

A little rock in mighty hands

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[0 : 0 0] to the passage we read in Daniel chapter 2, reading at verse 44. Daniel 2, verse 44. 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. Especially these words, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people.

Remember some weeks ago we started to look at Daniel, and remember last week, we noticed that Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, was in a position where he was unable to sleep.

Remember the situation that he had a dream, and that dream disturbed him. He didn't even know the interpretation of a dream. He didn't even know who the dream itself was. And remember how we concluded that as far as Nebuchadnezzar was concerned, he wasn't able even to ask a question, never mind get the answer. And so there was the poor man in the middle of the night with a dream and no one to interpret it. This morning there's a note of surprise comes into this passage. In verse 28 we get that expression, the days to come. Now that expression all through the Bible is used consistently to speak about the latter days, or the days when Jesus Christ will come again. For example, we have it in Hebrews 1 verse 1, that in the last days God has spoken to us by his Son. And so whenever we have this phrase, the last days, or the latter days, or the days to come, it shows to us the point of time between when Jesus was born and when he will come again. So the interesting thing is that Daniel here is talking to us about things that are happening in 1987. Things that are happening in our own day and age. Now this is prophecy. Much of Daniel is prophecy, prophecy, and there's much in prophecy we can't be sure of. And so we've got to be careful in dealing with it. But certainly there's much we can't be sure of. But in this passage this morning, there is plenty that we can be absolutely sure is certain. So as we go through this section of the chapter, there will be one sustained point driven over and over again. That is that there are two kingdoms in this world. There are two competing opposing kingdoms. There is the kingdom of what I call the world, and the kingdom of God. There is the serpent, and there is the one who will bruise the the the the serpent itself. Bruise the head of the serpent. These two kingdoms flow throughout the history of mankind.

Now there are three things I want us to notice this morning. And first of all, I want to notice the truth about this mighty world. The first thing, the truth about this mighty world. Now when I talk about a world, what do we mean? We mean in biblical terms all opposing anti-Christian systems. And these things vary.

Daniel here speaks of political systems. Great kings who rose up, and great kings who oppose Jehovah. Great kings who oppose the God of Israel. The anti-Christian systems could be social, they could be sensual. But all these things are anti-Christian.

[3 : 4 1] And so anything which is a counter-attraction to the gospel, anything is called worldly. And that's what I mean by worldly this morning. And so as we look at this vision that Nebuchadnezzar had, we notice that he saw the might of this present world.

Notice two things. First of all, we notice this. It looks impressive. Look at verse 31. You look, and the Hebrew says, you looked and looked and looked and looked, O king. And there before you stood a large statue, an enormous dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. And so the picture here is Nebuchadnezzar looking at the wild.

He's looking at all these visions that God is sending. And as he's standing there, he's looking and it's impressive. Again, notice the Hebrew says, he looked, he was captivated by the appearance of a statue. He was captivated by the might and the grandeur.

Again, two things stand out. First of all, the size. This statue was enormous. That's stated twice in the verse. An enormous statue, an awesome statue, a large statue. And then we're told that the statue was awesome.

There it was, permanent glittering before him and it made him quake as he looked at this vast statue. Now the king had a right to respect the statue he saw. Because the statue, as I said, was very, very terrifying.

[5 : 13] What did he say? See, he saw a vision of four empires. The head of gold. And then he saw the other things, the legs of iron, the arms of silver, representing all the great empires of this world. And as we look at this statue, come away with this feeling that Nebuchadnezzar is seeing a great thing. And that's one point this morning. He had never emphasized the power of this world. Because as we look at the world, the world is attractive. As we look at all the counter claims to Christianity, they are all attractive. And so often we say and we hear from the prophet that the world has no attraction perhaps. But those of us who have history who know that it does have an attraction until God comes into our life. Until the spirit changes our minds. And so the world is not to be underestimated. And so we've got to realize the great system today.

