

# The kingdoms in the world

**Deltacourse**

*A discipleship training to equip Christians for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-16)*

# 15

## QUIET TIME

**Theme: God's kingdom and the kingdoms of the world**

- Try to make a specific time every day to meet Jesus Christ through reading and meditating his Word.
- Pray, talk with Jesus Christ and make a few short notes about this Bible passage in your notebook.
- Record what you discover, what speaks to your mind and heart, what you find difficult or what you understand.

- Day 1 Psalm 24:1-10  
God's kingdom is God's sovereign kingship over all and everything
- Day 2 Isaiah 14:24-27  
God is the almighty Ruler over the kingdoms on earth
- Day 3 Isaiah 31:1-3  
All who rely on help from worldly kingdoms perish
- Day 4 Exodus 1:1-22  
The kingdom of Egypt oppresses God's people (1527 B.C.)
- Day 5 Exodus 14:5-31  
God punishes the kingdom of Egypt (1447 B.C.)
- Day 6 Isaiah 8:6-15  
God uses the kingdom of Assyria as instrument to punish Israel (734 B.C.) (cf. Isaiah 10:5-19)
- Day 7 Isaiah 10:20-34  
God punishes the mighty kingdom of Assyria (701 B.C.)
- Day 8 Isaiah 37:21-37.  
An angel defeats the kingdom of Assyria
- Day 9 Isaiah 13:1-22  
God uses the kingdom of Medo-Persia as instrument to punish the kingdom of Babylonia (538 B.C.)
- Day 10<sup>BS</sup> Daniel 8:1-27  
The kingdoms of the world in the light of the kingdom of God
- Think about Daniel 6:11. Daniel had a good custom: he talked to God three times a day.
  - Which good custom would you like to adopt?
  - Pray every day for someone or something specific and wait in expectation for what God is going to do (Psalm 5:3).

## STUDY

**Theme: The fourth continuous theme in the Bible: the triumph of God's kingdom**

Read study 15 carefully before the next meeting. If you have questions, write them down and mail them to one of your group leaders. We will seek an answer together.

## BIBLE STUDY

**Theme: The kingdoms of the world in the light of God's kingdom**

If you like, you may already prepare the Bible Study for the coming meeting by reading through the Bible passage. Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method. The Bible passage is: **Daniel 8:1-27**

## MEMORISATION

### 1. Motivation

Jesus memorised Bible verses (Luke 4:4-13). Are you doing that?

### 2. Memorisation

Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

### THE TRIUMPH OF GOD'S KINGDOM

**Daniel 2:44**

In the time of those kings,  
the God of heaven will set up a kingdom  
that will never be destroyed,  
nor will it be left to another people.  
It will crush all those kingdoms  
and bring them to an end,  
but it will itself endure forever.

**Daniel 2:44** (NIV)

### 3. Review and back-review

Review the last 5 memorised verses once every day and back-review all other memorised verses once every three weeks.

### 4. Review of the Bible books

- 5 books of the law
- 12 historical books (the early prophets)
- 5 poetical books
- 5 major prophets (the latter prophets)
- 12 minor prophets (the latter prophets).

# 15. The fourth continuous

## Theme: The triumph of God's kingdom

The book of Daniel is an 'apocalypse', i.e. a book that reveals God's perspective on the events of God's history of salvation in the history of the world. The writer of the book Daniel explains how God looks at the history of the world. This study explains Daniel chapter 2.<sup>1</sup>

### DANIEL 2: THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the mighty Babylonian Empire, had a dream. He saw an impressive great statue. Its head was of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron and its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. Then Nebuchadnezzar saw how a rock was cut out without the help of human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed it. The statue was struck on its weakest part! The clay, iron, bronze, silver and gold were not smashed one after the other, but *together* and became like chaff on a threshing floor, swept away by the wind without leaving a trace! But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. Daniel explains the dream as follows (2:36-45):

#### A. The identity of the four regimes in the empire of the world

##### 1. The materials used in the statue

In the political and religious context gold and silver are standard symbols of what is precious and majestic; while bronze and iron are symbols of what is strong and hard. Daniel does not say that the materials deteriorate from the top to the bottom. The statue represents a kingdom in the world with impressive beauty and strength. But the clay points to weakness, instability and transitoriness. It represents the opposite of what is expressed in the four metals.

