

"The Image"

Daniel 2

The book of Daniel is that part of Scripture which especially treats of the power of the world during the time of its committal into the hands of the Gentiles, while the ancient people of God--the children of Israel--are under chastisement on account of their sin.

The first chapter opens with the statement that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up against Jerusalem, that he besieged the city, that "the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god." This may, I believe, be regarded as such an introduction to the book as shall guide our thoughts as to its subject. The nation of Israel had departed from God, and He now delivers Judah, that portion of them with whom He had dealt in the most protracted long-suffering, into the hands of Gentiles, to whom He now commits power over His chosen city, Jerusalem. The distinctive object in the book of Daniel is to reveal, at the very period at which this committal has been made, what would be the course, character, and consummation of the power so bestowed.

We may divide this book into two portions: that part which is written in the Chaldee language, and that which is written in Hebrew. While we see that the book has one general scope, namely, Jerusalem given by God for a time into the power of the Gentiles who bear rule, we may regard this in two ways. We may either look at Gentile power in the outline of its history, or we may look at those things relating to this power in their local connection with Jerusalem. Now, the course, character, and crises of Gentile power are taken up in this book in the Chaldee language, while those things which are limited in their application to the Jews and are written in Hebrew.

There are very few portions of the Scripture which are written in Chaldee. There are some parts of Ezra (chap. 5:8 to 6:19, and 7:12-27) so written, which bring before us the children of Israel as being under the power of the Gentiles. There are some parts of this book. And there is one verse in Jeremiah (10: 11) which contains a message sent to the Gentiles. This verse occurs just as the gods of the nations had been mentioned in contrast with the living God.

It is important that we should so bear in mind the inspiration of Scripture as to recognize that nothing respecting it can be looked on as accidental. There must be in every circumstance a reason as to whatever God has written and however He has written it, whether we possess sufficient spiritual intelligence or not to apprehend it. Now in such a case as the present we may be sure that God has not made this difference of language without a very definite object. The Chaldee portion of Daniel commences at the fourth verse of the second chapter and continues to the end of the seventh chapter. All the rest of the book is written in Hebrew. In the Chaldee portion we see power in the hands of the Gentile presented before us to its character, course, and consummation; and in the latter portion of the book we see the same power localized in connection with the Jews and Jerusalem. The Gentile power is in each part that which is prominently before us, although looked at in different aspects.

We are often instructed in Scripture by having the same set of facts presented before us in different aspects. Each aspect may show but a few features of difference, but still enough will be found to evince that the variety is not without its value. As an illustration of this we may take the parables of our Lord in the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew. He teaches there on one

general subject--the effects which would result from the introduction of the gospel among men. He illustrates the results both of good and of evil (from the counter working of Satan) until the day when the tares shall be separated from among the wheat, when the fishes, good and bad, shall receive their respective allotments. Instead of one narrative or one continuous parable, He uses many; and thus we receive instruction in its individuality as to its several parts, and also in its completeness as to the whole instruction given.

This mode of Scripture teaching, by the presentation of many pictures of the same truths in order that their bearings and connections may be clearly and rightly apprehended, is especially found in the book of Daniel--in the first chapter of which we see Judah, because of sin, delivered into the hands of their enemies and carried into exile to Babylon.

Thus it is that the prophet is placed in the land of strangers. Daniel had not personally committed the sins which led to the captivity, but as part of the Israelitish nation it was his to share their lot. He and his companions are brought into a place of particular connection with the king's court, and this was an occasion of proving if their hearts were faithful to God or not. Daniel refused the appointed portion of the king's meat, of which he, as an Israelite, could not partake without defilement; and thus in the midst of Babylon [he] was separate unto the Lord his God. This was nothing in which he sought to bear any ostentatious testimony. In the then circumstances of his nation--rejected by God because of their sins--it was not a time for endeavoring to set forth before the Gentiles [the fact] that Israel was God's favored and chosen people to whom was confided the knowledge of God's truth in the earth. Each had now to stand in a great measure on his own individual responsibility before God. And thus Daniel maintains a separation which was well-pleasing to God, so that in the midst of Nebuchadnezzar's court and while occupied in the service of Gentile kings, his heart was right with God and his actions were directed by a conscience duly exercised. To most he might have seemed but as a faithful servant of the Babylonian king, while the eye of God could mark him as rejecting "the portion of the king's meat," as avoiding those things in which he could not obey God, thus truly owning allegiance and service to earthly sovereigns but always with the limitation that God's supreme authority should be upheld.