Daniel Nebuchadnezzar saw the statue. And the statue was to him a fearful thing. And look at all the statues of the world today. There is the statue of the materialism, big and glittery. This statue here would make a great TV advert, wouldn't it? Imagine your products being advertised using this big statue with a head of gold, the rest of silver, the rest of bronze, the rest of clay. Imagine the figures and the impressiveness of this huge big statue. The picture of power, the picture of might, the epitome of what was great and the epitome of what was strong. And so it is. The strength of the world is massive. And I wonder this morning are we realizing that? The massive ties of social climbing. And we realize the pressures involved in us. You live in a middle class area. You even live in a working class area. You live anywhere you want.

And there's the social climbing. And there's all this pressure of being sucked into it. And then there's the other great systems of the world. And the most dangerous of all is the system of complacency. And that is when men and women are saying, don't think. The American dream, the people who say, they'll always be in England. It'll be okay in the end. No matter what the problems of this world are.

Don't think. Everything will be alright in the end. And so people are shouting out, don't think, don't think, don't think. And you imagine yourself, you imagine myself, how do we spend our average day? We get up in the morning perhaps. And there's household chores in the morning. And then in the afternoon, what do we do?

Do some of us switch on the telly? And there we are, we're watching. The kids come in, we make the dinner. And then in the evening, the telly's on again. We see the news. We see all the programs. And we're watching it and watching it and watching it. And then 12 o'clock comes and we switch it off after the final program. There we see the vastness of the secular society. It's screaming at us, don't think, don't think, watch TV, do something else, do anything except think. And then there's the other great statues of this modern world. The statues of atheism and their religion. The power of militant Islam going across the world. All these things are massive. And the great point from Nebuchadnezzar's statue is, do not under-emphasize the power and the attractiveness of this world. But, but, the world looks impressive. But, secondly, the world has feet of clay. Look at verse 33. Its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. Perhaps here I am this morning stating the obvious.

[9 : 28] The great world system. The hype that is produced by a materialistic, godless, secular society. And there we are, we're drinking it all in. We can't get enough of it. And then Nebuchadnezzar's dream comes vividly to us and says, its feet are made of clay. With all its strength and all its glittering nature and all its stability. And yet Daniel points out to this king, look king, the feet are nothing but clay.

And you know, the great thing for us this morning is it's not always easy to realize that the feet are made of clay. Here we are, we look at our non-Christian neighbors and they've got everything. And we envy them. And we're sometimes there and we're saying, here I am, I'm doing the best I can. I trust God, I love God. But these people don't care about God and they're prospering. And yet their world is built in a foundation which is to us enviable. Their lives are built in a foundation which is to us tremendous. It's not the fact that they have things but they don't have any problems. They never worry about sin. They never worry about a guilty conscience. They never worry about God's law. They never worry about what the Bible says about this, that and the other. And yet when we look at their lives, we see that their lives are built on feet of clay. Why is that? Because in their lives there's unforgiving sin. In their lives there is neglect of God. And when spiritual reality is brought in, and when their lives are measured against that, their lives are seem to be empty. And on the day of judgment, these lives are broken. They come into peace and it comes like chaff, broken into pieces.

And men ought to be challenged. Someone said that history teaches one thing, but history teaches nothing. And that to me is a great expression. Henry Ford also said history is bunk. In other words, it's irrelevant. History teaches one thing, but history teaches nothing. What is Nebuchadnezzar's green scientists saying to us? Well, what does history teach? History teaches that a lifestyle built on non-Christian principles is not a firm foundation. History teaches that materialism does not bring happiness. History teaches that. But yet history teaches nothing. Why? Because we will not learn the lesson. Why is it that we who are an intelligent people, why is it we are still blinded to the fact that the world produces nothing. Man is blinded to make the same mistakes year after year after year.

This great statue. Remember the gold head represented Babylon. The rest represented Greece, ancient Rome. How many are they today? Remember that pathetic figure two weeks ago? Remember when Rudolf Hess was killed or he died rather depending on what interpretation you take. He died there in Germany.

