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THE DREAM IS CERTAIN.AND THE INTERPRETATION THEREOF SURE'

The Gospel of the Kingdom: Studies from the Book of Daniel.

THE KINGDOM WHICH WILL STAND FOR EYER.

(Daniel 2:31-49)

WITHOUT any hesitation, or doubt as to the correctness of the revelation which had been made to him, Daniel related to the king his dream:

"You, O king, saw, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and bis arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou saw till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors ; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them ; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

It is no wonder that this dream made a wonderful impression upon the mind of Nebuchadnezzar. It was certainly a most striking sight. The image was "great," there was an outward splendor or glory that was "excellent," and its aspect was "terrible." And it "stood" there before him with every outward indication that it might continue to stand. But it was struck upon the feet (not upon the head) by a stone "which was not in hands" (margin), and suddenly it all went to utter destruction "together," and the wind carried away the dust. Not even a remnant was left to remind one of its former greatness, but the stone which did the smiting became greater than the image. It is not surprising that Nebuchadnezzar said, "My spirit was troubled to know the dream." What could be the meaning of a sight so remarkable? Daniel had informed the king that " He that reveals secrets makes known to thee what shall come to pass," and he had promised that he would " show the king the interpretation." His statement and his promise are now made good.

INTERPRETATION OF THE DREAM.

" This is the dream ; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold."

A crisis had come in the lived of both Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel. The former was to hear the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and the latter had the privilege of proclaiming it to him. If the preacher is faithful, and his message is received, great results will follow. And what is the message? The same "Gospel of the kingdom" which is to be "preached in all the world for a witness:" "Behold your God!" "They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power ; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endures throughout all generations."

Nebuchadnezzar was " a king of kings," that " all nations shall serve him," but there is a king greater than he, and a dominion of wider extent. "The Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King." "His kingdom rules over all." This is the truth which is to be made known to Nebuchadnezzar, and so Daniel testified to the king that it was the "God of heaven" who had given to him the "kingdom, power, strength, and glory" which he enjoyed, and who had bestowed upon him the greatest dominion held by any man since the original dominion was given to Adam. How great is the One who can *give such gifts* as these! "It is He that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." And Nebuchadnezzar must learn that even "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency" will pass away.

TEMPORARY KINGDOMS.

"And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth."

Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was not to stand for ever. There was to be" another," and then " another." And not only so, but the one which succeeded his was to be "inferior." "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!" The very metals which formed the different parts of the image told the story of future degeneracy. Gold, silver, brass, iron, clay: each one is "inferior" to the preceding one. "The Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." It is character, not outward splendor, which counts in His estimate of real worth." Righteousness exalts a nation."

THE FOURTH AND LAST EARTHLY WORLD UMPIRE.

"And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things; and as iron that breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas you saw the feet and toes, part of potter's clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided ; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas you saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men : but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay."

The meaning of the image is now made clear. It was to reveal an outline history of the kingdoms of the world, and the truth that they would all pass away. There were to be four universal kingdoms, no more and no less. The first was distinctly stated to be the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon ; the others are not mentioned by name, because it was the character of the kingdoms, and not their names, which was of importance. It was the life of the history, rather than the mere skeleton, to which the attention was to be directed. But we know from the other prophecies in this same book, and from the historical records, that the second kingdom was Medo-Persia, the third Grecia (Ch. 8:3-5, 20, 21), and the fourth Rome.

It is worthwhile to note in passing that the second and third kingdoms are merely mentioned so as to make the connection

between the first and the fourth, Babylon and Rome, and that more details are given concerning the fourth kingdom than the first. God was making known to the king, and by the record is making known to us, " what shall be in the *latter* days," and it is evident that the fourth and last of these earthly kingdoms holds the most important place in His view of earthly history. Those, therefore, who wish to learn the lessons which the Lord would teach in the world's history will accept His estimate of the most important period, and will give the most study to the fourth kingdom.

The character of this fourth kingdom is plainly set forth. It is "strong as iron," even as it is known in history as the " iron monarchy of Rome," but it uses its strength to " break in pieces and bruise." It is not the mere possession of power by an individual or by a nation, which determines its standing in God's sight, but it is the use made of that power. He who is the Almighty uses His power to help the needy, to restore the fallen, to save the lost. Satan, the adversary, uses his power to hurt, to tear down, to destroy.

