

The Providence of God (12) **God's Providential Dealings with the Nations**

Last Lord's Day I had assumed that we had completed our study of God's providential working in history. But as this week unfolded another matter of importance came to mind that caused me to devote at least today to address it. We had recently considered God's providential dealings with the His elect, the ones whom God chose in eternity whom He purposed to save from their sins unto Himself. We also gave our attention to God's providential working among the reprobate, who are all those God passed by when He chose His people, allowing the reprobate to remain in their sins onto their final judgment and just punishment. These subjects had to do with God's dealings with individuals. But to do justice to our treatment of God's providence, we should consider God's acts of providence with respect to the nations of the world, not nations ethnically, but politically. God is the King of the nations, overruling them through history according to His purpose to glorify Himself through His providence.

Let us begin our study of this subject by reading **Jeremiah 18:1ff**. In this oracle of Jeremiah, God spoke of His just dealings with Judah and of His intention to bring judgment upon the nation. He described Himself as a potter who had the right and privilege to shape the nation into a vessel of His choosing, according to the purpose for which He intended it. Within this oracle God spoke of His sovereign dealings with all the nations of the world.

The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying: ²“Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.” ³Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. ⁴And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make.

⁵Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ⁶“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the LORD. “Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel! ⁷The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, ⁸if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. ⁹And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, ¹⁰if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

¹¹“Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.”’” (Jer. 18:1-11)

Here we read of the sovereignty of God over the nations, with God's particular care and concern for Israel. As a potter chooses what he purposes to fashion out of clay, God chooses the reason or purpose for the nations that He has created and over which He rules. Just as He deals with any generic nation (cf. v. 7), so He deals according to justice with His people as a nation. God declared through Jeremiah that He purposed to judge His people, that He purposed to bring disaster upon Israel due to its sins.

Now when we speak of God's providential works in history, we need to consider them according to two levels or two different perspectives. First, we know that God has decreed in eternity all that takes place in history. There is nothing that occurs in the life of any nation at any time but that which He controls, as He works out His purposes in all things. And yet there is second level or perspective, which is suggested here. There are times when God describes Himself as though He were standing aloof from a nation, as though He were letting them have their way. God allows that nation to direct its own existence according to the dictates of the people who rule over that nation and those living within that nation. It would seem that God sits passively by as these nations pursue their own goals and agenda until such time God purposes to intervene, when He brings His judgment within history upon them. God watches and assesses the behavior of the

collective people of a nation. If He has purposed to overthrow a nation, but the behavior of the people turns from its evil, God turns from His intention to punish that nation. On the other hand, if God intended to bless a nation, but it persists in unrighteous practice, God will relent of the good He would have brought to the people and He would judge that nation within history. And so God lets people have *their* way. He establishes nations, allows them to continue, but when they reach a certain level of degeneracy in their national life, God overthrows them within history. And so God is the sovereign Ruler of all the nations. This is the nature of the Kingdom of God respecting God's Rule over the creation of His hands.

We may consider a number of statements of God's Word that touches on this matter of God waiting within history before He sends forth His judgment upon a people. For example we read that God would first send Israel into slavery for 400 years before bringing them into His land of Promise. The reason God gave to Abraham was that the present nation in the land, which Israel would later possess, had not yet given itself over to evil to a degree that it warranted God's destruction of them. We read of this in **Genesis 15:13-16**.

¹³Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶But in the fourth generation they shall return here, *for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full/complete*" (Gen. 15:13-16)

Now let us consider our subject of God's providential working with nations in history by answering several questions that we may pose.

I. First, does God judge nations within history? Of course He does. God in His acts of providence administers justice within history. It might be argued that He must do so in order to be true to Himself. Our founding fathers recognized this and stated so. They argued that a nation's laws must be just laws and they must be justly administered. For though God will judge individuals on the Day of Judgment, and therefore they may not receive their full recompense in this life, justice will be rendered fully and faithfully upon individuals by the Lord on Judgment Day. But with nations this cannot be the case. God cannot judge a nation as a political entity on the Day of Judgment, that is a time in which only individual persons stand before God. Therefore in order for God to be just, He must administer justice upon nations within history. Whereas a sinning individual may not reap what he sows in this life, but reaps fully on the Day of Judgment what he has sown in this life, a nation must reap what it sows within history.

That God does judge nations in history is clearly demonstrated in God's Word. There are passages of Scripture, lengthy passages of Scripture, in which nations of the world are identified and the reasons for God's impending judgment are pronounced. We may consider the opening chapters of the prophecy of **Amos**.