The political and military might of kings and the kingdoms in the world are like this huge statue, but it has feet of clay – it always has a weak spot that threatens the stability and durability of the kings and their kingdoms. Only one rock needs to strike the statue on its weak spot and it collapses!

##### 2. The first regime (system of government)

The word 'malku' in Aramaic means a regime or the reign of a king (6:29), his royal authority or sovereignty (5:18), his royal territory or kingdom (4:18) or it refers to an empire in the world consisting of various royal dynasties (7:23).

*Traditionally* these four 'malku' have been interpreted as the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greek Empire and the Roman Empire. But because Nebuchadnezzar himself is the head of the whole statue, the four 'malku' rather refer to the reign of four kings over a single empire! The statue represents the Babylonian Empire that passes from Nebuchadnezzar to other Babylonian kings. Nebuchadnezzar is 'the king of kings', but Daniel puts the emphasis on the fact that Nebuchadnezzar only rules because the God of heaven had given *him* this dominion, power, might and glory (2:37)! God is 'the Lord of de kings' (2:47; cf. Revelation 1:5; 19:16)!

##### 3. The three other regimes

The three other regimes are not identified, remain indirect references and must not be interpreted. Jeremiah prophesies about *the history* of Babylon: "Al nations will serve him (Nebuchadnezzar) and his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes (after 70 years); then many nations and great kings will subjugate him" (Jeremiah 27:7). Daniel adapts Jeremiah's words about *the history of the world to the theological form* of four regimes.

The four regimes show no logical order of degeneration. Just as 'the four corners of the earth' (Revelation 20:8) represent the whole earth, so 'the four regimes' represent all the regimes or kingdoms in the world within the history of the world.

Daniel refers in passing to the second and third regime and then concentrates on the fourth regime. The fourth regime is an oppressing power that smashes everything as iron, yet is unexpectedly brittle as clay (2:41-42). It tries to overcome this weakness and division, possibly by a marriage to another regime, but fails (2:43).

The four regimes do not refer to Nebuchadnezzar and three of his Babylonian successors, because then 'the rock' would have to represent Cyrus (cf. Isaiah 41:2). Daniel does not describe the coming of Cyrus the Persian as 'the end of the Babylonian Empire' or 'the end of the Babylonian exile' of Judah in Babylon. The coming of Cyrus makes no difference for the Babylonian Empire or for the exiles.

<sup>1</sup> A summary of John E. Goldingay, *Daniel, Word Biblical Commentary*, 1989

## The four regimes to which Daniel refers are:

- (1) The regime of Nebuchadnezzar over the whole earth (605–562 B.C.) (2:36-38; 5:18-19).
- (2) The weak and divided regime of Belshazzar (550–539 B.C.), the son of Nabonidus (556–539 B.C.), who was ‘the second highest ruler’ in the kingdom after Nabonidus (2:39a; 5:27-30).
- (3) The regime of Darius the Mede over the whole earth (539–538 B.C.) (2:39b; 5:30 – 6:1; 6:26-27). Darius the Mede took over the Babylonian kingdom at the age of 62 (5:31). After the taking of Babel in 539 B.C. Daniel speaks of ‘the first year of Darius the Mede’ (9:1; 11:1) and thereafter of ‘the third year of Cyrus’ (10:1). This means that the two years of Darius the Mede were allotted to the reign of Cyrus. Apparently Darius the Mede only ruled over Babylon for two years by the grace of Cyrus and simultaneously with Cyrus (6:28).
- (4) The regime of Cyrus the Persian (559–530 B.C.). From 539 B.C. he reigned over the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus was known for his victories in military campaigns and his irresistible power (Isaiah 41:2-3,25; 44:28; 45:1-4,13). The fourth regime is said to be divided. Apparently Cyrus was half Mede and half Persian. He was married to a Persian.

All the above facts show that the Medes and Persians did not establish a new empire in the world, but only brought a new dynasty to the history of ‘the empire of the world’ which already existed.

The four regimes span the period from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus. The coming of the Medes and Persians during this period did not make an end of the dominion of the empire of the world (here represented by the Babylonian Empire) over the people of God, as the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11-14) and the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 13:19-22; 43:14; 44:27 – 45:4) had promised. The implied readers of the book of Daniel during the Medo-Persian period were probably disillusioned and depressed like those whom the prophets Haggai (Haggai 2:3) and Zechariah (Zechariah 1:12) addressed (520 B.C.). Daniel urged them to hold on to the conviction that the colossus would not stand forever! The kingdom of the world has feet of clay! This is the message of Daniel chapter 2 however the parts of the statue are identified.