In the second chapter we read of the vision shown by God to the king of Babylon. God appears to be meeting him in the thoughts and inquiries of his own heart. Nebuchadnezzar had seen his own power rising to a great extent, and his own soul was in some measure bent on knowing what the issue of all this would be. We see this from verse 29, "Thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter." The extent of his power, so different from that of any who had gone before him, seems to have led his heart to meditate upon the circumstances in which he was set, and the vision declared to him the course and crisis of the power so committed. But although the vision was shown to him, yet he had to receive not only the interpretation but even the vision itself again through the instrumentality of the prophet.

In the vision of this chapter the moral character and acting of this power towards God are not stated (except indeed as one who knew the mind of God might gather it from the crisis), but for this we must look for further light in the subsequent visions of the book.

Here all is presented as set before the king according to his ability of apprehension, the external and visible things being shown as man might regard them. The vision of Nebuchadnezzar was of a great image with the head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, and the legs of iron. In the interpretation all these several parts are taken up, and the symbolic

meaning of each is stated. The four metals of which the image consisted represented four kingdoms which should successively bear rule in the earth.

To understand the Scriptures aright we have no occasion to go beyond the limit of the Scriptures themselves. The same passage of revealed truth which tells us of the authority of holy Scripture tells us also of its sufficiency: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Thus nothing can be *needed* by the man of God in order that he should be "thoroughly furnished" beyond the inspired writings contained in the Bible. We have then no necessity to go out of the Scripture itself in order to gain information as to those things of which we read in Scripture. We may find many things which are interesting as bearing upon Scripture, but still whatever God looks on as *needful* for the establishment of the souls of His people, and for their spiritual intelligence in His truth, is to be found within the limits of His Scripture. History is not revelation, and we are nowhere commanded to search history to learn the truths found in God's word (although it may be owned most freely that God's word sheds a light upon the things which man has written as history, and that many lessons may be learned from seeing how different are the thoughts of God and of man about the same events).

We have no occasion whatever to go beyond the limits of Scripture to learn what the four kingdoms are which are thus mentioned in Daniel.

First. It was said expressly to Nebuchadnezzar that the head of gold symbolized his kingdom (verses 37, 38): "Thou, O king, art a king of kings. For the God of heaven has 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 has he given into thine hand, and has made thee ruler over them all--thou art this head of gold." These last words fix the first kingdom incontestably to be that of Babylon, which had grown to its greatness under Nebuchadnezzar.

Now as to the terms in which the extent of Nebuchadnezzar's power is stated, of course we are not to understand that he actually held and exercised this rule over every part of the inhabited earth; but rather that, so far as God was concerned, all was given into his hand so that he was not limited as to the power which he might obtain in whatever direction he might turn himself as conqueror. The only earthly bound to his empire was his own ambition. This is just what we find also in Jer. 27:4-6: "Thus saith the LORD [Yahweh] of hosts . . . I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him." Of course Nebuchadnezzar knew nothing of all this when carrying on his conquests. He had gratified himself without being aware that he was thus the instrument in the hand of God.¹

