



## God's Kingdom: Present Reality

*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. (Daniel 2:44-45)*

The major question facing us as we compare this passage with the various interpretations imposed on it focuses on the character or dimensions of God's kingdom that is here predicted. The majority view of our time insists that this kingdom cannot possibly exist today, so it must be a yet-future prediction of God's end-time work. Few serious Bible students will deny that God has a powerful and victorious dimension in store for the future. However, the real question that drives us to the heart of this passage is this. Does God presently rule? Does God's kingdom exist today? Is God today King of kings and Lord of lords? If so, what is the nature of His rule?

First and foremost, we should allow the passage to inform and to answer these questions rather than indulging fanciful imagination to project our personal ideas onto the passage. What does the passage specifically say about this kingdom?

1. It shall never be destroyed.
2. It shall not be left to "other people."
3. It shall break in pieces and consume the four kingdoms mentioned in the king's dream.
4. It shall stand for ever.

In each of these four descriptions God's kingdom stands in stark contrast with all human governments, including the four identified in the dream.

1. No human government has ever survived indefinitely. They all are eventually destroyed. Failure of human government is inevitable because of human nature. Eventually even the best of human governments becomes so compromised by fallen human appetites and depravity that it fails of its own internal corruption.
2. As human government fails, the "in" crowd from the old government lose their places

of power, often replaced by "other people," people with different philosophies and political values.

3. For a season human governments conquer weaker powers around them, but eventually they face a superior adversary and fall, broken in pieces by their conquerors.
4. Eventually all human governments fall, replaced by others. Where is Babylon today, or Persia, or Greece, or Rome? A study of world history will affirm this point beyond question. Both ancient Greece and Rome endured for several millennia, but they do not exist today. The countries of our time that occupy portions of their ancient territory and go by their name have no resemblance to those ancient empires.

I wonder at Christians who become obsessed with human governments, especially when they reveal a belief that human government is capable of solving all their problems and righting all wrongs. Their focus is sadly misplaced. They seek in human government what shall only be realized through God's government. Inevitably they become frustrated and disillusioned. How could it be otherwise? Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream directs us to God's kingdom and distinctly away from human government.

Over ten years ago I first encountered the ancient description of Christians, entitled "Those Christians." It describes a model citizen in God's kingdom, a distinct contrast with frustrated Christians who continue to seek in human government the noble realization that only occurs in God's government.

## “Those Christians”

**From a letter believed to have been written by an anonymous Christian apologist to Diognetus, a Roman government official, probably in the second century.**

*For Christians are not differentiated from other people by country, language or customs; you see, they do not live in cities of their own, or speak some strange dialect, or have some peculiar lifestyle.*

*This teaching of theirs has not been contrived by the invention and speculation of inquisitive men; nor are they propagating mere human teaching as some people do. They live in both Greek and foreign cities, wherever chance has put them. They follow local customs in clothing, food and other aspects of life. But at the same time, they demonstrate to us the wonderful and certainly unusual form of their own citizenship.*

*They live in their own native lands, but as aliens; as citizens, they share all things with others; but like aliens, suffer all things. Every foreign country is to them as their native country, and every native land as a foreign country.*

*They marry and have children just like every one else; but they do not kill unwanted babies. They offer a shared table, but not a shared bed. They are at present ‘in the flesh’ but they do not live ‘according to the flesh’. They are passing their days on earth, but are citizens of heaven. They obey the appointed laws, and go beyond the laws in their own lives.*

*They love every one, but are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death and gain life. They are poor and yet make many rich. They are short of everything and yet have plenty of all things. They are dishonoured and yet gain glory through dishonour.*

*Their names are blackened and yet they are cleared. They are mocked and bless in return. They are treated outrageously and behave respectfully to others. When they do good, they are punished as evildoers; when punished, they rejoice as if being given new life. They are attacked by Jews as aliens, and are persecuted by Greeks; yet those who hate them cannot give any reason for their hostility.*

*To put it simply – the soul is to the body as Christians are to the world. The soul is spread through all parts of the body and Christians through all the cities of the world. The soul is in the body but is not of the body; Christians are in the world but not of the world.*

As these “citizens” of heaven are dispersed throughout many locations and many world kingdoms, yet keep their eyes on their native land, so God’s kingdom is not to be measured by a specific plot of geography, but by a notable people who live in all world empires as citizens of heaven. ***It is this kingdom that shall slowly but surely break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms and empires; it is everlasting, it shall never be destroyed; it shall not be left to “other people;” it in fact did break in pieces and consume the four kingdoms mentioned in the king’s dream; it shall stand for ever.***

The final chapter of human history, outlined in visual images and analogical form in the closing chapters of Revelation depict just this. While the contemporary view of our passage ignores the contextual information we find in Daniel’s interpretation of the king’s dream and projects its fulfillment to the end of time, it necessarily loses the vision of “Those Christians” outlined above as it also loses the sense of what the final epochal chapter of human history will be. It degenerates God’s most glorious moment by transforming that time into a human-centric rather than a God-centric event. For example, it depicts the final confrontation between good and evil, between God and His enemies, as a global war in which untold millions of people die, commonly referred to as the battle of Armageddon. A careful examination of John’s description of this episode in Revelation will reveal that all of the saints who accompany King Jesus in this final conflict are dressed in white linen clothes, the clothing of an ancient Jewish priest, not in the armor of a soldier in battle. I suggest that not a single saint shall lose his/her life in that battle. Jesus alone will fight the battle, and He shall win it. The saints who witness this battle in white linen are there as witnesses of His victory, not as active participants in the battle. That triumph shall demonstrate the final and complete victory that Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream predicted. God’s kingdom is everlasting; it shall never be destroyed. The present kingdom of God as described in “Those Christians” shall continue till the Second Coming, and then it shall merge wholly into God’s eternal and perfect kingdom.

*...Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (Revelation 22:20b)*

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Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor