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Sermon Notes

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The Supernatural Rock: The Present and Coming Kingdom of God

Daniel 2:24-49

I. Review

A. The Rise and Fall of the World

1. One Empire After Another

An Empire begins, reaches its peak of glory, fades, dies, and another rises in its ashes

2. Human power causes terror & agony

Is God truly in control of world history? Or are we at the mercy of human tyrants?

B. Last week

1. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

2. Daniel's amazing revelation

3. The dream described

4. The dream interpreted

a. flow of world history

b. one empire after another

- "Head of Gold": Nebuchadnezzar himself: "You, O King, are the head of gold..."
- Chest/arms of silver: the Medes and Persians: Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon in 539, died ten years later... Darius the Mede raised empire to its highest level; kingdom supreme in Near & Middle East for about 200 years... never successfully dealt with Greeks on their border, however
- Torso/thighs of bronze: Greece; under incredible military exploits of Alexander the Great, conquered realm extending from the border of Yugoslavia to the Indus Valley in India, a distance of over 3000 miles... BUT Alexander died at 32, in the height of his power, and his kingdom divided amongst his four generals

- Legs of iron: Rome; the most powerful and durable empire of the ancient world
- Feet and toes partly of iron and partly of clay: the base of the statue, the focus of our study today... is this the "final phase of the Roman empire" or something else?

c. the stone cut out

- The Kingdom of God: supernatural kingdom destroys all the others, but will never be destroyed

C. Today's questions:

1. What is the meaning of the feet and toes of clay?
2. What does this passage teach us about the Kingdom of God?

II. The Nature of the Kingdom of God

III. The Growth of the Kingdom of God

IV. The Timing of the Kingdom of God

V. End-Times Details and Millennial Questions

II. The Nature of the Kingdom of God

[BY CONTRAST!!]

A. Origin: Human vs. Divine

1. The form of the statue: a human being
 - a. earthly empires all patterned after human mind, lusts, glory
 - b. human empires: human imagination, ambition, ingenuity, and military power

Nebuchadnezzar's father was Nabopolassar: suddenly ambition filled his heart; he rose to conquer all of the former Assyrian empire... the empire originated in his ambitions, willpower and intellect

So it was with Cyrus the Great of Persia, with Alexander the Great of Macedonia, and with the Roman Senate and Caesars

c. these empires are human top to bottom... all their glory is a human glory

The ORIGIN is human

2. The Stone has supernatural origin

vs. 34 *“While you were watching, a rock was cut out but not by human hands.”*

- a. the missile comes from heaven... no human origin
- b. ref. Virgin birth of Christ
- c. ref. Also “Kingdom of Heaven” origin: the mind, plan, purposes of God Himself

The ORIGIN is divine... no human thought of it, no human brought it about

John 18:36 *Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."*

Illus. SINCE CONSTANTINE had a vision at Milvian Bridge in 312, the Church & State were wedded in the West and Christianity frequently sought to advance itself by the sword... but this is NOT the way Christ's Kingdom advances now... but rather, by peaceful proclamation & example of Gospel

B. Essence: Earthly vs. Heavenly

1. Human empires made of human essence

- a. each phase of the statue was dug from the earth itself

Each phase of the statue made from something dug by human hands out of the earth... gold, silver, bronze, and iron all came from mines

Job 28:1-2 *"There is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined. ² Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore."*

- b. material for the city itself came from the earth

Note also: each brick for the Tower of Babel made from clay baked through

- c. human beings themselves are earthy... eating foodstuffs taken from the earth
- d. “feet of clay” show that essential weakness comes from their humanness

Illus. “Feet of clay” a saying for fatal weakness; the fatal weakness of human empires is that they are human, therefore sinful and mortal

Genesis 2:7 *the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

1 Corinthians 15:47 [NASB] *“The first man is from the earth, earthy...”*

Genesis 3:19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

2. Kingdom of God made of supernatural essence
 - a. God does not build His Kingdom by earthly means or with earthly materials
 - i) more money does not mean more Kingdom
 - ii) earthly power does not guarantee advance of Kingdom
 - b. God builds His Kingdom with supernatural means and materials
 - c. therefore earthly must be transformed to be heavenly

1 Corinthians 15:50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

C. Duration: Temporary vs. Eternal

1. Human empires are temporary
 - a. each empire has a first day and a last day
 - b. because they are human, their mighty leaders eventually sink back into the dust
 - c. each empire was superseded by another human empire
 - d. someday, America itself will sink back into the dust... all its wealth given to another
2. God's Kingdom is eternal

vs. 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."