¹ The extent of Nebuchadnezzar's dominion was, however, very great; far greater than many have supposed. In the course of his conquests he must have become the wielder of most of the powers of the earth, as it then was. We know something of the greatness which Nineveh and Egypt had possessed in previous ages. All this (as the Scripture shows) had now been rendered subordinate to Babylon. We know how the merchandise of the earth was in the hands of Tyre. This too, we see from Scripture, had become Nebuchadnezzar's. Before this time the Phoenician colonies had extended themselves widely, and these colonies owned a connection with Tyre (and, perhaps, a sort of dependence) in the offerings sent to the altar of the Tyrian Hercules (i.e. Baal). The Phoenician colonies had extended to almost every coast of the Mediterranean, and over these the conquest of Tyre must have given Nebuchadnezzar at least a certain superiority. The early extent of the Phoenician colonies is exhibited in a

Second. He was told, "after thee shall rise another kingdom inferior to thee." To find out what kingdom was intended we have only to inquire what kingdom succeeded to that of Babylon. In 2 Chron. 36:20 we read of Nebuchadnezzar: "them that had escaped from the sword, carried he away to Babylon, where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia." And indeed in this book of Daniel itself we find a plain intimation of what the second kingdom should be which should succeed that of Babylon. In chap. 5:28 it is said, "Peres; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." Although these were two nations, yet the Medo-Persian kingdom is regarded as being one, as we also find in chap. 8:20.

Third. In the vision the king had seen "his belly and his thighs of brass" (verse 32), and this is defined in the interpretation to be "another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth." In chap. 8 we learn (verse 21) what this kingdom was, to which dominion was given after that of the Medes and Persians--"the rough goat is the king of Grecia." This symbolic goat had been previously spoken of as destroying the ram, which was used in that vision as the symbol of the Medo-Persian kingdom. The commencement of chap. 11 tells us the same thing.

Fourth. In the vision the image had been seen with "his legs of iron" (verse 33). In the interpretation we read, "the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things, and as iron that breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise" (verse 40). We shall not find the *name* of this fourth kingdom in the Old Testament, although we see here, and in other places, its character and description. But we learn from the New Testament what this kingdom is, for we there find another bearing rule over the earth after that of Greece had passed away. Thus in Luke 2 we read that there was a certain empire or kingdom which professed to bear rule over the whole inhabited earth at the time when our Lord was born; and in Luke 3 we find things so fully spoken of after the Roman arrangement and order, that the ministry of our Lord's forerunner is dated "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea." Thus we see that the empire of the Caesars had then begun, and that the governor sent by that empire exercised authority for it in the land of the Jews. The same thing is also shown by the reply of our Lord to the question which was put to Him about the tribute money, and also by the frequent mention made of Rome and Roman power in the book of the Acts.

Thus we may see that it is wholly needless to go to any other source than that of the Revelation of God in order to discover what these four successive kingdoms are--the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, Roman.

It must be obvious to the Christian student of Scripture how much more satisfactory it is thus to learn the details of facts from the word of God than from the records of history. The latter may be true but the former commands our faith, and leaves us with a confidence of certainty which we never can have with regard to facts derived from other sources. It would have been indeed strange if it had been necessary for us to draw from the doubtful statements of profane historians in order to understand prophecy; and we must also remember how many would find it impossible to do this.

The metals which symbolize these kingdoms become less and less pure. A certain process of

map and accompanying memoir on the early diffusion of the Hebrew language through the Phoenician colonies in *The Bible of Every Land*. Besides the places mentioned in the "Memoir" as those where Phoenician inscriptions had been found, *Marseilles* must now be added: the Phoenicians appear to have formed a mercantile settlement at that port, before the colony of Phocaeans.

deterioration appears to be marked out as to power, while passing from one kingdom to another.²

When Nebuchadnezzar received the committal from God, it was simply power from Himself, not derived from man, not dependent on the will of others, but put by God into his hand and exercised in responsibility to Him alone as the only ruler of princes. Nebuchadnezzar might rightly bear, as far as man was concerned, the name of autocrat; his will was law. Now we can see in part from Scripture how power deteriorated in its character in the other kingdoms. The kingdom of Persia was said to be "inferior" to that of Nebuchadnezzar; and we see that this was the case as to the power of its kings. In chapter 6 of this book we find Darius unable to deliver Daniel from the hands of the princes who sought to cast him into the lions' den. Not so had Nebuchadnezzar ruled: "all people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him; whom he would he slew, *and whom he would he kept alive*" (5:19). In the case, too, of Ahasuerus in the book of Esther, the king and the princes act together; and the king could not undo what they had jointly decreed about queen Vashti. In Ezra 7:14 we find authority given to that servant of God from the king and his seven counselors. All this shows us not a king acting in the mere right of his royal prerogative, but a king in a certain sense controlled by counselors, without whose advice and consent he could not act.

