

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Daniel's Vision

Daniel 2, 7

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It may be well here to notice that the book of Daniel is divisible from its nature into two nearly equal parts. The first six chapters may be regarded as the first volume, the last six as the second. This is not at all an arbitrary division. It is one founded on the contents of the book. For the early chapters consist of visions which the Gentile king saw, or facts of a moral kind that befell one or other of the monarchs of Babylon vindicating God's mind and sure judgment; whereas the last half of the book communicates visions which the prophet saw. Accordingly there is a marked difference between the two portions, even when they treat of the same subject matter. We see this clearly by comparing the seventh chapter with the second. They go over the same ground precisely, but in a different way. The earlier of the two gives the public history of the world as made known to the first man whom the God of heaven made monarch of all mankind, as well as of the lower creation (Dan. 2: 37, 38); in the later (Dan. 7) we have a presentation of it to a saint, and details in relation to the Lord and the saints at the end of the age.

Nebuchadnezzar was not able to enforce his sway universally — man never is. But as far as the sovereign gift of God was concerned, it was wheresoever the sons of men dwelt. Cyrus, the Persian, extended his sway somewhat more; Alexander of Macedon, a great deal farther still (v. 39). But it was the Romans who did more than any before them. This was the last empire of the four, to which God gave to conquer and rule the then known world, leaving outside of it races that were then uncivilized, our own included, but afterwards to become the most important peoples of modern times. The Britons up to the Christian era were rude and undisciplined. So were the Germans as wild and fierce as the Britons, and the Gauls little better, though successively more or less reduced by the Roman arms. You all perhaps know the famous Julius Caesar visited our country in the south; as others followed and tried to conquer the Caledonians; but the mountains protected those hardy warriors, and the Romans had no particular sway beyond the well-known limits that sever the Highlands from the Lowlands.

However that may have been, here we have God giving in the first part of the book a comprehensive view of the great imperial powers in the history of the world. There was first the vigorous and splendid empire of Babylon. Man had sought and contended for undisputed and supreme power; but it had never been seen before. Thus we see in scripture the haughty ambition of the Assyrian power; and, even after its fall in the destruction of Nineveh, the rising up of the Egyptian, till Nebuchadnezzar overthrew it at Carchemish. Babylon had been but a subject province of Assyria till the Chaldees gave new courage and strength against its suzerain. For they were among the active enemies that destroyed Nineveh, combining with their Median and Persian allies. Whatever the pretension, the Assyrians did not succeed in getting a universal empire. Egypt sought the same thing afterwards, but Nebuchadnezzar crushed any such aspiration. God had decided to exalt a hitherto inferior kingdom. Who on earth then would have thought of Babylon? Yet was it chosen of God to hold this new place of imperial power. It had under Merodach Baladan become independent no doubt, but it was soon put down again and made tributary to Assyria. Hitherto they appear to have been chiefly of Hamitic race; but some time before the Chaldees gave them a new impetus, coming down from the northern mountains, being of Japheth, from which source were the races that overspread Europe.

But whatever the providential course that wrought, the empire of the world depended on another and all-important turning point. Israel, Judah even, had proved utterly unworthy to be the leader of the kingdoms of the earth. They ought to have been a central witness as a people to all the surrounding kingdoms, a pattern of righteous government under the law of God that all the nations might take heed and see the blessing of having the Lord Jehovah for their God. All this, however, had completely and shamefully broken down before God allowed Babylon to be anything but a power aspiring to independence, but not yet succeeding even in this. When it rose for a little, it was friendly toward Judah, as we may learn from Isa. 39.

You remember how, after recovery from his sickness, Hezekiah the king displayed his treasures to the ambassadors from Babylon, and how the prophet was promptly sent to announce that all should be carried to Babylon without a remnant, and his own sons captives and eunuchs there. No such destiny had God allowed to the Assyrian, who on the contrary fell under an immense disaster, even the destruction of a mighty host of them, through the angel's intervention. A hundred and eighty-five thousand in their camp were left dead corpses in a single night. Do you ask how these facts were not acknowledged by the ancients? How could you expect a vainglorious and idolatrous king like Sennacherib to publish his own shame under the evident interposition of the living God?