We first read that ***God identified Himself as the Lord who rules over all***. **Amos 1:1-2** read,

The words of Amos, who was among the sheep breeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

²And he said:

"The LORD roars from Zion,
And utters His voice from Jerusalem;
The pastures of the shepherds mourn,
And the top of Carmel withers."

The prophet then begins to speak forth the words of God's judgment upon various nations in the region. **(1) He first addressed the nation of Syria, with its capital city of Damascus.** We read in Amos 1:3-5:

³Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of *Damascus*, and for four,
I will not turn away its punishment,
Because they have threshed Gilead with implements of iron.
⁴But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael,
Which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad.
⁵I will also break the gate bar of Damascus,
And cut off the inhabitant from the Valley of Aven,
And the one who holds the scepter from Beth Eden.
The people of Syria shall go captive to Kir.”

(2) *He next addressed the nation of Philistia with its major city of Gaza.* We read in Amos 1:6ff:

⁶Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of *Gaza*, and for four,
I will not turn away its punishment,
Because they took captive the whole captivity
To deliver them up to Edom.
⁷But I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza,
Which shall devour its palaces.
⁸I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod,
And the one who holds the scepter from Ashkelon;
I will turn My hand against Ekron,
And the remnant of the Philistines shall perish.”

(3) *We then read of the judgment of God pronounced against the coastal nation of Tyre.* We read in Amos 1:9-10:

⁹Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of *Tyre*, and for four,
I will not turn away its punishment,
Because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom,
And did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.
¹⁰But I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre,
Which shall devour its palaces.”

(4) *The Lord next pronounced His judgment against Edom.* We read in Amos 1:11-12:

¹¹Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of *Edom*, and for four,
I will not turn away its punishment,
Because he pursued his brother with the sword,
And cast off all pity;
His anger tore perpetually,
And he kept his wrath forever.
¹²But I will send a fire upon Teman,
Which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.”

(5) *The Lord mentions the nation of Ammon on this list.* We read in Amos 1:13-15:

¹³Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of the people of *Ammon*, and for four,
I will not turn away its punishment,
Because they ripped open the women with child in Gilead,
That they might enlarge their territory.

¹⁴But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah,
And it shall devour its palaces,
Amid shouting in the day of battle,
And a tempest in the day of the whirlwind.

¹⁵Their king shall go into captivity,
He and his princes together,”
Says the LORD.

We read continue to read in chapter 2 that Amos identified several more nations as having God’s judgment upon them.

(6) *The nation of Moab is said to have been under God’s judgment and sentenced to destruction.*
Amos 2:1-3 read:

^{2:1}Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of *Moab*, and for four,
I will not turn away its punishment,
Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.

²But I will send a fire upon Moab,
And it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth;
Moab shall die with tumult,
With shouting and trumpet sound.

³And I will cut off the judge from its midst,
And slay all its princes with him,”
Says the LORD.

The final two nations listed, being seventh and eighth, are Judah and Israel, the southern and northern kingdoms respectively. They are listed alongside the other nations that are under God’s judgment to show that they were as guilty and deserving of God’s judgment as the other nations. God deals with nations within history according to a strict standard of righteousness, executing His judgment upon transgressors.

(7) *We read of Judah under the wrath of God.* Amos 2:4-5 read,

⁴Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of *Judah*, and for four,
I will not turn away its punishment,
Because they have despised the law of the LORD,
And have not kept His commandments.
Their lies lead them astray,
Lies which their fathers followed.

⁵But I will send a fire upon Judah,

And it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.”

(8) *Last we read of Israel under the judgment of God.* Amos 2:6-8 read,

⁶Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of *Israel*, and for four,
I will not turn away its punishment,
Because they sell the righteous for silver,
And the poor for a pair of sandals.

⁷They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor,
And pervert the way of the humble.
A man and his father go in to the same girl,
To defile My holy name.

⁸They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge,
And drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.

II. *In what ways does God bring His judgment upon nations within history?*

We read further in Amos 4 of the various ways in which the judgment of God was manifest upon Israel. God had administered various kinds of temporal judgments that He brought upon the nation. We may learn through this passage the manner in which God judges all nations in history.

(1) First we read of God’s judgment by bringing *famine* upon the people. We read in Amos 4:6:

“Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities,
And lack of bread in all your places;
Yet you have not returned to Me,” Says the LORD.

(2) God executes His temporal judgment upon nations through bringing upon them *floods* and *draughts*. This is mentioned in Amos 4:7.