Daniel 6:26 "For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end."

The same is ascribed to the Messiah, the Son of David, Jesus Christ

Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace there will be

no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

Luke 1:30-33 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

The Kingdom of Christ has already begun and it will never end. No power on earth can conquer it, including death itself... Jesus is the eternal King and His Kingdom is an eternal Kingdom!

D. Power: Vulnerable vs. Unconquerable

1. Each human empire has limited power and is vulnerable

a. vulnerable to the ravages of a superior army

The Medo-Persian empire could not withstand Alexander's brilliant new tactics... his fluid movements on the battlefield crushed their armies every time; Greece could not withstand the power and discipline of the Roman legions

b. vulnerable to the ravages of time, internal decadence

Rome was conquered by her own decadence and immorality as much as by superior forces

c. vulnerable to the law of succession: who will be next... wise man or fool??

Ecclesiastes 2:17-19 So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. ¹⁸ I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. ¹⁹ And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless.

All human empires are vulnerable because they all lack power... power over others, power over themselves, power over time and death

Not so, Christ's Kingdom!!

2. God's Kingdom: Unconquerable

vs. 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."*

Illus. Earthly kingdoms are nothing compared to the Kingdom of God... all their glory is as nothing

John Wesley: "I was in the robe-chamber, adjoining to the House of Lords, when the King put on his robes. His brow was much furrowed with age, and quite clouded with care. And is this all the world can give even to a King? All the grandeur it can afford? A blanket or ermine around his shoulders, so heavy and cumbersome he can scarce move under it! A huge heap of borrowed hair, with a few plates of gold and glittering stones upon his head! Alas, what a bauble is human greatness! And even this will not endure.

III. The Triumph of the Kingdom of God

A. Instantaneous Victory

1. Immediate smashing
2. All rival kingdoms destroyed
3. Wind blew the remnants away

B. The Rock Becomes a Mountain

vs. 35 *But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.*

1. What started small ended up filling the whole earth
2. This may be instantaneous or it may be gradual
 - a. if rock's appearance is second coming of Christ, rock must grow immediately
 - b. if rock's appearance is first coming of Christ, rock can grow gradually
3. Either way, the image is one of transformation

C. Final Unrivaled Dominance

1. After the wind has swept away the other kingdoms without a trace, only rock is left
2. Total unrivaled rule of the Kingdom

IV. The Timing of the Kingdom of God

A. Two timing clues:

1. Where it struck the statue

vs. 34 *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.*

- a. chronology laid out head to leg... why not also feet?
- b. After Rome's iron comes mingled clay + iron
- c. some commentators: "revived Roman empire"

2. Clear statement by Daniel

vs. 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.*

- a. "the times of those kings" = the kings of the toes or of the whole statue?
- b. answer: "It will crush all those kingdoms..."
- c. "those kings" = kings of gold, silver, bronze, iron kingdoms
- d. this is the "times of the Gentiles"... in that era, the Kingdom will come

B. Key to everything: what is the Rock??

1. The Rock = Kingdom of heaven

vs. 44-45 *"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. ⁴⁵ 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.*

2. Kingdom of heaven extensively covered in New Testament

Key question: does the Rock represent Christ's first coming or His second coming?? Or could it be both??

Does the Kingdom represent only the spiritual kingdom (i.e. the Church), only the earthly reign of Christ (i.e. the "millennial kingdom"), or could it be both the Church and the eternal kingdom set up by Christ at His second coming?

V. The Kingdom of Heaven: A Summary of the Issues

A. Lessons on the Kingdom of Heaven

- The Kingdom of God made its appearance when Christ came the first time:

Matthew 12:28 But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

- People can enter the Kingdom of heaven NOW... so the Kingdom is not merely future

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 21:31 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you."

- BUT the Kingdom of God awaits a yet future fulfillment when Christ rules openly on earth:

Matthew 6:10 "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

- Christ is ruling over the earth NOW for the benefit of His advancing Kingdom

Acts 2:32-35 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. ³³

Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand ³⁵ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." "

Ephesians 1:20-22 he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church

1 Corinthians 15:24-26 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For he "has put everything under his feet."

- The Kingdom of God advances forcefully through the world, growing larger and larger all the time

Matthew 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

Matthew 13:31-33 He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

³³ He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."

- Kings and kingdoms are frustrated and defeated if they try to stop the advance:

Psalm 2:1-6 Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. ³ "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." ⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. ⁵ Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, ⁶ "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."