These ancient despots were ready enough to blazon their successes on enduring pillars or other monuments of pride. Who ever heard of people disposed or ready to acknowledge their own defeats, especially when the defeat was of divine origin as in this instance? And if such be the might of Jehovah's angel, what of His hand? In fact, God then held things in the balance, until first Israel and then Judah proved altogether failing to present the picture of a righteous people here below. Had He continued to keep Judah after Manasseh and others, it would have been God supporting His own in the wickedness of the kings and the people. He cannot deny Himself. For those who know His nature and ways, it is impossible to conceive His doing otherwise than He did in their case; and so He warned them early. "Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3: 1, 2). Who finds anything like this in the Vedas or the Sutras, in the Zend-avesta or the Yih-king, the Koran or the like?

The spurious sacred books of men rather flatter and puff up their votaries, while they harden their hearts to destroy better men who refuse their impostures. God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men that hold the truth in unrighteousness. He will not sanction but punish those who couple His name with their own evil; and is it not most just? The Epistle to the Romans declares His grace to the ungodly, who, when they confess the name of the Lord, are brought into the richest spiritual blessing. But if they insult the God Who blesses them, what can be before them but righteous judgment? God is not mocked. So the gospel declares. But Israel is still kept as a people to be blessed of God. They are in a truly abnormal state, having been for many centuries without a king and without a prince, and without a sacrifice and without a pillar, and without an ephod and teraphim. What is there that remains to Judaism but dry and empty form? All they can do in Jerusalem is to wail. But this is not the spirit or language of those who have the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. These may and ought to confess their sins; but if they be not happy, there is something wrong with their faith or their state. They who believe the gospel have the deepest, highest, and simplest grounds for rejoicing in the Saviour. "Rejoice in the Lord always," said the prisoner from Rome; "again I will say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4: 4); as he said of himself, "Yea, and if I be poured forth upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all" (Phil. 2: 17).

Those that in faith of Christ read the New Testament, or the whole Bible (for one likes it as a

whole and not merely its latest part), cannot but glean from it very considerable good. But if they practice what is contrary to the word, the Holy Spirit of God is grieved and therefore makes them miserable in the sense of their unfaithfulness; for He witnesses against their faults till they judge themselves before God. But their regular state is of one of peace and joy in believing.

When the children of Israel not only fell into wickedness against God, but their wickedness became systematic and complete as apostates from His name — not merely the people and the priests, but also the prophets and the kings such as we see them at the end of Kings and Chronicles, God gave them up to one of the most idolatrous of the Gentile nations; and Nebuchadnezzar by His appointment became "the head of gold" (Dan. 2: 38). Undoubtedly Babylon was a great city from the earliest days, and "mad on her idols" (Jer. 50: 38) as time went on. You may be aware that there was no idolatry in the antediluvian world. All flesh on the earth had corrupted its way, and the earth was filled with violence; but there was as yet no setting up of false gods. When, however, the heavens darkened against them and the waters of the great deep swept them away from before God, after this it was that Satan induced men to worship the hosts of heaven and deprecate the avenging powers of death. They thought nothing so reasonable as to propitiate the heavens that they might ever shine favourably, and the waters that they might no more overwhelm them in their resistless flood. Therefore religion took the form of paying honour to the higher powers of nature as well as of satisfying those lower. All immorality followed, and even contrary to fallen nature itself.

But God called His people Israel to bear witness to Himself as the One living God; and when departed into idolatry, He handed them over as captives to the vilest of men, setting up Babylon as the first of the great world-powers. It did not matter that they pretended to honour Jehovah along with their false gods; indeed such an alliance made things worse in His sight. However solemn might be their zeal for His feasts, their tampering also with idols only heightened their guilt and His indignation. But the fact was undoubtedly, that they often showed themselves more zealous for the false gods than for the true God; as Christians now, when they take up bad doctrine are absorbed with the error, and seem to lose the very truth they once professed.

God then chose Babylon to be the vessel of supreme earthly power for the punishment of His guilty people. Its ruler was not only a king but a king of kings, an emperor in the fullest sense of the word. Such was Nebuchadnezzar. His thoughts, we are told, came upon his bed what should come to pass hereafter; and God was pleased to reveal the secrets of futurity. But this He did, so as to impress on the Gentiles that true intelligence is only with those that fear Himself. In vain had the king applied to the ordinary means of his empire in order to recall or understand the vision. He asked, as his wise men told him, what no king had ever asked before. By their confession none but He whose dwelling is not with flesh could give the answer. In his imperious style he demanded it on pain of death, and when his minister was about to put the cruel decree into execution, where did God raise up a witness? Among the captives of Judah. If power was vested in the Gentile who scourged a people more guiltily offensive to God, the light of God was vouchsafed to Daniel the captive. God prepared for others too a deliverer from the king's wrath out of the king's palace. Daniel was morally prepared, as we see him in Dan. 1 refusing the king's dainties, which were invariably offered to idols. He was willing to die rather than dishonour the true God, Who gave him favour with his guardians, so as to abide faithful. For "them that honour Me I will honour; and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 2: 30). The great principle here is that, if you are to have the secret of the Lord, you must look to Him and stand clear of the world, and especially of its religion which never is nor can be the truth. Do not expect to enjoy the holy light of God if for your ease or honour or safety you conform to what is of the world.

