

Abide in Me

John 15:4

*Bible studies for disciples
who make disciples*



Volume 9 - Number 8

The Week of December 3, 2023

Advent Series

The Hinge of History

The Rock that Smashes the World

Daniel 2:20-23; 31-45

Welcome to Advent as we prepare for the arrival of Christmas and look to our Lord's return. For the next few *Abides* (December 3, 10, and 17) we will be considering several great prophecies from Daniel and Malachi that prepare us for Jesus' coming. The birth of Christ is the hinge of history. Today, the calendar of history is divided between the world before His arrival and after it. In this week's message, we will read about King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of an image or statue that is ultimately pulverized by a stone uncut by human hands that becomes a huge mountain that fills the earth. It is a stunning picture of the kingdoms of the world conquered by the kingdom of God. It is *how* the kingdom of God conquers the world that is of great interest.

OBSERVATION (*What does the passage say?*)

Before meeting with your Growth Group, read through the passage at least twice and perform the following prompts:

- Place a Δ over every reference to God and associated pronouns in verses 20-23.
- Circle all the attributes of God mentioned in verses 20-23.
- Draw a square around both references to *wisdom and might* (vss. 20,23) and draw an arrow connecting the two.
- In the left margin draw a picture of the image with its four corresponding parts.
- Circle the reference to all four kingdoms that follow in vss. 36-40.
- Label each part of your drawing with its respective kingdom.
- Draw a stone hurtling towards the image.

²⁰ Daniel answered and said:

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
to whom belong wisdom and might.

²¹ He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings;

he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding;

²² he reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what is in the darkness,
and the light dwells with him.

²³ To you, O God of my fathers,

I give thanks and praise,
for you have given me wisdom and might,
and have now made known to me what we asked of you,
for you have made known to us the king's matter."

³¹ “You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening.

³² The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

³⁴ As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ 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.

³⁶ “This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. ³⁷ You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, ³⁸ and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. ³⁹ Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. ⁴¹ And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. ⁴² And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. ⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ⁴⁵ just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”

INTERPRETATION (*What does the passage mean?*)

1. Why did Nebuchadnezzar ask his counselors to tell him his dream instead of telling them his dream first?
2. What aspects of God's character cause Daniel to break out in praise in verses 20-23?
3. How does Daniel ensure that God gets the glory and not him?

4. What are, most likely, the four kingdoms represented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream? Why does it matter?

5. What or who is the key focus of the interpretation of the dream?

6. Which advent or coming of the Lord is captured in the stone that becomes a mountain?

APPLICATION (*How does the passage apply to our lives?*)

1. How do you respond—normally or naturally—to a difficult situation? What can we learn from Daniel's example on how to react in a crisis (verses 14-18)?

2. Re-read through Daniel's prayer in Daniel 2:20-23. What stands out to you about Daniel's prayer, and how should this impact our response to when God is active in our lives?

3. Why does the history of the world leading up to the birth of Christ matter?

4. How does the picture of the rock smashing the image and finally becoming a mountain inspire you and give you hope?

