

44. Defining the Rise of God's Kingdom (Daniel 1–6)

From the prophecies of Daniel and John, we learn that the kingdom of God is established on the earth after the forces of chaos, which rule in the world, have done their worst. Only at that point are the “saints” or “holy ones” (*qedoshim*) of the Most High God given his kingdom on the earth. In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream that Daniel interprets, it is during the end-time rule of ten antichrist kings that a stone symbolizing the kingdom of God is “cut out without hands” which destroys the kingdoms of the world. Precepts of men that claim the kingdom of God has already been set up on the earth refute what the scriptures are saying. From the scriptures, we learn that it is under the auspices of the Lamb of God, who is the God of Israel, that the kingdom of God is set up.

We start with Nebuchadnezzar’s dream that Daniel interprets: “Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:31–35).

Daniel’s interpretation sees a succession of empires—Babylonian, Mede/Persian, Greek, and Roman—rule the world, starting with Nebuchadnezzar: “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

“And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. 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” (Daniel 2:37–44).

In a variation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Daniel has a dream in which he sees a Beast with ten horns representing the fourth world empire. The Beast’s ten horns represent ten end-time kings: “The fourth Beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And

the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him” (Daniel 7:23–27).

Daniel’s own dream thus clarifies Nebuchadnezzar’s dream that “in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom” that destroys the kingdoms of the world (Daniel 2:44). The “days of these kings,” in other words, are a time when ten kings come to power that are part of an end-time Beast or Antichrist.

John’s vision of the end of the world, too, serves as a second witness to the prophecies of Daniel: “The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the Beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto 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 are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:12–14).

A revelation through the prophet Joseph Smith clarifies the process through which the kingdom of God is ultimately established on the earth: “The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth. Yea, a voice crying—Prepare ye the way of the Lord, prepare ye the supper of the Lamb, make ready for the Bridegroom. Pray unto the Lord, call upon his holy name, make known his wonderful works among the people. Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth” (Doctrine & Covenants 65:2–5).

Although the keys of the kingdom were bestowed upon men, the Lord saw that they would not accomplish his designs until the time spoken of: “But inasmuch as they keep not my commandments, and hearken not to observe all my words, the kingdoms of the world shall prevail against them. For they were set to be a light unto the world, and to be the saviors of men; And inasmuch as they are not the saviors of men, they are as salt that has lost its savor, and is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men” (Doctrine & Covenants 103:8–10). Until the Ephraimite Gentiles learn to “observe all my words,” the kingdoms of the world will prevail against them.