Accordingly Daniel was blessed remarkably. The king, though he had let slip the dream, was

conscious of something altogether extraordinary in it, and in the furious haste of his rage apparently overlooked Daniel. Nor was it till the last moment that he went in and desired of the king that time be allowed him. This given, he betakes himself with his three pious friends to prayer. And God heard. "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision" (Dan. 2: 19). How cheering and beautiful the dealings of God! As Daniel in faith took the initiative, though all four joined in prayer, God singled out Daniel. What happens thereon? Does he at once rush off to the king? He turns to God in thanksgiving. "Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven" (v. 19). As he had looked to Him alone, so the glory he renders to God only. "Art thou able," said the king, "to make known the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?" (Dan. 2: 26). "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days" (Dan. 2: 28), answered the lowly prophet. And he adds, "But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living" (Dan. 2: 30); yet was he the wisest then on the earth. But God was in all his thoughts, to Whom be glory. It was a wonderful revelation for king Nebuchadnezzar; but think, my friends, what we have given of God in the whole Bible.

If you say that we have not Daniel, do not forget that we have a better than Daniel. A wiser and better than Daniel? Yes, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, that other Paraclete, the gift of Christ's redemption. The Holy Spirit had indeed wrought always, notably in Daniel and his companions; but there is now more, the personal presence of the Spirit of God to dwell with and in the Christian for ever, and in the assembly or church of God. See John 14: 16, 17, 26; John 15: 20; John 16: 7-14. He abides, among other privileges of the utmost value, enabling the believer to enjoy all the revelation of God in the measure of his faith by grace. Oh! I what a wonderful boon for the Christian and for the church of God. See that you sink not below your privileges, but enter into them by faith; for it rests not on your own opinion or the authority of other men. There is much blessing in the communion of saints; but God's teaching must be individual. "They shall be all taught of God" (John 6: 45).

Remember that the Lord lays down what has just been stated in His remarkable series of parables (Matt. 13). They represent the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and we are in it now. With the kingdom as here made known we have to do now on earth, while the Lord is exalted and hidden in heaven. Yet, though embracing so large a sphere, the Lord says in ver. 9, "Who hath ears to hear let him hear." In the Old Testament the call was to all Israel, to all the people; but now it is to each of us, to a Christian individually. Whatever comes, this responsibility in hearing and receiving the truth of God is inalienable; and woe to such as deny or weaken it. You will do well to lay it to heart.

Daniel then repeats and interprets the dream to Nebuchadnezzar: a gorgeous image with golden head, with breast and arms of silver, with body and thighs of brass, and with legs of iron, ending in feet of iron and clay, smitten by a little stone which reduced the whole to powder; after which the stone that smote the image became a great mountain which filled the whole earth.

There is also evident deterioration, as the power is distant from its source, and becomes characterized with more of man lower and lower. It has nothing to do with the extent of empire, which, on the contrary, became greater successively. But Nebuchadnezzar in his imperfection acts absolutely, as only One can perfectly to God's glory. In the Medo-Persian empire, wise men counsel much; as in the Greek soldiers of fortune. Rome goes down to the dregs, and is governed instead of governing, so that power from God is swamped by the people as its source.

Not a word of Christ's suffering for our sins, nor of the gospel going forth in consequence to every creature; not a word of Christ's sitting as the rejected but glorified Lamb on the Father's throne, and of our meanwhile suffering with Him while He there waits. It is Christ coming judicially in power and

glory, dealing with the fourth empire in its last divided state, as well as with all that remains of its predecessors. Only after this destruction does God's kingdom fill and rule all the earth.

When Daniel had the vision of these four powers as it is given in Dan. 7, they are presented to his eye as four ravenous beasts. The vision as dreamt by Nebuchadnezzar was comparatively external, as man's eye might see; but the same objects seen by the prophet were according to what a spiritual understanding could enter into. The reader may find an analogy in the parables referred to, first some before all in public, then others to the disciples within the house (Matt. 13).

In Dan. 7 the prophet sees the four powers emerge from the sea or ungoverned mass of peoples: first, a lion with eagle's wings, which ere long is humbled; secondly, a bear which raised up itself on one side and had a measured voracity; thirdly, a leopard with four wings, and eventually four heads, which none of the preceding had; lastly, a beast to which none in the realm of nature answered, beyond all dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly, with great iron teeth, devouring and destroying with contempt, diverse from all before, and at length with the peculiarity of ten horns, etc. And here, answering to the little stone of Dan. 2, we have the Son of man before the Ancient of days, receiving dominion, glory, and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him: an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. Here we have the internal view according to God's mind, with yet more added to the interpretation.

But it may be remarked in passing, that the intervening chapters are as valuable for the world-powers, as Dan. 1 we have seen to be for the moral state of Daniel. Dan. 3 shows that the first recorded act of Nebuchadnezzar was to enforce the most senseless idolatry, on the king's authority, as a means of binding together the peoples, nations, and languages; which only brought out fidelity at all cost on the part of the three Hebrew youths, the remnant, and the Gentile king's recognition of God their deliverer. Dan. 4 points to the Gentile power, after the seven times of a beast's heart, restored to praise the King of heaven. Dan. 5 is plainly the profaning Gentile judged in the destruction of Babylon; as Dan. 6 attests the Gentile that took the place of God (according to the law that passeth not) confessing the living God Who alone rescues from the power of the enemy, and His kingdom what shall not be destroyed and His dominion unto the end. It is in the then facts the prefiguration of Gentile power abased and of Jew saved at the end to God's glory and the triumph of His kingdom. For no prophecy of scripture is of private (of its own, its isolated) interpretation. Every one bears, all converge, on the grand object of God in the exaltation of the Anointed, at the close of man's busy restless day. The Holy Spirit in what is written never stops short of that conclusion, so worthy of God and His Son, so blessed for the universe and every creature in it, save those that have rebelled persistently against His will. No accomplishment in the past, even if true and important, exhausts the meaning or satisfies the divine end.

If ever man tried to govern the world of his day by his own will absolutely, it was "the head of gold"; and as he sinned in giving the glory not to the Most High but to himself, he was abased personally as no monarch or man was before or since. But mercy intervened in due time, and presented a hope "at the end of the days," which shall not make ashamed; when the nations shall be gladdened with His people and hope in Him Whom they together slew on the tree.

When the monarch took counsel with others, nobles or military chiefs, it was not really better. And when it was avowedly the people with or without an emperor, no tyranny so selfish, none so oppressive, nor so presumptuous against the true God. Never will the divine ideal be realized till He come again to reign, Whose right it is in the fullest way, divine and human, the Father of the age to come, the Prince of peace. All governments meanwhile are imperfect and provisional in His

providence, though every soul in Christianity is bound to be subject, as unto higher authorities of this world. The existing authorities, whatever the form, are ordained of God; and he that ranges himself against the authority is a resister of the appointment of God. Yet consisting of sinful men, not one of any sort but has failed and sinned. How blessed to know that He, Who is coming to be King over all the earth, here lived and died and rose and ascended, not only the Lord but the Servant of all, and the Servant of God in serving all others not in love only but as the propitiation for our sins.

For indeed there is one Man, and one Man only, Who never thought of any other object but doing or suffering the will of God. It was therefore and necessarily one course of ever deepening humiliation, though moral glory, till He reached a depth unfathomable save to Him. He it is Who, when He returns in power and glory, will take the whole world, as scripture fully shows. Meanwhile the Lord Jesus is very far from now governing the world. If He were, would He suffer Satan to be god and prince, as God's word declares he is, even since Christ took His seat on the Father's throne?