## B. The identity of the rock

The rock, which was cut out of a mountain without any human assistance (2:45), smashed the regimes or dynasties of the kingdom of the world and grew until it became a huge mountain that filled the whole earth (2:35). This rock symbolises God’s power and sovereignty in establishing his everlasting kingdom! The explanation clearly says that the new regime is of divine origin (2:44).

The message that the God of the Bible has sovereign power to establish his kingdom is also the message of ‘Mount Zion’ (Isaiah 2:2-3; Ezekiel 17:23-24; Psalm 2:6; 48:2-3; cf. Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 14:1). Isaiah has a similar message: The God of the Bible is the sanctuary for his people, but will become the stone that causes the fall of the governments and empires of the world, because they trust in their worldly kings and kingdoms. Isaiah refers to the king of Assyria. (Isaiah 8:6-8,11-15; cf. Revelation 13:1).

## C. The scheme of four regimes

*The scheme of four regimes represents the governments of the kingdom of the world in every period of human history.*

In Daniel chapter 2 the fourth regime is represented by the regime of king Cyrus in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and the four regimes of the colossus stand model for what will happen to the regimes of the world in the history of the world – they will ultimately be replaced by the sovereign reign of God (2:44)!

In Daniel chapter 7 and 8 the fourth regime is represented by king Antiochus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. who waged war against the saints (God’s people) and defeated them until God (the Ancient of Days) came and pronounced judgment in favour of the saints of the Most High and the time came when they possessed the kingdom (7:21-22)!

The readers of the book of Daniel lived during the second century B.C. under the terrible oppression of another king than Cyrus, namely king Antiochus IV (175–163 B.C.). The book of Daniel was God’s message of encouragement for his people in that crisis, during which king Antiochus had forbidden the worship of the God of the Bible, desecrated the temple of Jerusalem and burned the books of the Law in 167 B.C. (Read this history in the apocryphal books of 1 Maccabees 1:1-64 and 2 Maccabees 5:11-26) (cf. lesson 15).

The book of Daniel describes in one sweep the history of the kingdom of the world from the reign of king Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century B.C. to the reign of king Antiochus in the second century B.C. The direct rule or reign of the kingdom of the world over the people of

God (here represented by Israel during the exile) began with king Nebuchadnezzar in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. This suppression of the people of God by the kingdom of the world did not stop with king Nebuchadnezzar, but was continued until king Antiochus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.

At the beginning the reign or kingdom of the world is still described in positive terms. The power and glory that God gives to the regime or kingdom of the world deserved admiration (2:37-38; cf. Romans 13:1-7). But in her appearance the power of this kingdom of the world is depicted as a statue that is as hard as iron (cf. Revelation 13:1-2), but as brittle as clay (2:40-43)! The governments of this world are as hard as iron, but simultaneously as brittle as baked clay that sticks to the iron. The governments of the world always have a weak spot, which they desperately try to prop up by worldly means that are doomed to fail! The kingdom of the world is ultimately and finally smashed by the kingdom of God: represented by 'the rock' in Daniel 2:44, by 'God's judgment' in Daniel 7:21-22,26 and by 'divine power' in Daniel 8:25!

While the prophecy of Jeremiah did not look further than *the destruction* of the Babylonian Empire (Jeremiah 25:12-14), the message of Daniel proclaims *the establishment* of a completely different sovereignty or kingdom (2:44). 'The rock' symbolises God's power and sovereignty in establishing his everlasting kingdom, namely, the kingdom of God (cf. Matthew 21:42-44).

*Within the history of the world, the kingdom of God ultimately and finally smashes all the regimes or kingdoms of the world and grows to become a huge mountain that fills the earth.*

Christians miss the message of the book of Daniel when they waste their time in arguing about the identity of the four regimes in Daniel chapter 2. What was important for the readers of the book of Daniel was that the fourth regime or kingdom of the world would be followed by the kingdom of God!

When later generations of the people of God (Christians today) *apply* this scheme of four regimes to the history of the world in which they live, they respond to the message of Daniel in the way God desires!