Remember the pathetic scene of these 20 or 30 folks outside. These were the Nazis. And yet remember not so very long ago, perhaps 45 years ago in Germany, the streets thundered with the might of the jack-booted battalion. Nowadays there's hardly any of them. A vast empire crumbling away.

[13 : 24] And perhaps we can bring it to our level. What's taking us from Christ this morning? What is it that's keeping us from Christ? Will it last forever? Or will it be like Babylon, ancient Greece and ancient Rome? Powerful at one time. But yet under the analysis of time and under the finger of God, the Lord, it goes away and away and away and away. What is it that's keeping you from Christ this morning? Will it last forever?

Or is it rather like you taking sand in your fingers and it's running through and we're trying to keep it and keep it and keep it, but it's running off and running off and running? And at the end of the day, all we're left with is guilt and a feeling of unsatisfaction, satisfaction. You looked, O King, and there before you stood a large statue, an enormous dazzling statue, awesome in appearance.

Is that what's keeping you from the Savior this morning? A large statue and it's dazzling you. And you're like someone who is entranced by the hypnotic eyes of a snake.

You cannot keep our eyes off. You think it's great. But yet at the end of the day, it fades away because its feet are like clay. And so we've seen the truth about this mighty world. It looks good, but it is feet of clay.

Then secondly, we notice in this passage, the destiny of the kingdom of God. Because as Nebuchadnezzar was looking at this statue, we find that a little rock appears. And we find that that little rock struck the statue in verse 34.

[15 : 15] While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not with human hands. It struck the statue in its feet of iron and clay and smashed in. A little rock appears, not made by human hands. In other words, it was divine in origin.

Verse 44, our text says that it was the kingdom of heaven. So here we are this morning. We look around and we see in our congregation this morning, perhaps, I don't know, 90, 100 people.

We look around and we see in world terms a very small amount. But yet we find here that that's how the kingdom of God appears. It appears as a rock cut out. A little thing. Let's notice one or two things about this rock.

This rock shows us first of all the power of God. We notice first of all, or I keep saying first of all, we notice first of all that the rock represents the power of God. We see that this rock is the kingdom of heaven.

And even that very word kingdom shows the power of God. It's a strong word. That God has a sovereign kingdom. That God is the king, just as much a king as Babylonia, just as much a king as ancient Rome. Our God is a sovereign God.

[16 : 30] And this power is seen in this very prophecy. This passage was written in the 6th century before Christ. But here Daniel has no hesitation in saying that all these things will come to pass. What does that suggest to me?

Not simply that God could foresee the future, but that God also had the power to put the future into practice. No one can destroy God's flag. Remember these words in Acts chapter 17. He determined, it says, the time set for the nations and the exact places they should live.

And so Daniel is interpreting this dream. And he's seeing that these great kingdoms will come and these great kingdoms will go. Why is it Daniel never said, well this may not happen? He didn't say that because he knew that God was in control.

That the God who foresaw was the God who foreordained. The God who saw the future was also in the same breath. The God who made the future. And the God who steered the future along.

And so what's the application for us? The application for us is that God is in the throne. The application is that God sets up kings and God takes kings down.

[17 : 47] The application for us is that the future is in God's hands. And nothing that we can do can change that situation. That is why the Christian does not fear the bomb. That is why the Christian does not fear the future.

Certainly there are many horrible events. But ultimately the man exercising faith is the man who says it may be horrible, it may not be very pleasant. But I know that God is on the throne.

And so it is in our own future lives. God never, in the words of the old folk song, he never promised us a rose garden. He never promised us that it would be easy. But yet amidst all the difficulties, we have the same view that Daniel had. That he was the God of heaven. And that he was the one in control.

And so God still rules. The kingdom will eventually destroy the power of the world. And then I want to know the second one here. The future of the church. Again, look at our verse. Verse 44.

That kingdom will never be destroyed. Now when I talk about the church, I don't talk about the free church. I don't talk about the church of Scotland. I don't talk about the Baptist church. I talk about the church of Jesus Christ.