God's providential care does not fail of course, but what occupies Christ now is His loving ways with the church, and saving sinners to serve God and wait for Him from heaven. They are not of the world as He is not, and He is coming to receive them to Himself in the Father's house. This is far better. No matter how effectual and glorious the government of the world by-and-by when Christ reigns, it is not at all comparable to union with Him even now, and suffering with Him here below, and enjoying His love as Bridegroom for ever in heaven. This is what Christ is now carrying on in God's children, that, when He shall be manifested, we may be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

But returning to the first vision, we note that it was a great image, whose brightness was excellent, and the form thereof terrible. So it was seen by Nebuchadnezzar; whereas Daniel was given to behold the self-same first empire as a lion with eagle's wings. This power was not to endure long, because its continuance was measured, as Jeremiah (ch. 25: 11, 12) had already predicted, by the captivity of Judah — in round numbers about seventy years. It was a power of peculiar majesty and splendour, Nebuchadnezzar being called "the head of gold," as it appears to be in part, if not mainly, from receiving his power as king of kings direct from God in a way that none else of these empires did afterwards, and allowing no human element to enfeeble his acting as so constituted. It was not won by conquest merely; it was God's immediate gift in his case, instead of being derived successively from others put down. Thus Cyrus was in many respects a greater man, and employed to do God's will on behalf of the Jewish remnant typically. Even Nebuchadnezzar was not a ruler to be despised, being (I suppose) the greatest city-builder the world ever saw. There are to be seen countless bricks with his name on them still, although thousands of years have passed since they were made. There they remain, strong and recognizable as ever almost, circumstances being no doubt peculiarly favourable for their preservation. Nebuchadnezzar also had much energy and practical wisdom in many other respects, as in seeing to the water-ways of the great rivers, and the irrigation of his fruitful plains, in order that the country might flourish and the people be prosperous as it never was before.

Under his reign Babylon became by far the most powerful and celebrated city of that age on the globe. The country was watered by two great rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris, rivers having their rise in Eden, where was the original Paradise of man; a remarkable proof that the deluge which left neither man nor beast on the earth did not blot out so much as some think. And as this great king actively provided work for the people, so also did he promote immense foreign trade. We read of "the cry of the Chaldees in their ships," and their ports then became a source of enormous wealth and led to enterprise without end. Yet when the allotted hour struck, the golden city was razed, and, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, became in due time as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. Nor was there in all history so tragic a scene, if so righteous a fate, as that which is

portrayed in Daniel's account of her last night as an imperial power.

Then followed the second empire of the Medes and Persians, the captors of Babylon, set out by the image's breast and arms of silver, and by the bear that raised itself on one side: a kingdom of larger extent, but inferior in vigour and splendour, which lasted some 200 years before it fell before Alexander the Great, the founder of "another third kingdom of brass, which should bear rule over all the earth." Who could have conceived of an empire so much wider than its predecessors, from the vain and contentious Greeks, led by the despised race of Macedonia, and their boy king? Up to that time what did they present but a cluster of jealous factious states, if one except Sparta, struggling for leadership, whatever their skill in arts or letters? The attacks of Darius and Xerxes at length united them for a while in patriotism with a humanly brilliant result. Only God could have led the king to dream, and the prophet to interpret, the Greek or Macedonian kingdom. Yet there is the living picture, the details of which cover the beginning of Dan. 8.

There is more particularity as we descend the stream of time; so false is the maxim of the rationalists who leave out God, or count Him such a one as themselves. How plainly does He put contempt on their assumption that a prophet anticipated no more than the imminent future! They are given as God pleased, Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greeks, and Romans. The first or Babylonian no doubt was there before men; but which of the rest could have been foreseen even plausibly by a single soul on earth? Least of all would Nebuchadnezzar have conceived changes so beyond calculation.

We have seen the extreme improbability of a world-wide empire from Greece or its rude neighbor Macedon. What is the fact as to the Rome of Nebuchadnezzar's day? The philosophers count its annals as for the most part uncertain if not fabulous. Yet we need not doubt the city was then ruled by such petty kings as Italian towns could boast of old, kinglings indeed. Long before, we see a sort of analogy in the numerous kings whom the sons of Israel smote under Joshua (ch. 12), more than thirty. The kings were succeeded by consuls; dictators too ruled occasionally; decemvirs; and consular tribunes; till the chaotic condition morally and politically gave opportunity for an emperor, though still employing republican forms. Rome yet for hundreds of years had been engaged in constant struggling with its rival neighbours. Sabines, Volscians, Veientes, and the like. Finally they had their city taken and burnt by the Gauls; they further had to fight for their very existence with another competitor. And what think you, was the power that rose up to dispute in a life and death conflict with Rome? It was Carthage, an active mercantile city, exceedingly ambitious and aspiring, planted and colonized by the accursed race of Canaan.