## D. Daniel presents a theology of the history of the world

### 1. The history of God's people becomes a part of the history of all the nations of the world

The vision of Daniel does not concentrate on the history of Israel as the other Old Testament prophets do, but focuses on the history of the world! *It does not limit itself to the history of salvation of God's people in the world, but presents a theology of the history of the kingdoms in the world!*

The history of the nations in the world in Genesis chapters 1 to 11 is from Genesis chapter 12 onwards *narrowed down* to the history of one nation, God's people (Israel) in the world. The history of God's people in the world spans from Abraham (2092 B.C.) (Genesis 12:1-5) to the exile of God's people to Babylon during the three invasions of Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. (2 Kings 24:1-4), in 597 B.C. (2 Kings 24:8-17) and in 587 B.C. (2 Kings 25:1-12).

Nebuchadnezzar made an end to the reign of the Davidic kings in Jerusalem and ruled over the first Gentile kingdom that reigned over the people of God in the history of the world. From the exile of Israel to Babylon onwards the confined history of God's people (from Abraham to the exile) is *broadened again* to the history of the nations in the world (from the exile onwards). Since that time (the time of the exile) Israel and the Jews became a part of the history of the nations in the world (and the Church and Christians today are still a part of the history of the nations and non-Christians in the world)! From Daniel's perspective the history of the nations became the history of the reign (or kingship, kingdom) of the God of the Bible, even when the kingdoms in the world do not realise or acknowledge that (cf. Psalm 24:1; 145:13; 146:10; Jeremiah 10:10)!

During the Old Testament period this reign of God is most visible in what happens to the kingdoms in the world (God sets up kings and deposes them) (2:21). But during the New Testament period this reign (or kingship) of the God of the Bible is established in the hearts of Christians (Luke 17:20-21) and is most visible in the lives of Christians (cf. the Sermon on the Mount and the parables of Jesus).

The book of Daniel does not say that the history of the kingdoms in the world opposes or goes against God and his purpose for his people. But it does say that the regimes or kingdoms of the world, including those under which the people of God must live in the future, stand under the power and sovereignty of the God of the Bible in the same (though indirect) way as the kings of Judah stood before the exile (cf. Isaiah 14:24-27).

God sets the reign of the governments (regimes or kingdoms) of the world in motion, but also terminates them (2:21; cf. Romans 13:1-2 and Revelation 17:12-14). Compare this with the Lamb that breaks the seven seals of the scroll in heaven and thereby reveals and sets in motion the history of the world and the history of the Church within this world (Revelation chapters 5 and 6) and at the end of the history of the world permanently terminates the reign of the final antichrist and his allies (the nations with their kings that follow that antichrist) (Revelation 19:19-20)!

## **2. The history of the world is not explicitly condemned as being evil**

The vision of Daniel does not suggest a cosmic duality of four evil kingdoms of the world against one good kingdom of God. His vision does not condemn the fourth regime or kingdom more than the other three. The readers of the book of Daniel knew that they lived under an earthly power (the worldly kingdom of Antiochus) that was capable of terrible violence and destruction. Nevertheless, that worldly kingdom's ability to oppress and to smash is not 'bad' in itself, because the reign of the God of the Bible has that same ability, namely, to smash and completely obliterate the kingdom of the world (2:44)!

The fourth regime or kingdom of the world ultimately falls because it was brittle – it had feet of clay. The kingdoms of the world are and will remain a work of merely man (cf. Revelation 13:18)!

## **3. The history of the world is not predetermined by God, but God is sovereign in the history of the world**

The revelation in the book of Daniel hints that the history of the world is known by God before it happens, but not that the history of the world is determined by God before the foundation of the earth. Daniel does *not* speak of a division of the history of the world into several 'dispensations', which have been determined previously by God.

Daniel also does not speak of a dualism; about a world that lies in the power of the evil one and is waiting for the coming new world in which only righteousness will dwell. The revelation of Daniel assumes that people (kings) make real decisions and choices that form the history of this world, but these human decisions and choices do not necessarily have the final word. Daniel chapter 2 affirms the absolute sovereignty of the God of the Bible within the history of the kingdoms in the world, which sometimes works via the human decision-making process and sometimes in spite of it.

## **4. The history of the world does not come to an end in Daniel chapter 2**

The vision of Daniel does not suggest that the end of the history of the world is imminent. There is no indication that the history of the world has reached such a low point that God must take action. The book of Daniel hints that with God's permission the history of the world progresses according to its own laws, sometimes forward and sometimes backwards; that the history of the world takes its ever-changing course.