⁷“I also withheld rain from you,
When there were still three months to the harvest.
I made it rain on one city,
I withheld rain from another city.
One part was rained upon,
And where it did not rain the part withered.

⁸So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water,
But they were not satisfied;
Yet you have not returned to Me,”
Says the LORD.

(3) We read of God’s judgment by bringing *crop failure* upon the people. Amos 4:9 reads,

⁹“I blasted you with blight and mildew.
When your gardens increased,
Your vineyards,
Your fig trees,
And your olive trees,
The locust devoured them;

Yet you have not returned to Me,”
Says the LORD.

(4) God’s judgment in history takes place through *disease* and *war* that He brings upon a nation. Amos 4:10 reads,

¹⁰“I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt;
Your young men I killed with a sword,
Along with your captive horses;
I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils;
Yet you have not returned to Me,”
Says the LORD.

III. How are God’s special acts of judgment in history commonly described in the Scriptures? The judgments of God in history are often depicted as a manifestation of the Kingdom of God. This idea is communicated in different ways. They include these ideas:

1. The Coming of God.

The Old Testament portrays God as Israel’s King Who comes to rescue His people from their enemies in order to deliver them from slavery and oppression and to bring them to a place of safety where they may dwell with Him.

(1) This is how God is portrayed in the event of the Exodus of Israel from bondage in Egypt. God came from Sinai to Egypt and led them out with His mighty hand back to Sinai.

(2) King David described his rescue from Saul as a “coming of God” to judge his enemies.

I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised;
So shall I be saved from my enemies.

⁴The pangs of death surrounded me,
And the floods of ungodliness made me afraid.

⁵The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.

⁶In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried out to my God;
He heard my voice from His temple,
And my cry came before Him, even to His ears.

⁷Then the earth shook and trembled;
The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken,
Because He was angry.

⁸Smoke went up from His nostrils,
And devouring fire from His mouth;
Coals were kindled by it.

⁹***He bowed the heavens also, and came down***
With darkness under His feet.

¹⁰And He rode upon a cherub, and flew;
He flew upon the wings of the wind.

¹¹He made darkness His secret place;
His canopy around Him was dark waters
And thick clouds of the skies.

¹²From the brightness before Him,
His thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of fire. (Psa. 18:1-12)

(3) God showed Himself as King when His people were in exile in **Babylon** (6th c. BC). God promised that He would come to them and bring them out of exile and lead them back to their land. God came to save His people from Babylon where they had been held in captivity for 70 years. **Isaiah 40:10-11** tells of this event. It speaks of the deliverance that God as King of Israel brought to them through Cyrus the Persian.

Behold, *the Lord GOD shall come* with a strong hand,
And His arm shall rule for Him;
Behold, His reward is with Him,
And His work before Him.

¹¹He will feed His flock like a shepherd;
He will gather the lambs with His arm,
And carry them in His bosom,
And gently lead those who are with young.

2. The Visitation of God

The manifestation of God's judgment in history is often set forth as the visitation of God. This idea of the kingdom carries the thought that God comes to inspect and render justice to the situation that He finds.

(1) When **Sodom** and **Gomorrah** were destroyed, it was after a divine visitation in which God, through two angels, inspected the city and its inhabitants (Genesis 19:1ff).

(2) Again, when God would come to **Egypt** to bring out His people in the great Exodus, it was described as a visitation. When Joseph was dying, he gave this prophecy of Israel's future deliverance which took place through Moses: "And Joseph said unto his brethren, 'I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob'" (Gen. 50:24)

(3) God would visit **Tyre** with His judgment. We read in Isaiah 23:17, "And it shall be, at the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre. She will return to her hire, and commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth."

3. "The Day of the Lord"

This expression should *not* be viewed as a *specific date*; rather, it is a description of an *event* that transpires. The phrase describes God intervening in the affairs of nations in order to punish sin and deliver His people. Perhaps it could be explained in this way, "Man has had his way (day), now the Lord will have His way (day)." It is as though God says "Enough! No more!" And He therefore executes justice in punishing evildoers and relieving the oppression of His people. He intervenes, He acts, in such a way all know that it was He Who brought it to pass. He alone is exalted in that day. A good description of this is in **Isaiah 2:11-13, 20-21**.