[19 : 08] The kingdom of God. I don't talk about the church of God. I don't talk about the church of God. I don't talk about the church of God. I don't talk about the church of God. But I do find the kingdom of God. And so look what happens in this vision. The small rock, he says, turns into, in verse 35, the rock that struck a statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. Isn't that tremendous?

That the kingdom of God goes on and on and on. And that ultimately that little rock becomes a huge mountain and fills the whole earth.

And many men have tried to stamp out the church. Many men have tried to martyr and kill people. Many men have tried to suppress the church. But what has happened? The blood of the martyrs has become the seed of the church. As the people try to destroy the church, the church goes on.

And so I wonder, do we have that positive image of the church? Instead of seeing decline and instead of seeing a church going down and down and down. And instead of having a small things mentality saying, oh, well, it will never be the way it was. It will never be the way it was a hundred years ago.

Instead of having that small little vision, let's have a vision that God gives us in the word of God. But the small rock becomes a huge mountain. And what does that suggest to us?

[20 : 34] It suggests that if we belong to the kingdom of God, we cannot fail. And I wonder this morning, where are we putting all our talents? Where are we putting all our resources in?

Are we putting them into something that will eventually fail? We talk these days about the stock exchange and how pathetic it is to see people putting money into a company.

And many men have put thousands, even millions into a company. And eventually the company falls and the folks are left taking away ten pence on the pound of what they put in.

That's what happens. People back something which will eventually fall away. And that's what Daniel is teaching here. The kingdom of heaven is not like that.

The little rock will become a huge mountain and it will fill the whole earth. Where are we putting our resources? Where are we putting our investment? Are we putting it in this world which will fall?

[21 : 38] Or are we putting it in the kingdom of God which will never, never fade away? And it will be awesome to be outside this kingdom. It will be fearful to be outside this kingdom in that day when the Lord comes again.

Then the third and final thing we notice in this passage is the experience of the Babylonian king. We notice that in verse 46. First of all, he worshipped God.

We find that Nebuchadnezzar worshipped Daniel. That's what it seems. But he's not actually worshipping Daniel. Because he's paying Daniel honour. In reality he's giving honour to God himself.

Daniel is God's representative. But we notice here that Nebuchadnezzar's change isn't really genuine. Because in the one hand, verse 46, he's bowing before God.

And in the next verse, in verse 47, he's saying, surely your God is the God of gods. He's still a polytheist. He still believes in many gods. He has not yet come to the point where he believes in God as the only God.

[22 : 45] I wonder, does that describe the position of many in our congregation? Perhaps many of us have even had a religious experience. But what happens when our experience goes?

What happens when our feeling goes? A superficial response to God. That's what happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. He fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honour.

And ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. Verse 47, surely your God is the God of gods. A superficial response of praise.

And in the next verse, a falling away. Now, I want people here to be searching. And I want people here to be searching whether their own faith is a genuine faith.

Whether their own experience is a genuine experience. Whether their own interpretation or whether their own salvation is genuine.

[23 : 48] What are the marks of having a genuine as opposed to an emotional experience? One of the marks are a sense of worry. If there is someone here, and as I've been speaking, they've been worrying.

Well, maybe my experience has been emotional. Maybe my experience is a one-off thing. And you're sitting even in that seat worrying. Well, that's a sign that your experience is genuine.

For your longing for something deep. Is it emotional? Is it the real thing? A sign of a real experience as it's continuing. Nebuchadnezzar, it was just a one-off thing.

And then in the next chapter, in fact, we find them making an image of gold. That's another mark. Another mark of a genuine experience is it wouldn't go away.

No matter how far we put it to the back of our minds, it just wouldn't go away. And sometimes we can manage to suppress it. We can manage to put it down for a few weeks, even a few months.

[24 : 53] And in some cases, a few years. But it comes back. It's always there. Coming to us and it wouldn't go away. It's another sign of a genuine experience of God.

Is it emotional? Is it genuine? And another factor is, does it lead for a thirst for truth? Do we want to know more? Do we want to talk about it?