## **5. When God acts within the history of the world, then the coming of God's kingdom is accompanied by catastrophes**

But there comes a time when God will act! God acts at a point of time that is known only to him! It is impossible to predict that point of time, because God can at any moment intervene in the history of the world. Gods acting in the history of the kingdoms in the world proceeds from his complete free and sovereign will and for reasons which he alone knows and has not revealed to us (cf. Isaiah 55:8-9; cf. Romans 9:17)!

When God's time has come to act, then the kingship or kingdom of God demands the destruction of the regimes or kingdoms of the world rather than acting through them. For the time being the human kingdoms are in accordance with God's will. However, not for always! When God's moment to act has arrived, then the coming of the kingdom of God is accompanied by catastrophes and destruction (Jeremiah 18:5-10)!

## **E. The coming kingdom of God in the book of Daniel**

### **1. The coming kingdom of God is a kingdom on earth**

Daniel 2:41-43 does not say that the fourth regime consists of a dynasty of several kings instead of one king. That is why the words: "In the time (days) of those kings" (2:44) refers to the three kings mentioned in the book that succeed Nebuchadnezzar (Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus).

Daniel also does not say that the fourth regime is followed by a fifth regime. The four regimes are followed by something completely different, namely, the kingdom of God. Daniel does not predict the prolonging of the current time and events, but promises a completely new future. His notion about 'the kingdom of God' approaches that of 'the Day of the Lord' in the other prophets when God terminates earthly kingdoms. The kingdom of God has a supernatural, divine origin. Nevertheless it is localized on earth. Daniel does not envision the disintegration of the universe and also not the creation of a new universe.

The problems accompanying worldly politics and the history of the kingdoms (governments) in the world can only be solved by a supernatural intervention of God by establishing a new kingship or kingdom, namely, the kingdom of God!

This does not require the dissolution of this world, but rather changing the reign over this world! The new kingdom is the kingdom of God and it fills the whole earth. The history of the world is not destroyed, but the political and military powers of the kingdoms of the world are destroyed!

## **2. The coming kingdom of God is not an Israelite kingdom**

Daniel views 'the rock' not as representing the kingdom of Israel. He emphasises that the wisdom and power belong to God (2:20-22). Daniel chapter 2 contains no reference to Israel as the people of God and also no reference that the land of Israel, the city of Jerusalem or the temple has any special significance. Daniel does not speak about 'the remnant' of the people of God as the prophet Isaiah does (Isaiah 1:9; 10:20-23). He does not speak about the coming Messiah and also not about the destiny of humanity. *The whole focus of Daniel is directed on the sovereign reign (kingship or kingdom) of God within the history of the world.*

## **3. The coming kingdom of God is also not changed into a different kind of kingdom**

Some expositors think that Isaiah chapters 40 to 55 is a promise to realise the kingdom of God in Israel after the return from exile. But after the termination of the exile this kingdom in Israel never materialised! The history of the world simply continued. The reaction of Daniel was not to change the kingship or kingdom of God into a national kingdom, as if the kingdom had to be limited to Israel.

He does not change the kingship or kingdom of God into something individual, as if the kingship of God had to be realised only in the life of an individual believer.

He also does not change the kingdom into something super mundane, as if the kingship or kingdom of God could only be realised in heaven. Daniel proclaims that the kingship or kingdom of God is realised within creation and within human history. The kingship or kingdom of God concerns human beings living here and now on earth, just as the prophecies of Isaiah chapter 40 to 55 also proclaim.

## **4. The coming kingdom of God is more a matter of expectation than fact**

The kingdoms of the world are not in reality what they seem to be at the present time. They may seem attractive and strong, but in reality are evil and weak. In the kingdom of the world the kings do what they like,

magnify themselves above God and say unheard of things against God (11:36). But they will stumble and fall, to be seen no more (11:19)!

Also the kingdom (kingship) of God is not yet visibly on earth what she in fact already is! The kingdom of God has not yet made a definite end to all these other kingdoms in the world (2:44) and has not yet filled the whole earth (2:35).