From early days God had pronounced against that son of guilty Ham, who had indeed many sons; so that we may admire the mercy that all were not involved in similar ruin. It was righteous that God should mark His displeasure. Is there not a moral necessity to deal with men guilty of signal wickedness? Even an infidel husband would not condone his wife's dishonour, or his son's stealing the family's money. If God must not punish iniquity, to let man off, what is it but desiring God to be less holy and righteous than the most worthless of mankind? If justice is not only free but bound to render according to the due desert of human deeds, is God alone to be debarred from that prerogative? In the three Carthaginian or (as they are called) Punic wars, the two cities fought for supremacy, and so for life. Rome fought in Sicily, in Spain, and at length, after desperate defeats on her own soil, in Africa. In the last of the three Rome's stern determination was to destroy Carthage. The senate felt that thence emanated an enemy that would entirely frustrate all their hope of progress and conquest; and so the cry that Carthage must be blotted out arose accordingly. These wars stretched from long before Christ; but they were still longer from the time of Daniel who died an aged man more than five centuries before our Lord's birth. Yet even then all that so deeply concerned the last of the empires was made known

and written down by God's inspiration. Here we have, from two separate aspects, a complete sketch-map of the world-powers that were to govern from first to last until the Lord appears in power and glory. Even so it is given clearly in the brief space of a few paragraphs.

Does any one object that there are few particulars? If time permitted and such were my present object, it would be easy to prove that they are many more than hasty men imagine. And is it observable that, just when we are brought down to the fourth empire, then these details are supplied in most abundance. What a rebuke to rationalism! And why was it so? Because the Roman was the empire in which Christ was to be born and be cut off; as that empire is to rise up again by Satan's power when He will shine forth in judgment from heaven. The Roman empire was to be expressly different from all its predecessors. The Babylonian lost its imperial power; so did the Medo-Persian; as well as the Macedonian or Grecian, never to rise again. Yet they were all to exist, and so they do still; but their dominion was to be taken away, as it is laid down in Dan. 7: 12. There was to be no revival of their imperial character, though a prolonging in life was given them, when their dominion was lost. Rome and Rome alone is the empire which must rise again, as we learn in Rev. 13 and more awfully than of old, quite falling in with what Daniel predicts of its end in chs. 2 and 7.

A great many Protestants think all this refers to the papacy. But the Pope essentially differs from a Roman emperor. The Popes have played a shameless imposture in Rome under the abased name of the Lord. Babylon is much more like their evil in pride and corruption and persecution than a Roman emperor. It was the Roman power that was responsible for the crucifixion of Christ under the apostasy of the Jew long before the first budding of the papacy. Pontius Pilate who condemned the Lord was the local expression of Rome in Judea. God as well as man always holds the governing power to be responsible for its public, deliberate, unrepudiated acts; as we see sometimes in international affairs. In the face of his conscience, of his conviction of Jewish unrighteousness, and of solemn warning, the governor condemned the Just; the Roman empire far from repudiating it accumulated its acts of enmity. This is the power whose head was wounded to death but healed to universal astonishment on earth; and it emerges not only from the sea but from the abyss, the historical fact being given of the little horn in Dan. 7 as the character is in Rev. 13, 17. It "was, is not, and shall be present."

Nothing so wonderful in all past history as that which is predicted in the Book of Revelation, as for instance this three- fold condition and its moral source at the end, as well as God's judgment of it: "the beast that was, is not (which we can now say still applies), and shall come forth out of the bottomless pit" (as Christ Who died and rose will be present from heaven). The first points to a condition of past existence, then to its non-existence (we know it was destroyed by the Goths and other wild races, chiefly the Teutonic tribes of that day), and lastly to its future re-existence. The moment of its revival surely hastens. Already a great step is taken toward the re-appearance of that empire. Italy has become a kingdom; and not only so but a great power is Italy now considered. I cannot doubt that it is destined to become still greater before the sure execution of God's judgment on the peculiar iniquity of the empire. Scripture cannot be broken; and we find that which has been said fully proved in Daniel and the Apocalypse. The outline was manifested clearly enough in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and yet more in the vision of Daniel. Then above all in the Revelation our attention is drawn to a principle of the greatest moment. Most is said throughout on the fourth or Roman empire. Thereon the Spirit of God dwells most, because of its collision with the Lord Jesus. That would have seemed most difficult, humanly speaking: to deal most fully with the most distant is not the manner of man, who would have naturally said as much as possible about Babylon; then, if at all, more hazily about Persia, and not a word could have been said of the two western empires.

