

The Image and the Stone

by Richard E. Bieber

God's Kingdom is already here and doing what it's supposed to do, and our choice is to be part of it or not.

Topics: "Kingdom Of God", "Worldly Power"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on Nebuchadnezzar's dream, highlighting the two kingdoms represented: the kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of God. The image in the dream symbolizes the temporary nature of worldly power, while the stone cut by no human hand represents God's eternal Kingdom. Believers are urged to discern between the power of this world and the power of God, emphasizing the importance of being rooted in God and functioning together as a unified body in His Kingdom.

Transcript

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, had a dream. He demanded his wise men, not only to interpret the dream, but to tell him what he dreamed! The wise men protested, but King Nebuchadnezzar insisted, "Either you tell me what I dreamed, and the dream's interpretation, or you will be killed, along with your households."

Daniel's three friends came to him with the news that they too would be destroyed if someone didn't come up with the dream and the interpretation. They fasted and prayed, and just before the deadline, Daniel received a revelation from the Lord. He stood before the King, revealed the dream and explained its meaning: "You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. The head of this image was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it smote the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces; then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." Daniel 2:31-35 In Nebuchadnezzar's dream there are two kingdoms: The kingdom of this world ... represented by a dazzling image whose golden head is the king of Babylon and whose feet of iron and clay of the last universal empire: is Rome.

The other kingdom is the Kingdom of God ... represented by a stone cut from a mountain by no human hand which smashes the image and becomes a great mountain which fills the whole earth. At the

beginning of the dream the image is by far the most brilliant thing in view, but those feet of iron and clay are a clue that it will not last. The stone cut from the mountain by no human hand looks unimpressive by comparison, but the fact that it is cut out by no human hand, - and that it smashes the image, - and that it grows until it fills the whole earth indicates that the stone is the work of God.

If God has given us anything of His Spirit then He has surely given us eyes to discern the difference between the image and the stone cut out by no human hand, between the power of this world, and the power of God. And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down."

Mark 13:1-2 The disciple thought that magnificent buildings were evidence of the Kingdom of God. But that temple was part of Nebuchadnezzar's image ... it would be destroyed. And many of the structures of Christendom, including enterprises which may be dear to our hearts, are as precarious as that temple of old - they are not the Kingdom of God and they will come down. Surely the Spirit of God is giving us eyes to see that many things in the Christian world which look so solid and powerful and even spectacular are in fact no more than houses built on sand.

We don't have to wait until they fall to see it; we can see it now through the Spirit. And that the very things which appear to be fragile and even worthless are in fact part of that Kingdom which will stand forever: The difference between the image and the stone cut from a mountain without hands is that the image just stands there attending to itself while the stone moves, conquers, grows. The stone is alive, it does things, it causes things to happen, it creates, it redeems, it heals, it also brings judgment.

Another parable he put before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." Matthew 13:31-32 ... it grows! He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

Matthew 13:33 ...it leavens! "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." Matthew 13:44 ...it creates joy, ...it brings action! "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Matthew 13:45-46 ... it searches! "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind."

Matthew 13:47 ... it gathers! And the driving life behind it is God himself ... not man. It's God's Kingdom, - He built it ... not we. - He extends it ... not we. We have only two choices in relation to the Kingdom. ...either we yield to it, becoming part of its life, ...or we eliminate ourselves from it by building our own kingdoms, ...especially religious kingdoms which always become part of Nebuchadnezzar's image. Let me say it again: Every time we set out to build some new Christian enterprise to help God out, - whether it's launching a gospel satellite, - importing a gospel clown to Convention Hall to revive our city, - setting up a campaign to evangelize China or smuggle bibles into Russia, unless this thing has been specifically given to us by God we're just smearing some more clay between the toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image.

God's Kingdom is already here ... it is doing exactly what it's supposed to be doing ... it is on schedule. The image is on its way out and the stone cut out by no human hand is on its way in. Our only choice is:

Will we or will we not be part of it? _1. God is building His Kingdom with people who are individually rooted in Him. These people are sustained not by "Christian ambition" or by spiritual vanity, but by an inward, hidden consistent heart-rooted, freely-willed walk with God.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:1-5 Every branch has its own direct connection with the Vine and out of that connection bears fruit. Where it's God's Kingdom, and not some religious fraud, you will see people standing before God, walking before God, on their own two feet. "Though none go with me, still I will follow." The Spirit of God will give you a prayer life which is specifically yours, ...a ministry which was planned for you from before the foundation of the world, ...a combination of gifts different from that of your brothers and sisters, ...a set of trials designed especially for you.

"... a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it." Revelation 2:17 The door of the Kingdom, like the door of birth and death, is only big enough for one at a time. You enter it as a solitary individual; and your walk with God, until your dying day, is your walk with God - no one can walk it for you. Right now both to those inside the Kingdom and to those standing at the door, the Spirit of the Lord says, "Come, draw near.

Get to know me. Walk before me and be blameless." 2. God is building His Kingdom with people who function together. - For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body---Jews or Greeks, slaves or free---and all were made to drink of one Spirit. I Corinthians 12:12-13 In the Kingdom we are neither a cult, nor an individualistic anarchy. We are a body in which all the members, joined to the one head who is Jesus, function together.

If we are not functioning together this is a sure sign that as individuals we are not rightly linked to our head. If we are linked to the head we will function together, and the proof will be that not one soul is lost in the shuffle. If you have a splinter in your little finger your whole body knows it and suffers, cares, works to get it out. That's how it is in the authentic Body of Christ. So somebody needs a ride from the east side...or somebody is going through a trial ... here's a sister who's very very shy ... here's a brother whose mind is confused.

In God's Kingdom these things are taken care of. In an uncanny way somebody becomes aware and moves. If we're rightly linked to our head, our praises are really corporate praises. We really sing, we really give thanks.... and if they need help in the nursery, it comes. Surely if we're yielded to the Spirit of the living God we are learning how to fit in with brothers and sisters -hard ones, soft ones, ...fast ones, slow ones, ...smart ones, ...even the troubled confused ones, ...and especially the wounded ones. 3.

God is building His Kingdom with people who circulate. GO!..... into all the world..... not into an evangelical plastic bubble, where we seem to be in "all the world" but still we're isolated and protected by the Styrofoam shield of pop Christianity. We can begin to go into all the world by really going out into our city, and mixing with folks on the street level. "As the Father has sent me, so send I you." "Behold I send

you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." Circulate out there in the real world to manifest the mercy of God.

Call men and women to repentance. Welcome them into the Kingdom. The clear mark of the presence of the Spirit of God in the midst of an assembly of believers is that they circulate in the world. They go -- into the streets and lanes of the city, -- into the highways and hedges, -- into the hospitals, jails, nursing homes, bars, -- they reach out to people on their jobs, -- they get to know their neighbors. Man-made religious cults withdraw behind some protective shield which keeps them from ever touching the real world. -The Kingdom of God is out there in the real world making real disciples out of real people.

Each of us is joined at this moment by the love of our hearts and the thoughts of our minds and by the action of our bodies, either to the dazzling image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream or to the stone cut out by no human hand. The hand which cut that stone out of the mountain is reaching out to us, eager to make us, and preserve us, as part of His Kingdom. Let the hand of God bring you into a living union with God through Jesus the door ... fit you into the Body.... send you forth empowered to make disciples. God help us to yield to His hand now.

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