justice as realized here on earth in a very literal sense but they will come about as the gospel is taken to the ends of earth. So with this view are you talking about the First Advent? Are you talking about a spiritual kind of kingdom? Or is it a kingdom that you have not seen yet but will be realized in the earthly, physical sense through the spread of the gospel? Or is this fulfillment to be seen in the connection with the Second Advent of Christ rather than the first? See, those are questions that can be asked.

c. Second Advent of Christ – Christ’s Second Coming is the Smashing Stone

I say we hold those questions for a moment and go on to the third view which would say the climax is at the Second Advent of Christ. The succession of empires would be the same as the previous view; that is, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek, but when we get to the legs and the feet we have an added distinction: We have the Roman Empire, but with two phases. You have the legs and the feet. There are two section, the legs of iron and the feet, part iron and part clay. The suggestion would be you have two phases between the legs and the feet, and that there is a gap between the two. Now, you see, if you look at that succession of empires, the Babylonian Empire lasts about 80 years, the Persian Empire about 200 years. Alexander’s is about 280 years; not his own rule, but the Hellenistic Kingdom lasted about to 50 B.C., so about 280 years. But then you come this question about the Roman Empire; do you extend it 2000 plus years? That’s a long kingdom. You can ask where it is today? So some have argued there is a gap that occurs in this fourth kingdom between the legs and the feet, and that is indicated by the iron of the legs and the iron and clay of the feet. Now, that might seem artificial, and I think for the present we could say that we'll just hold this and see if some of the other prophecies may shed some light on this interpretation.

Problems with a Gap

I think part of the problem with a gap is that many times in Daniel, maybe not in this chapter, but you have these four kingdoms, and there seems to be a parallelism. In chapter 8 there are four, and in chapter 7 there are four, and they are quite parallel with chapter 2. But then it could be a matter of the degree: If you're going to posit a gap here, in a sense you are speaking of a fifth kingdom, but not a fifth kingdom that has nothing to do with the one that proceeds it. In other words, a fifth that in some sense traces its origin back to the fourth. There is a certain unity as well as continuity. But I think that the problem is that the parallelism is so striking between chapters 7 and 2; and 7, instead of an image of four parts, you have four beasts, 4 different animals. And within the fourth you get this horn that comes up that seems like it is the Antichrist. So the question in 7 is, what are the phases in the fourth kingdom?

Not only the reformers, but there have been a lot of people who argued that Europe, the Catholic Church, Western ideas or laws, NATO, all those kinds of things have been drawn into this continuation of the Roman Empire, one way or another.

2. Objections to the Various Approaches

Let me go back over 2. of the outline, "Objections to the Various Approaches." That first viewpoint, the critical viewpoint, if you hold to that, you have got to get four kingdoms before Antiochus Epiphanes, and the only way to do that that is to create the Median Kingdom and put it in between the Babylonian and Persian. Historically, that is erroneous. So the result is if you hold that position, you hold an inaccurate resume of previous history. You must conclude the biblical text is mistaken. The character of divine revelation is destroyed.

But the second viewpoint is the First Advent of Christ. The Roman Empire only really became an empire in about 30 B.C. So the stone is referring to Christ at his First Coming and is placed in the early days of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire continued long after the death of Christ. You have the destruction of Jerusalem at the

hands of the Romans long after the death of Christ. The Roman Empire in the west came to an end in 476 A.D., so that's over four hundred years subsequent to the coming of Christ. In the east, it was really more influenced by Greek culture and thought and gradually the empire was reduced to the area around Constantinople, which was conquered by the Turks in 1453 A.D. So in the eastern part the remnants of the Roman Empire lasted until 1453.

A question might be asked with that second viewpoint: Where is the second phase of the fourth kingdom? Where is the distinction between the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay? How does that fit with the First Advent of Christ early on in the Roman Empire and in the smiting of the image?

The third viewpoint climaxes at the Second Advent. It seems however, like there is too much time involved, well over 2000 years, and the suggestion of the gap would seem artificial.

Comparison and Parallels with Daniel 7

So I would say at this point, let's make no decision on the conclusion for chapter two, but before doing that, let's look at chapter 7, which parallels chapter 2 and look at chapter 7 independently initially. Let's see what's clear in chapter 7, then compare it to chapter 2 to see what light it may throw on chapter 2, and what light in chapter 2 may throw back on chapter 7. I think you can do that, trying to be careful not to push passages into line with preconceived ideas or systems. In chapter 2, there are several problems with the various viewpoints, so leave an open mind to that then move on to chapter 7 and see what chapter 7 has to say. See if 7 throws any light back onto chapter 2.

Our time is up before we go to chapter 7. We will stop here and look at Daniel 7 next time.

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