Again, how could man prognosticate that only four world-powers were to rise? There was ample

ambition of founding more. Even in the middle ages Charlemagne tried to set up such an empire and failed, with the strongest desire to succeed. Then a military genius arose in this century no less ambitious, and never scrupling at violence or corruption to effectuate his schemes; Napoleon Bonaparte essayed it. He sought, if ever man did, a universal empire, but notwithstanding all means, skill, and opportunity, he broke down utterly in the attempt. God employed Britain to smash all Napoleon's hopes. Nelson with his fleet completely crushed his navy, and on the field of Waterloo Napoleon saw his star set forever. There was to be no new world-power, though all know of course there are those who style themselves emperors in a quite subordinate sense.

But now what is the "little stone cut without hands," which at length becomes a mountain? Perhaps all my readers are accustomed to hear this referred to the Lord gradually making good the kingdom of God. Undoubtedly He will come in that kingdom of God when the hour strikes. But take care that you understand its true force. Excellent men will tell you that it will be through the gospel — the kingdom of God introduced by the Spirit. Allow me to ask this, Does the gospel smite kingdoms of the world? Does the Holy Spirit by the word destroy powers that be? The first action of the "little stone" is to fall upon the feet of the great image, and the effect of that decisive blow will be to scatter its fragments like chaff of the summer threshing-floors.

You know God's gospel is the revelation of Christ applied by the Spirit of God to save sinners, Jews and Gentiles that believe. But the "little stone" on the contrary symbolizes a power, small in appearance, which at once deals destructively with all that is high, great, and strong on the earth, at the first blow reducing the entire imperial system to powder. Consequently the attempt to make the gospel out of it wholly fails. The word of God is by the Lord compared to the seed that, sown in the good ground, bears fruit more or less abundantly, as a germ of life by the Holy Spirit. It is plain that the "little stone" is not the gospel or the church, but the kingdom of God which Christ enforces when he returns. Conclusive and clear is the proof of this from the comparison of the closing scenes in Dan. 2 and the corresponding part of ch. 7. It is not only an intervention from on high, but of a judicial and even executory character. The gospel is no doubt of God, but it is His sovereign grace based on the cross of Christ. Whereas the "little stone" smites the powers of the world, the mightiest then reigning no less than the remnant of all that preceded, and at once crushes them to atoms.

What can be more in contrast with the gospel? After this the "little stone" grows and becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. The gospel never smote any earthly power, never will destroy a single king or kingdom. God's work in the gospel is to reconcile the sinner to Himself and render him meet for heaven. Can one conceive things more different? All Christians profess to believe the Lord Jesus is coming again. What to do? Is it not to judge the quick and the dead? Even the common creeds of Christendom admit that; Copts and Jacobites, Nestorians and Greeks, as well as Latins and Protestants of every variety, confess this truth. They read, say, and sing that Christ is coming to judge, not the dead only but the living also; and these before the dead, we may add.

It is easy to theorize, but scripture shows Christ to reign a thousand years, and to judge the quick. The judgment of the dead follows, as Rev. 20 teaches, and this after the heavens and the earth flee away; whereas the quick He will judge on this earth. Will not Christ's feet stand on the Mount of Olives? and when He stands there, will not the mountain be split in two? So Zech. 14 declares. Yet there it is still, as solid as ever; but it will be cloven yet, giving testimony to its Maker and to the word of God. Who can wonder when the Creator stands there in power and glory? When He came the first time, it was in grace and humility, bearing all and enduring all, when He deigned to die a sacrifice to God, yet at the hands of His own creatures, that their sins might be blotted out. Then it was all pure and sovereign grace, in which He bore God's judgment of our evil that we who believe might be delivered

from wrath. But when He comes again, it will be in judicial power and glory. And will He come alone? His own glorified hosts will follow Him — they that are Christ's (Rev. 17: 14; 19: 14).

Carefully avoid the new-fangled notion that seems to please some in the present day, that none are with Him but "superior Christians." I have generally found those men when weighed sadly wanting. They and their set are no doubt excellent in their own eyes; but God forbid that a true-hearted saint should regard Himself as better than others. We are debtors to God's grace in Christ alone for salvation; and we have abundant reason to humble ourselves before God while here below. There is doubtless power in the Spirit of God to keep us; but as a matter of fact, in many things we all stumble. Let us look to Him Who alone can keep us from falling. It is a strange delusion, by way of what is called "deepening the spiritual life," that any can jump into holiness practically; and why connect this idea of themselves and the like with the translation of the saints to heaven at Christ's coming?