In the continual hindrances thrown in the way of the Jews after their return from Babylon, when they attempted to carry out the edicts of the Persian kings in their favor, we see manifest proof how the governors and others in authority under the Persian kings could oppose the execution of the pleasure of the sovereign.

We do not read much in Scripture as to the Grecian power, and therefore details as to the manner of the deterioration are not to be pressed. Only the fact of such deterioration of power being intimated should be noticed.

In one respect the Scripture appears to indicate the mode of this deterioration when it tells us of the divisions of the third kingdom, so that it continued in a fragmentary and not a united form. Babylon and Persian stood as kingdoms and fell as kingdoms. The empire of Alexander continued in broken parts, and these parts were destroyed one by one.

The fourth kingdom is said to be "as strong as iron." As a metal, this is in many respects inferior to brass, although possessed of much more strength for certain purposes and capable of far more extensive application. Strength and force are spoken of, but still apparently deterioration.

It may also be noticed that the deterioration of the fourth kingdom is especially shown in its last state.

Each of the four kingdoms appears as succeeding that which had gone before, not as annihilating it, but as incorporating it with itself--each making, as it were, the dominion of the metal which had gone before a part of itself. Just so do we read in chap. 5:28 of the manner in which the kingdom of the Medes and Persians succeeded to that of Babylon: "Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians," the kingdom not being, as it were, destroyed, but transferred; that is, the cities and nations were to continue in existence while the glory which had belonged to

² It may be worthy of observation that the metals in the image lessen in their *specific gravity* as they go downwards. Iron is not so heavy as brass, and thus the *weight* is so arranged as to exhibit the reverse of stability, even before we reach the mixture of clay and iron.

them passed into the hand of other powers. Babylon stands as the head of the image, and this headship existing throughout the whole gives the image its identity. The four powers succeeded one another as the actual holders of the dominion, and as they thus came into view, so is their place seen successively in the image.

Babylon may be defined as having been power in the form of absolute autocracy; Persia, power in the hands of the king, while nobility of person and descent were everything--the nobles were the king's equals in rank though not in office. In Greece there was the aristocracy not of birth but of supposed excellence, as evinced by the power of the mind of man and individual influence. In Rome, power had a still lower character, for the emperor was entirely dependent upon popular choice, the soldiers commonly bestowing the imperial dignity upon a successful general. In fact, the very name of "emperor" (Imperator) arose from any commander having been so saluted by his soldiers after a victory if they were satisfied with his conduct. If they did not so salute him, then he could not receive the public honors of a triumph.³ Thus we see that in the Roman Empire power actually was derived from the people. And it may also be worthy of observation that the emperors succeeded one another rather in the way of popular military election than in that of hereditary rule.

The committal of power in all the fullness spoken of in verses 37, 38 appears to belong to Nebuchadnezzar personally, or at all events to have been confined to the kingdom of Babylon.

In verse 40 we have rather the character of the Roman power than its territorial extent. This latter subject does not appear to belong to the scope of the present vision, which we have to regard especially as speaking of these kingdoms in their succession from Babylon, and the crisis to which they tend.

The "potter's clay" (verse 41) means, I believe, simply "earthenware"--that which is hard but yet brittle. Softness does not seem to be at all the thing pointed out. Now an image which stood partly upon feet of earthenware would be very stable so long as there was nothing but direct pressure brought to bear upon these feet; while a blow falling upon them would break them to pieces, and that only the more thoroughly from the fact of iron being intermixed with the earthenware. This I believe to be the thought here presented to us.