The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the pride of men shall be humbled; and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. For *the Lord of hosts has a day* against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up and high; against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan... *In that day* men will cast forth their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats, to enter the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, from before the terror of the Lord, and from the glory of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth. (Isa. 2:11-13; 20-21)

The language that is often used to describe this day is filled with *graphic imagery* and *poetic symbolism*. Men hide in caves. The earth shakes. Great hailstones fall. Stars fall from heaven. The splendour of God is revealed.

Because the Day of the Lord is an event, we should realize that the Bible indicates *that there have been a number of Days of the Lord in history*. God has intervened in overthrowing kingdoms, punishing the wicked, and bringing relief to the oppressed. There are a number of Days of the Lord in the Old Testament. Great harm comes when this expression is associated solely with a single date, or a single event. *Many Christians do err greatly in their interpretation of prophecy for they wrongly interpret this expression, the Day of the Lord, in its every use to be a direct prophecy of the second coming of Christ*. But “the Day of the Lord” is used to describe a number of events in the Biblical record.

- (1) A “Day of the Lord” occurred when God judged **Egypt** (Jer. 46:1-13, especially v. 10) (605 BC)
- (2) A “Day of the Lord” occurred when God judged **Edom** (Isa. 34:1-15; esp. v. 8) (a. 600 BC)
- (3) A “Day of the Lord” occurred when God judged **Israel & Judah** (Amos 5:18-24; esp. vs. 18, 20)
- (4) A “Day of the Lord” occurred when God judged **Jerusalem** (Ezek. 12:26-13:14, especially 13:5; Zeph. 1:4-18, especially vs. 7, 14; cf. Lam. 2:22) (Early 6th c. BC)
- (5) A “Day of the Lord” occurred when God judged **Babylon** (Isa. 13:9-22; esp. vs. 6, 9) (6th c. BC)

Let us consider this passage of Isaiah that describes **Babylon’s destruction** by **Media Persia** that happened in the 6th century BC. As we read this passage, please notice the apocalyptic language employed to describe God’s judgment upon Babylon, and event that had occurred in Old Testament times.

¹The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

⁴The noise of a multitude in the mountains,
Like that of many people!
A tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together!
The LORD of hosts musters
The army for battle.

⁵*They come from a far country,
From the end of heaven—
The LORD and His weapons of indignation,
To destroy the whole land.*

⁶Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand!
It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

⁷Therefore all hands will be limp,
Every man’s heart will melt,

⁸And they will be afraid.
*Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them;
They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth;*
They will be amazed at one another;
Their faces will be like flames.

⁹Behold, *the day of the LORD* comes,
Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger,
To lay the land desolate;
And He will destroy its sinners from it.

¹⁰*For the stars of heaven and their constellations*

***Will not give their light;
The sun will be darkened in its going forth,
And the moon will not cause its light to shine.***

¹¹I will punish the world for its evil,
And the wicked for their iniquity;
I will halt the arrogance of the proud,
And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

¹²I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold,
A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir.

¹³***Therefore I will shake the heavens,
And the earth will move out of her place,***
In the wrath of the LORD of hosts
And in the day of His fierce anger.

¹⁷Behold, ***I will stir up the Medes against them,***
Who will not regard silver;
And as for gold, they will not delight in it.

¹⁸Also their bows will dash the young men to pieces,
And they will have no pity on the fruit of the womb;
Their eye will not spare children.

¹⁹And ***Babylon***, the glory of kingdoms,
The beauty of the Chaldeans' pride,
Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

²⁰It will never be inhabited,
Nor will it be settled from generation to generation.

This was Isaiah's prophecy that took place when the armies of Media Persia defeated and capture Babylon in a single night, during the days of Daniel, when he was an old man living in the city of Babylon.¹

All of these manifestations of God's judgment in history, His providential dealings with the nations, along with the expressions used to describe these events (such as "the kingdom of God"), all portend the final Day of the Lord that will take place at the end of history when the Lord Jesus physically returns to this world. Then the final Day of the Lord will unfold in which God will judge all people of all times by His Son Jesus Christ.

IV. What are the implications of Jesus Christ dying upon His cross, being raised, and being enthroned upon His Father's throne in heaven? When the Father raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, the Father enthroned Him in heaven over the kingdoms of the world. This was in fulfillment of the promise that the Messiah would rule from "David's throne", which is the throne of God, the throne on which the Son of David rules on behalf of His Father. This kingdom of our Lord Jesus is over all the kingdoms of the earth. The Lord Jesus is now ruling the nations on behalf of His Father as King of kings and Lord of Lords, the reign which was inaugurated upon His ascension from the grave. King Jesus is now executing God's justice in history upon the nations, even while He is saving the people the Father had given Him in eternity and reserving all unbelievers unto their final sentence of condemnation on the Day of Judgment.

