

The Absolute Sovereignty of God

Daniel 2:31-49

Introduction

- In his book *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Jared Diamond, a professor of physiology at UCLA, attempts to answer this basic question, “Why did history unfold differently on different continents?”
- He writes, “It is not the case that societies on the different continents were comparable to each other until 3200 BC whereupon Eurasian societies suddenly developed writing and began for the first time to pull ahead in other aspects as well. Instead by 3200 BC there were Eurasian and North African societies not only with incipient writing but also with centralized state governments, cities, widespread use of metal tools and weapons, use of domesticated animals for transport and reliance on agriculture and domestic animals for food. “Why were those societies the ones that became disproportionately powerful and innovative? The usual answers are...the rise of capitalism, scientific inquiry, technology, and nasty germs that killed peoples of other continents that came in contact with Eurasians.”
- **MAP OF EURASIA**
- Diamond summarizes his book in one sentence: “History followed different courses of different peoples because of differences among peoples’ *environments*, not because of biological differences among peoples themselves.”
- “If one responds by invoking idiosyncratic factors—e.g., scientific inquiry supposedly stifled in China by Confucianism but stimulated in western Eurasia by Greek or Judaeo—Christian traditions—then one is continuing to ignore the need for ultimate explanations: why didn’t traditions like Confucianism and the Judaeo—Christian ethic instead develop in western Eurasia and China respectively?” [To discover these answers] we seek to grasp our past’s lessons for our future.”
- He is a proponent of “parallel evolution” in that humans evolved not from one location, but simultaneously from different regions. He writes, “...skulls of humans living in China and Indonesia hundreds of thousands of years ago are considered by some physical anthropologist to exhibit features still found in modern Chinese and Aboriginal Australians...If true, that finding would suggest parallel evolution and multiregional origins of modern humans, rather than origins in a single Garden of Eden. The issue remains unresolved.”

- Diamond attributes much of the Eurasians societal success to the evolution of the alphabet. “Alphabets apparently arose only once in human history: among speakers of Semitic languages, in the area from modern Syria to the Sinai, during the 2nd millennium BC. All of the hundreds of historical and now existing alphabets were ultimately derived from that Semitic ancestral alphabet...”
- But to what extent does the influence of individuals have on the course of human history? Diamond writes, “Individual idiosyncrasies throw wild cards into the course of history—Adolph Hitler, Alexander the Great, Augustus, Buddha, Christ, Lenin, Martin Luther, Mohammed, etc. But, they are scarcely relevant because even the most ardent proponent in the Great Man theory would find it difficult to interpret history’s broadest pattern in the terms of a few Great Men.
- Nothing could be further from the truth!
- *"Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. ²¹ "It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. ²² "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.*

Daniel 2:20-22

PRAY

- **Proposition:** *The course of human history is in the hands of a sovereign God. There is no other doctrine in scripture that should give us more comfort than the doctrine of God’s sovereignty. And, because He has demonstrated His absolute sovereignty through the fulfillment of His prophetic word, all of His word is true and all of His promises are trustworthy.*
 - A. W. Pink writes, “The sovereignty of God is the exercise of His supremacy. Our lives are neither the product of blind fate nor the result of chance, but every detail of them was ordained from all of eternity, and is now ordered by the living and reigning God. Not a hair of our heads can be touched without His permission.”
 - **Proverbs 16:9** The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

Background TIMELINE

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

- Daniel 2:28-29 **“There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed. ²⁹ “As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place.**
- When Daniel prays, “It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding...”, he is in fact worshipping God, acknowledging what is true about Him *according to what He has revealed in the pages of scripture*
- We know from Chapter 1 that Daniel showed “intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge...” and as his stand for the Hebrew dietary law demonstrated, he was knowledgeable concerning the Hebrew Scriptures.
- TIME LINE: Creation, the fall, the flood and...
 - Genesis 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And again the command in verse 7, "As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."
 - And they did, right?
- Genesis chapter 10 the genealogy of Noah's sons is recorded: **Now these are the records of the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood.**
- Notice after each son, 1st Japheth—verse 5 **“From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations...verse 20, These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations...and verse 31-32, These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations. ³² These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.**—it's an overview of the specific event of chapter 11 about 100 years after the flood

- **Genesis 11:1-9** Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. ² It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³ They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. ⁴ They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." ⁵ The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. ⁶ The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech." ⁸ So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

- **1 Chronicles 1:9** The sons of Cush were Seba...etc. ¹⁰ Cush became the father of Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one in the earth... ¹⁷ The sons of Shem were Elam...etc. Shelah became the father of Eber. ¹⁹ Two sons were born to Eber, the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided..."
 - Nimrod built Babel...Peleg comes into the picture toward the end of Nimrod's reign and the "scattering" (Continental Drift Theory)

- The Tower of Babel as described by Nebuchadnezzar in the Borsippa Inscription:
 - "A former king built it...but he did not complete its head. Since a remote time people had abandoned it without order expressing their words. Since that time the earthquake and the thunder had dispersed the sun-dried clay, the bricks of the casing had been split, and the earth of the interior had been scattered in heaps. Merodach, the great lord, excited my mind to repair this building. I did not change the site, nor did I take away the foundation stone. As it had been in former times, so I founded, I made it as it had been in ancient days, so I exalted its summit."