We see from verse 42 that the part of the feet thus formed of iron and clay intermixed was the toes. And the interpretation which is given is, "the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken" (or, rather, "brittle"). In verse 43 the explanation is continued: "they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men." Thus there will be power (in its deteriorated form, iron) mixed up with that which is wholly of man, and which when put to the proof is found to be only weakness itself.

Thus we see this fourth empire especially brought before us at a time when in a divided condition, and when thus debased. The number of the toes of the feet appears to imply a tenfold division. This may be taken as a hint given to us here, although the more specific statement of the fact is not told us till farther on in this book. This kingdom is then divided into parts, which we shall see from other portions of the Scripture (especially chap. 7) to be exactly ten. Power in

³ The senate often made a show of appointing the emperor; but their decree was, in general, simply a needful compliance on their part. So too in the case of Vespasian, although the *people* of Rome professed to bestow on him the imperial power (as recorded in the still existing bronze tablets), yet in fact they had no real power, for Vespasian already had the military rule in his own hands.

the hands of the people is seen having no internal stability, although something is still left of the strength of the iron.

Verse 44. Here we see that when the image is fully developed, even to the toes of the feet, then destruction falls on it. In the vision it had been stated (verse 35) that all the materials of the image became, when smitten, "like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them." This expression may give us some intimation of the moral character of these kingdoms before God, such as we do not find anywhere else in the chapter; just as we read in the first Psalm, "The ungodly . . . are like the chaff which the wind drives away."

The expression in verse 44, "in the days of these kings," is worthy of attention, for it brings before our minds more than had been expressly stated, either in the vision or in the interpretation; namely, that the kingdom which had last borne rule has been divided, and that the toes of the feet do actually symbolize such divided parts. "These kings" cannot mean the four successional monarchies, because in that case the plural number could not be used seeing that they do not *co-exist* as the holders of power. The fourth kingdom is divided into parts (which other Scriptures show to be exactly ten), and "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed."

This kingdom is in its character utterly unlike the four which had preceded it. It has nothing springing from Babylonian headship, which may be transferred and become deteriorated in the hands of men; but it stands in direct contrast to all that has been.

It is important to observe very distinctly what is the crisis of the image--"a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and broke 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" (verses 34, 35).

Now what does the stone so falling upon the feet of the image symbolize? It has been sometimes thought that it alludes to grace, or to the spread of the gospel. But surely if the very words of the Scripture be followed, we shall see that destroying judgment on Gentile power is here spoken of, and not any gradual diffusion of the knowledge of grace. The image is standing on its feet, part of iron and part of earthenware. The stone then falls from above upon these feet, and the whole image is destroyed as it were with one crash.

Now our Lord speaks of Himself as the "stone" and makes reference, or direct citation of, several passages in the Old Testament in which he had been so designated. Thus in Matt. 21 He says: "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? . . . And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (verses 42, 44). Our Lord here cites from Psalm 118, and alludes to the mention made in Isaiah 8 to the stone on which Israel has stumbled and been broken; and he likewise clearly refers to the destroying judgment which takes place when the stone, now exalted at the head of the corner, falls thus upon the fabric of Gentile power - "it will grind him to powder."

"The stone" must be taken as a definite appellation of our Lord. We see this from Psalm 118:22,

Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16, Acts 4:11, and 1 Peter 2:4, 6, in all of which Christ is spoken of under this name. Now this cannot refer to Him as born into the world, because the fourth kingdom was not then in its divided condition--no toes were then in existence. This falling on the feet of the image could not, therefore, have anything to do with our Lord when He was upon earth. Equally impossible is it for this to symbolize the spread of the gospel; for, so far from Christians being put in the place of destroying those that bear earthly rule, they are taught submission to the powers that be as ordained of God, and their place is to suffer, if needs be, but not to rebel.