Things still remain hidden and sealed until the time of the end (12:9). What the kingdom of the world in reality already is (namely 'completely evil'), has not yet been exposed. And what the kingdom of God in reality already is (namely 'completely righteous'), has not yet been revealed. When the kingdom of the world will be fully exposed and the kingdom of God will be fully revealed, the wicked people will only be wicked and the righteous people will only be righteous (enlightened, purified, spotless and refined) (12:10; cf. Revelation 22:10-11).

What the events and realities in the history of the kingdoms in world seem to be (as reported by the mass media) are not yet what they in essence already are (as viewed from God's perspective).

*The book of Daniel is not a prophecy* in the sense of a prediction about future events, because the events in the kingdom of the world were already taking place in Daniel's time and are already taking place in our time. *The book of Daniel is a sealed apocalypse* (12:9-10), while the book of Revelation is an unlocked apocalypse (Revelation 22:10-11)! *Apocalypses unveil or reveal the true character of the history of the world!*

The events in the history of the world from man's point of view are in essence not yet what they already are from God's point of view. When the seals of the scroll in heaven are broken, these realities become visible: Jesus Christ reveals them and sets them in motion (Revelation chapter 5 and 6). Then comes in reality what already exists in principle. *Then one can no longer view the history of the world by itself (secularly, without taking God into account), but must view the history of the world against the background of what God in heaven is doing.*

The kingdom (kingship) of God really began in the New Testament with the first coming of Christ (Mark 1:15; Matthew 12:28; Ephesians 1:20-22). However, in our present time it has not yet been fully manifested (Matthew 25:34; Revelation 11:15). That is why Christians continue to pray: "Your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10)!

## 5. The coming kingdom of God is an everlasting kingdom

The characteristics and qualities of the coming kingdom are not described. Daniel only says that it is the kingdom of the God of the Bible (and not of any god of the other religions) and that it will endure forever! The characteristics of the kingdom of God form a contrast with those of the foregoing kingdoms of the world. For a short period dominion, power, might and glory were given to Nebuchadnezzar (2:37). But now these characteristics are manifested in another place and forever. “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen” (Matthew 6:13; cf. 1 Chronicles 29:11-12).

This dominant thought with respect to ‘the time’ appears again and again. The kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar cannot endure forever (2:39; cf. 2:21a), but the kingdom of the God of the Bible will certainly endure forever (2:44; cf. Isaiah 9:7)!

## 6. The coming kingdom of God was not established in the time of Daniel

The vision of Daniel was not fulfilled in the historical period to which the book of Daniel refers (i.e. the second century B.C.). Just as in the prophetic books, ‘the Day of the Lord’ seems to be near; but then the years move along and people ask: “Where is the coming he promised?” (2 Peter 3:4; Ezekiel 12:22; Matthew 24:48).

Likewise in Daniel’s vision. The kingdom or empires of the world which the writer of the book Daniel and his readers during the second century B.C. knew from history (the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire and the Greek-Syrian Empire) had already passed away. The reign of God in Jerusalem had been restored, first after the return from exile (when the temple was rebuilt in 516 B.C.) and later after the cleansing of the temple (which Antiochus had defiled in 164 B.C.). Thus, the readers of the book Daniel were aware that they had witnessed the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies in part (the return from exile, the restoration of the land and the rebuilding of the temple). That is why they were convinced that the words of the prophets would be fulfilled in God’s perfect time.

## 7. The coming kingdom of God began to be fulfilled at the first coming of Christ

At the beginning of the New Testament period ‘the rock’ in Daniel 2:44 was associated with the other ‘rock’ passages in the Bible. Jesus Christ, the stone which the builders (the leaders of Israel) rejected (Psalm 118:22), has become the capstone (Matthew 21:42).

Jesus Christ sees himself as this capstone over which some people stumble and are broken to pieces and as the capstone which falls on others (and their human kingdoms) and they are crushed (Matthew 21:42-44; Luke 20:17-18; cf. Isaiah 8:13-15). Jesus Christ sees himself as ‘the rock’, the real embodiment of the kingship (sovereign reign) or kingdom of God!

Nevertheless, there is no indication in the book of Daniel that Daniel understood ‘the rock’ to represent the kingship and kingdom of the Messiah himself.

According to the later conviction of Christians, Jesus Christ appeared to be the One who caused the ultimate fall of the regime or kingdom of the world and set the establishment of the kingship or kingdom of God in motion (Mark 1:15; Revelation 17:14).