A DIVIDED KINGDOM.

It is also declared of this fourth kingdom that it " shall be divided." This reveals the fact that it will not be an everlasting kingdom, for "every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation ; and every city or house divided against itself *shall not stand."* The effort to impart strength and stability to this kingdom by royal alliances, as "they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men," is no more successful than the effort to mix iron and clay. Strength is not found in cleaving to men. That union which is merely outward, and is dictated simply by self-interest, will not stand the strain of changed and trying circumstances. It is only that love which “endures all things,” love as the life, binding hearts together, which will bring permanent union and strength. This is the experience of the kingdom of God within, and the law of the kingdom is the life of love, and the love which is life. By this means divisions are either prevented or are healed, and those who are far off "are made nigh in the blood (the life) of Christ. For He is our peace who hath made both (or two) one."

But the interpretation is not completed yet, It has been shown that none of these four kingdoms will endure; what is to happen next?

"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, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it break 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."

The secret is now made known to Nebuchadnezzar. His false view of the course of history has been corrected. The kingdom of Babylon will not endure for ever. "The things which are seen are temporal." ''There is a God in heaven that reveals secrets," and He who is thus making Himself known to Nebuchadnezzar is the only King whose kingdom "shall stand for ever." And this kingdom is not set up by a gradual process of absorbing the fourth kingdom, for " it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms." The stone "smote the image upon his feet, that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces." "Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Ps. 2:6-9.

It is " all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" rather than the men themselves, against which "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven." Through the working of the power of the Gospel, God is able to set up His kingdom within man, separating this "ungodliness and unrighteousness " from him, so that when "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven" against them, the man is not destroyed. "He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life." But those who reject the Gospel of the kingdom reject "the law of the Spirit of life," and make themselves the objects of the wrath. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him."

WHERE WE ARELIVING.

We are living "in the days of these kings," in the divided state of the fourth kingdom ; and from the fulfilment of many signs and prophecies we know that the time is just at hand when all earthly kingdoms will pass away, and the God of heaven shall set up His kingdom in their place. This will be consummated "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe ... in that day. 2 Thess. ii. 7-10.

The preparation for that greatest event of the ages consists in receiving the Gospel of the kingdom of God, in recognizing and accepting in our lives the truth that God is " above all, and through all, and in all," and that " all flesh is grass . . . but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Being thus identified with " the eternal God," and becoming "heirs of God," "children of the kingdom," when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat," and when "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up," we "shall dwell with the everlasting fire," we "shall dwell with everlasting burnings," we "shall see the King in His beauty.”

O that all might listen to "the voice" that is now sounding throughout all the earth, " Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His Judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." By this message a people is to be gathered out from "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, "whose citizenship is in heaven," who are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," who "declare plainly that they seek a country," and who will be citizens of that kingdom which "shall stand for ever." "And the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

A ROYAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

"Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him. 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 could reveal this secret. 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. 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."

Although Daniel was a captive, and Nebuchadnezzar sat upon the throne, yet Nebuchadnezzar recognized Daniel as a greater man than he was. It was his acquaintance with God, that made him great. It was his acceptance of the principles of the kingdom of God, which had made him ruler over himself and over Babylon within, and now these kingly qualities were recognized. His ability to tell the dream and the interpretation, showed that he was chief " over all the wise men of Babylon," and the king simply gave to him the position which belonged to him. Faithfulness to principle, and loyalty to the King of heaven, made Daniel and his companions truly great. They did and taught the commandments of God, and so they were "called great in the kingdom of heaven;" therefore in order that the Gospel of true greatness might be preached to all the people, they were given the place which really belonged to them "over the affairs of the province," and "in the gate of the king." And as Babylon was then a universal kingdom, so the experiences of these Hebrew captives preached the Gospel of the kingdom "in all the world for a witness unto all nations." And in these last days the same devotion to principle is needed in order that the same work may be accomplished, and the setting up of the kingdom of God may be hastened.

"Dare to be a Daniel! dare to stand alone! Dare to have a purpose firm! dare to make it  
known."

W. W. PRESCOTT.