You find here that Nebuchadnezzar's experience was merely emotional. But friends, this morning you may have had an emotional experience. Many here may have remembered at one time when the word of God spoke to them very vividly.

Speaking to them as it has never spoken to them before. And instead of writing it off as an emotional experience. Why do we not build on that?

Why do we not go on? Nebuchadnezzar had the starting point. He had a vision of the power of God. He had a vision of what God could do. But he wasn't able to carry it on.

[26 : 02] By God's grace, you can carry it on. By God's grace, you say to yourself, it's very difficult. But by God's power helping you, you can do it.

And there are many of us this morning and we're saying, how can I do it? How can I even turn up at the prayer meeting? How can I sit at the Lord's table? How can I witness?

Believe me, by God's grace and strength, you, with his help, can do it. He worshipped God. And then secondly, he elevated Daniel.

Now, there's a major lesson there. Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men.

There's a lesson here. Just the chapter, at the beginning of the chapter, these men were due, as it were, for the chop. That's what Nebuchadnezzar says. I'll cut you in pieces and pour down your house.

[27 : 07] And so these men, how did they react? They prayed. And they refused to compromise. And as a result, the Lord blessed them with greater responsibility.

Not only are they safe, but now they are influential. How does a church advance? Does a church advance by what I call expediency and pragmatism?

In other words, doing what people want them to do? Or does a church advance by sticking to the truth and being faithful to God? Well, look at Daniel and his friends.

Look at all these men, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They prayed and they were faithful. And the Lord gave them promotion. The Lord gave them a position of responsibility.

And how often have we seen people and they've compromised there. When the chance of a bit of glory comes in, we find that they're not as keen as they once were.

[28 : 09] In other words, they are transformers. Just as we told the kids, they're folks who are one thing one day and another thing another. Was Daniel a transformer?

Daniel was a man who was faithful to God. And the Lord was faithful to him. And so this morning, where do we end?

We end, I think, by weighing up values. This vision that Nebuchadnezzar had. A large statue of the world with its feet of clay.

Or the little rock of the kingdom of God. Which will eventually fill the whole earth.

Once again, whose choice this is? The choice. It's your choice. God cannot take the decisions for you.

[29 : 23] We are responsible. What's it going to be then? The statue or the rock? Heaven or hell?

Father, again we bow before thee and we would thank thee for thy word. A very difficult passage. And we pray that as we leave this place, That thou would indeed give us food for thought.

We know that many of us have been challenged over the last few weeks and months. And we ask, Lord, that thou would continue to challenge us. That we would search our own experience.

To see if what we have experienced is emotional or genuine. And Lord, we know that if we have that desire for it to be genuine. Then that is a mark.

That thou art working in us through thy spirit. We ask that thou would continue to bless us now. That thou would be our guide.

[30 : 29] That thou would be our helper. That thou would be our saviour. Amen. Let's sing now in Psalm number 2.

This is a psalm which speaks about the power of the world. Verse 1 says, Why rage the heathen and vain things? Why do the people mind? Kings of the earth do set themselves and princes are combined.

Who plot against the Lord and his anointed. Saying thus, Let us asunder, break their bands and cast their cords from us. And God's reaction is, Verse 3, Verse 4, He that in heaven sits shall laugh.

And there is nothing more awesome than the laugh of God on the people who are trying to oppose him. So we'll sing verses 1 to 6.

And then we'll sing verse 12. The tune is York singing 1 to 6. And then singing the last song which speaks about the saviour Jesus. Kiss ye the son, Lest in his ire ye perish from the way.

[31 : 32] So psalm 2, So psalm 2, 1 to 6, And then verse 12, To the tune York, Why rage the heathen. Standing to sing. Why rage the heathen has paid me, Why do toning o'er heathen with them.

Do her ■■■■ o'er heathen plays. And■ err heathen heart Sing us!

Let the birds of thunder Groß East Mount and gather Your drummers Give■ we lift our gifts Ghost, Lord, Call us, Ehaton, them all Master and Dianna Centium the And O world's eye on your will, I have been on your head.

His studies look so great and big day, but a part of his also life.