

The One Enduring Empire

Daniel 2:27-49

The theme of kingdoms and power is a major theme of Daniel. Who exercises power, and for what ends, matters.

The Source of Power

The king is frightened by the image he saw. A representation of humanity's power over man, apart from God, would be terrifying. Daniel tells him it's about the succession of empires. Babylon is the golden head. Whilst the empire was far from perfect there were things God could affirm. We should not become cynical when considering our own governments.

Daniel tells the king any power he has comes from God. For any leader, to understand that all power is derived is critical, and it should humble us. But we should also be humbled by the fact that we, like Nebuchadnezzar, are just observers as God works out his purposes. Also, that we, like Nebuchadnezzar, will not last forever. However, this is also encouraging: Babylon, ancient or modern, will not last forever. Don't sell out to power. Don't despair. Don't compromise.

The Weakness of Power

The decreasing value and increasing hardness of the metals is a reminder not to put our hope in humanity's advances. We need a solution to our problems from somewhere other than human power. The fourth kingdom has massive power but is intrinsically weak. The problem of humanity is humanity. The problem is that our modern societies put all their hope in humanity. Man has become God.

It is only the gospel of Jesus – a man without clay feet – which can save us. Only a gracious intervention from outside can save us. And in contrast to the terrifying but flawed man, Nebuchadnezzar also saw a stone.

The One Enduring Power

The final kingdom is different. It is divine. It will last forever. The fact it will come teaches us to be patient; to not fear but endure; to not invest our hope in earthly kingdoms or political powers. Whilst we're to seek the welfare of the city, we realise that we're not building Jerusalem. We are waiting for it to be brought by the one king who *will* reign forever.

Christ is the stone. It is at his death and resurrection – just when he seems crushed by Rome's power – that he deals the fatal blow to every earthly power, and shatters our claim to self-rule. His resurrection tells us he is the one with the power. As we live in Babylon, we must not use power as a Babylonian. We must use it as Christ used it – on behalf of those with no power.

How does Nebuchadnezzar respond? He worships God. He knows there is a God in heaven who knows his thoughts. When you know that, it helps you do the right thing, and use power rightly. And he promotes Daniel and Daniel takes the job. It's a reminder that we don't need to fear that things will inevitably go pear shaped if you are faithful. You might just get promoted. If you are, remember, it's God who's put you there.