Psalm 2:10-12 Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry

Christ's destruction of His enemies has been somewhat hidden up 'till now... at the second coming, He will finish that destruction openly

- At the second coming of Christ, the final form of human governments will be assembled and smashed forever

Rev. 19:19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.

Revelation 19:11-20 [Christ returns on a white horse with the armies of heaven and crushes a coalition of all the kings of the earth and their armies which had been assembled to make war against Him]

The coalition against Christ will be of ten kings, led by one king, the Antichrist

Revelation 17:12-14 "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³

They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

Daniel 7 *"After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast--terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.*

"He gave me this explanation: `The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. ²⁴ The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. ²⁵ He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.

²⁶ *" `But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. ²⁷ Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'*

The fourth beast in history is the Roman empire... The ten horns, however, find no parallel in Roman history, since they coexist and are destroyed simultaneously by heaven... leading many to believe there will be some kind of revival of the Roman empire right before the second coming of Christ

This, they argue, is the meaning of the feet of clay, and the toes in the image... there are ten toes on most human feet, so the ten toes probably correspond to the ten horns of Daniel 7 & Revelation 17.

This final coalition, what some call the "revived Roman empire" is weaker than the original Roman empire, a mingling of many peoples which do not perfectly adhere to one another. Putting passages together, this final human government will last only 3 and ½ years... very weak compared to that of Rome

- At that point Christ's Kingdom will come and God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven

Revelation 11:15 *"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."*

The “amillennial” view says the rock’s smashing appearance is simply the first coming of Christ during the Roman empire... that the feet is merely the “human frailty” of all the empires, and that’s why the whole statue is destroyed at once; it points out accurately that the kingdom set up CAN’T be a “millennial” (i.e. thousand-year) kingdom, since the Scripture clearly says it will last forever and ever

BUT the “amillennial” view neglects to explain how the coming of Christ destroyed all human governments and replaced them with the open political rule of Christ... it plays fast and loose with the fate of the Roman empire which was in its absolute hey-day when Christ was born and continued powerfully for another four centuries or more

The “premillennial” view says the rock’s smashing appearance can only be the SECOND COMING of Christ, for that alone explains the details about the iron legs and the iron and clay feet and toes... it also synthesizes well with the vision of the fourth beast in Daniel 7 and the beast of Revelation 17; it very well explains how the Kingdom of Christ destroys finally the political power of the world’s empires and replaces them with the open rule of Christ on earth

BUT the “premillennial” view totally ignores the impact of the FIRST COMING of Christ on world history, and the fact that the Kingdom was in fact established at that time; furthermore, that the advance of Christ’s kingdom of the last 2000 years has had a powerful impact on secular political history; furthermore, it neglects the clear statements that Christ is presently sitting at God’s right hand while all His enemies are being made a footstool for His feet

I propose that the rock’s smashing appearance includes BOTH the first and the Second comings of Christ, and say that what Christ began secretly and in a hidden way in His first coming He will openly complete in His second coming

ALL OF HISTORY IS THUS INCLUDED IN THIS VISION!!!

VI. Applications

A. Human Kingdoms Exhaust Themselves for Nothing

Habakkuk 2:13-14 Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing? ¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

- Don’t fear the power of human governments
- Don’t tremble at the rise of a militant Islamic state, or the future of the Oriental powers... China, Russia, Japan
- Human empires are a drop in the bucket... they rise for a moment and vanish

B. All Human Glory is as Nothing

- Don't be impressed by the might achievements of America... the skyscrapers of Chicago; the inventions of Silicon Valley; the fighter jets of McDonnell-Douglas; the wealth of Wall Street
- Don't be in awe of the mighty men and women of this world: the Presidents, Prime Ministers, Potentates will all die and wither away
- Don't yearn for a business as successful as Microsoft
- Don't lust for a body like Sylvester Stallone's

C. God's Kingdom is Everything

Realize that nothing in all human history matters except entering the Kingdom of God

All your accomplishments on earth will be meaningless if you do not enter Christ's Kingdom

Matthew 16:26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

What would Napoleon have traded on Judgment Day for his soul? Would Caesar Augustus have exchanged the power and grandeur of the Romans Empire for one day in heaven? Would Alexander the Great have lamented not that there were no more worlds to conquer but that he had lost his soul?

And what about you? Do you spend your time, energy, money building worldly things that will not survive Judgment day?

D. Peter's One-Verse Application

2 Peter 3:11-12 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

- "Live holy and godly lives"
- "Look forward to the Day of God"
- "Speed its coming"