For such self-flattering expectations scripture gives no warrant. "We shall not all sleep," says the apostle, "but we shall all be changed in a moment," and the same moment. The living saints found when our Lord comes are not to die. The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, not some of us but all, shall be caught up together with the risen to meet the Lord. This is the mystery as it is called, or New Testament truth, added to that of resurrection revealed in the Old Testament.

When Christ comes and those that are His along with Him from heaven, He will smite the powers in open blasphemous rebellion (Rev. 19), and call all the nations to account, as He will in Matt. 25: 31-46. The two leaders civil and religious will be thrown living into hell. Their followers and kings and armies will be slain on the spot. Did you ever realize who these will be? The flower of the civilized world, the rulers and hosts of the then kingdoms of the west. They will have hastened at the Emperor's demand to protect the Jews and their king in Jerusalem. The Jews who rejected the true Christ will then have received the Antichrist. Then will all the powers of western Europe be involved in the same sin. Balance of power is long gone. The satellite kings "have one mind, and shall give their power and authority to the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with Him (the glorified saints) are called, chosen, and faithful." "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (Rev. 17: 13, 14, 17).

There will remain for divine judgment the last king of the north (Dan. 11: 40-45); and after him Gog from the land of Magog, Prince of Rosh (Russia), Meshech (Muscovy), and Tubal (Tobolsk), the power that makes the king of the north mightier than his own strength could command. These shall all perish in due time after the Lord has appeared: all must receive the due reward of their deeds. Is this not as far as can be from the kingdom of God in spiritual power such as we know under the gospel? But it is in full accord with that which is the true meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and of the prophet's interpretation, as well as of his own visions in ch. 7 and elsewhere. The destruction of "the beast" and other powers which will then be in a state of rebellion must be fulfilled at the end of this age.

And what is preparing for an end so awful? The superstition and the infidelity of the day: each provokes the other beyond measure. Where are these men so different in appearance and pretension, yet alike unbelievers, the one sanctimonious, the other profane? They are everywhere; their name is Legion. You have them both here in your quiet little town, lively and strong. But it does not matter where they may be: God is not mocked, and they are His enemies. How they swarm in the great city, the metropolis of the kingdom! It is not so strange that they often join arms, sometimes are combined in the same persons. Such are those who dare to say that God did not inspire the Bible, and deny him who wrote this book to be "Daniel the Prophet," although the Lord declares so it was. They would make it a

romance written hundreds of years after his death. Whoever so speaks, and whatever he pretends to be, no orthodox believers should shrink from denouncing such a man as infidel. They are corrupting this country and America, as others have Holland and Germany.

But let it be understood that no mistake is greater than to suppose Roman Catholic countries free from scepticism. No country more abounds in infidelity than France and other Popish lands. The women may go to mass and confession, and some of the men may follow occasionally; but this is no disproof of their infidelity. And the issue will be (spite of all forms, and processions, and what not) the falling away or apostasy, as the apostle told the Thessalonians. The open abandonment of the gospel is at hand. Then man under Satan's power will become the object of universal admiration and worship to the exclusion of God; and this will bring down the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven. So He in Dan. 7 answers to the "little stone" of ch. 2. He is seen coining to the Ancient of days, and receiving dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. It opens with the execution of consuming judgment on earth, and most unsparingly where most light had been given and given up.

Is it possible to find a scene in stronger contrast with grace? The gospel of God's grace is founded on Christ's first coming, and on His death, resurrection, and ascension; for His object was atoningly to suffer to God's glory for sins. When He comes again, it will be as the "little stone cut without hands," wholly apart from human means to destroy the kingdoms (then apostate), and to establish God's kingdom in power, righteousness and glory over the earth. He will appear from heaven, and (falling, as we see in Dan. 2 and 7, on the Roman empire) will efface all the authority set forth by the image or by the four beasts. The beast (or he who then shall wield the power of the fourth empire revived) and the false prophet are to be consigned to the burning flame. That is, the imperial as well as the religious chiefs are to meet this unspeakably frightful doom, while their adherents are slain (Rev. 19: 19-21). Besides, judgment falls on all the other elements. "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together." So too is it in Daniel's vision of the beasts whose dominion had been taken away and their lives prolonged (Dan. 7: 12). There is no sparing of evil longer. Jehovah reigns, and the earth rejoices. It is the Son of man Who makes good the kingdom over all the earth, as His first advent gave grace its scope for heavenly glory, which the Christian and the church should enjoy now in faith.