¹ Dispensationalists commonly do this. If you were to read the descriptions of these chapters in a study Bible that reflects dispensational theology, you would discover that these passages are commonly, but I would argue wrongly, said to be prophecies of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, which in their minds is the only Day of the Lord. They look at the apocalyptic language and argue that these are descriptions that will take place "literally" at the consummation. Yet a reading of the context shows clearly that they are references to God intervening in history to administer His justice upon the nations.

The Scriptures foretold this event in the prophets of the Old Testament. God revealed this in numbers of places, but we may look briefly at Daniel 2 in order to confirm what we are asserting. Daniel recorded that God had the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar to have a dream that greatly troubled him. He had called his pagan magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers to interpret the dream. They wanted him to first describe his dream then they would supply the interpretation (Dan. 2:4). The king refused, demanding that they describe the dream first and then give its interpretation. He wanted to assure himself that they had true insight into this matter. After they had failed and the king determined to destroy them and all of his advisors, which would have included Daniel and his Hebrew friends (Dan. 2:12f).

But Daniel had announced that the Lord would give him understanding of the dream and its interpretation. So the king summoned Daniel before him. Here is what Daniel declared:

Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, “The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. ²⁸But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: ²⁹As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. ³⁰But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart. (Dan. 2:27-30)

Daniel then proceeded to describe the dream and give the inspired interpretation. We read this in **Daniel 2:26-45**.

The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?”

²⁷Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, “The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. ²⁸But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: ²⁹As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. ³⁰But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

³¹“You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. ³²This image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

³⁶“This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. ³⁷You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; ³⁸and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all-- you are this head of gold.”

The image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream depicted four great kingdoms that would exist in history. It would be in the days of the fourth empire that the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of the Promised Messiah, would be inaugurated. And so, Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that He and his nation of Babylon were the first of these four kingdoms. But then we read on in **Daniel 2:39ff** of the following three kingdoms:

³⁹“But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. ⁴¹Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. ⁴²And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. ⁴³As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.”

These kingdoms that followed after Babylon were Media-Persia, then Greece, and then the Roman Empire. It was during the days of the fourth kingdom, that being the Roman Empire, that God would set up the Messiah's kingdom that would encompass the world², a kingdom encompassing and ruling over all kingdoms. We read in **Daniel 2:44ff**:

⁴⁴“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. ⁴⁵Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold-- the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”

Upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God the Father highly exalted His Son, seating Jesus Christ upon His throne in heaven, giving Him a kingdom that is over all kingdoms. The Lord Jesus has been ruling over history these past 2,000 years and His kingdom will continue through eternity. We who are Christians have seen this and do confess that Jesus is Lord. But one day, hopefully soon, He will return and His kingdom will then be fully manifest for all to see. Then He will cause all, small and great, to be brought before Him and He will judge them according to their works. Those who have been justified through faith alone will stand in the righteousness of Jesus Christ and will not come into condemnation, their works validating that they were true believers. But all others--all unbelievers along with all who profess to know Him but whose works have denied Him (cf. Luke 12:46), they all will be cast into the lake of fire that burns forever and ever.

V. How then should we respond to these things? Let us take to heart the last words of Peter that are recorded for us. **2 Peter 3:10ff** read this way:

² Dispensationalists, knowing that this fourth kingdom is Rome, but who believe that the kingdom promised here is a future 1,000 year millennium, argue that the Roman Empire disintegrated in the past but must be re-established in the future just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, before the “kingdom”, as they understand it, can be inaugurated. No, it is not that difficult. In the days of the Roman Empire in the first century, God sent forth His Son, who was rejected by His people as their promised King, nevertheless, the Father vindicated His Son by raising Him from the dead and enthroning Him in heaven over all of humanity and over all of history. Upon His resurrection, the Lamb having been slain comes forward and received this promised Kingdom from His Father. Daniel foretold of this in Daniel 7:13-14, which read, “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, *One* like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* which shall not be destroyed.” John described the Lord Jesus receiving this kingdom in Revelation 5, which again, took place upon His resurrection and ascension into heaven. Jesus Christ is presently King of kings and Lord of lords, ruling over the nations of the world. Paul declared this to Timothy regarding our Lord: “I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen. (1 Tim. 6:13-16)

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹²looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless...

¹⁷You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; ¹⁸but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.