Thus it is clear that the Lord Jesus is here referred to as coming again--in the day when He shall take to Himself his great power and shall reign, when He shall be revealed "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:8).

It might occur as a difficulty that the Roman empire does not exist as one united body, and hence it might be thought that the stone falling on the image must have been some past event. But observe, the Roman empire is presented in its divided condition. It is true that these divisions commenced about 1,400 years ago, but under the divided parts of the Roman empire we still live;⁴ and its last condition is that in which the stone of destruction falls upon it, a condition in which as yet it has never been.

Now we may regard "the stone" in three different ways, for we find it in Scripture so spoken of: in connection with Israel, with the Church, and with the Gentile powers. In Isaiah 8:14, 15 we read that the Lord of Hosts would become "a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared and taken." We see from the words of our Lord already cited from Matt. 21, and from what Peter says, Acts 4:11, how Judah stumbled upon Christ according to the words of the Prophecy. We see also from 1 Peter 2:7, 8 how Israel in their dispersions did also stumble upon Christ as preached unto them--"a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed." Thus *both the houses of Israel* have fallen upon this stone, and they are *broken*, not destroyed; cast off for a time though still "beloved for the fathers' sakes."

How different is the connection of the Church with this stone! "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood," etc. Thus could the Apostle Peter address those who by nation belonged to Israel, who through grace had trusted in the blood of the Lamb without blemish and without spot. And as the Church consists of "us whom he has called, not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles," this blessing is true of the whole family of faith. We are built upon this "stone," this tried foundation. We are thus identified with it, and not with those who have fallen upon it, nor yet with those upon whom it shall fall.

I have already spoken of the relation of this stone to Gentile power. But I would remark further, that the utter distinctness of this power from that which stands in grace is most vividly presented to us in the crisis of this power. The Church is built upon the stone; the image is

⁴ Not only did the monarchies of Western Europe spring up as each holding a portion of Roman sovereignty, but also in their continued administration this fact has been habitually recognized. Each has regarded as holding a portion of *Roman imperium*. See *Note on the Roman Empire and its Divisions*, after Remarks on the Four Beasts, chap. 7.

destroyed by the stone falling upon it. We ought carefully to note the distinctions which God makes in His word; and no line of demarcation which He has laid down is more plain than that which exists between the world and its power on the one hand and the Church on the other. How wondrously does it show the power of Satan in confusing the mind as to things that differ, that it should have been supposed to be possible for the Church rightly to rest upon the power of this world--upon that which the Lord Jesus is going thus to judge!

Let the saints rightly value their place as identified with Christ as resting upon Him, and then they will see aright how to act as to any connection with the world and its power. A saint who identified himself with the image would be, as it were, so far seeking to put himself in the place of that which will receive destroying judgment. It is quite true that God will keep from final condemnation every soul that He has quickened by the Spirit to believe in Christ. But it would evince a hardihood of mind, which seems scarcely compatible with grace, for anyone deliberately to say, "God will keep me, and so I may put myself in the place where judgment will fall." It is for us to have nothing to do with that upon which the judgment of God will fall, but to realize our union with Him who will execute the judgment, and in whose coming kingdom his people will share.

The second chapter of Daniel may be looked on as the alphabet of the prophetic statements contained in the book; and it is well for the mind to be grounded in the truths contained in this portion of the book before other parts of it are searched into. We have here the four successive empires, the last of these in a divided and deteriorated condition; and then, in contrast to the whole that had preceded, a kingdom which shall last forever, set up by the God of heaven--the coming of the Lord Jesus in destroying judgment being the turning point which changes the whole scene; all that had failed in the hand of man then passing away, and that which is kept in the Lord's own hand being then introduced.

If we refer to the 8th Psalm, we shall see the extent of Christ's dominion spoken of in terms very similar to those which in this chapter had been used to describe the power committed to Nebuchadnezzar. We thus see how the power of the earth, entrusted to him and which failed in his hand, is taken up by Christ as One who really is able to hold and to exercise aright this dominion in all its wide extent.