- The seed of rebellion was planted in all mankind through Adam and God destroyed the earth and it's inhabitants save Noah's family of eight

- When God commanded the whole earth to be replenished, He meant *the whole earth* and man revolted and turned from worshiping God to idolatry—Babel—the birthplace of astrology
- The earth is divided, the people are divided, nations, races, and languages are established in Genesis 11
- God's sovereignty confirmed: Acts 17:24-26 **"The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; ²⁶ and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation..."**
- In Genesis chapter 12 God chooses to establish a new nation, holy and separate from the world through Abraham...TIME LINE continue
 - Israel a sovereign nation under God's authority and they rebelled and grossly turned to idolatry—captivity and the throne of David is interrupted
 - King Zedekiah is the last of David's line to sit on the throne until Christ returns to establish His earthly kingdom fulfilling the promise given in the Davidic covenant
 - The time between Zedekiah and Christ on the throne of David is referred to as the "Times of the Gentiles"
- Luke 21:5 **And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, ⁶ "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down." ⁷ They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" ⁸ And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them. ⁹ "When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately." ¹⁰ Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, ¹¹ and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven... ²³ "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; ²⁴**

and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the *times of the Gentiles* are fulfilled. Today, in essence, Jerusalem is a Gentile city

- Jared Diamond is correct on one point—if we want to understand our future we must understand the past (History validates Biblical prophecy)
- But contrary to what the world and Mr. Diamond thinks, God *does* choose men to accomplish and reveal His divine purposes on earth—that man is Daniel

I. The Dream Exposed

Daniel 2:29-35 "As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place. ³⁰ "But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind. ³¹ "You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. ³² "The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. ³⁵ "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

A. A Statue PICTURE

- Head of Gold
- Breast and arms of silver
- Thighs of bronze
- Legs of iron
- Feet of mixed iron and clay

- From superior metals to inferior not only in value but specific gravity or weight Gold heavier than silver, heavier than bronze, heavier than iron, heavier than clay
- Gold softer than silver, softer than bronze, softer than iron, clay mixed?

B. A Stone

- “A stone was cut out without hands”—not just a random rock, but a purposely cut or designed stone (vs 45 tells us it was cut from a mountain)
- The stone is a projectile—so it is purposefully aimed and with obvious great force strikes the feet of iron and clay
- The entire statue disintegrates
- There is no remaining trace of the statue—chaff
- The stone becomes a prominent mountain—it fills the earth

C. A Detailed Dream

- Verse 36, “This was the Dream...”
- Daniel, you have my undivided attention! Not expressed verbally but by the stare of amazement!

II. The Dream Explained

Daniel 2:36-45 “Now we will tell its interpretation before the king. ³⁷ “You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; ³⁸ and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. ³⁹ “After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ “Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. ⁴¹ “In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. ⁴² “As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. ⁴³ “And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will

combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. ⁴⁴ "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ "Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."

A. A Sovereign World Ruler

- Verse 38, **"Nebuchadnezzar You are the head of gold"**
- Daniel identifies that his rule and power is God given!
 - To whom the God of heaven has given
 - *He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all*

B. A Temporary World Ruler (obvious from the result of the stone perhaps)

- Notice the progression of strength the softer metals yielding to the harder metals
- Notice the iron nation in verse 40, it crushes and breaks the other three into pieces—What about the stone crushing the statue in verse 34-35?
- Notice that the fifth kingdom of iron and clay doesn't defeat the iron kingdom
- Notice that it's a mixture of the fourth kingdom
- Verse 43. **"And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery."**
 - This particular verse has given rise to much speculation as to the nature of this last kingdom
 - It's divided, not united which attributes to its apparent weakness

- Is the division because of mixed forms of government—democracy, dictatorship, and monarchy?
- Is it because of the marriage politics of the middle ages?
- Or is it symbolic of a union of different nationalities and other diversities of religion, ethnic groups and so on
- In any case the idea portrayed by Daniel is certainly one of weakness
- Who are the kingdoms—Daniel reveals three of them by name
 - Gold Head—Babylon
 - Silver breast and arms Medo-Persia (Dan 5, 8, 11)
 - Bronze thighs—Greece (Dan 8, 11)
 - Though not named by Daniel most scholars agree that the Iron legs represent the Roman Empire because of the description in verse 40.
 - But this also has its share of controversy depending on a amillennial or premillennial viewpoint
 - Amillennial view being the kingdom of God mentioned in Daniel 2 occurred during the 1st coming of Christ
 - Premillennial view being that this is still a future event.
 - Unconvincing argument that the 1st coming of Christ caused the Fall of the Roman Empire
 - The destroying stone appears to be a sudden event and it's unconvincing to think that the church represents rule and authority over the Gentile/secular world
 - The stone strikes the feet of clay and iron indicating an event at the end of the chronology of kingdoms

C. A Sovereign and Permanent World Ruler

- Vs 44 In the days of *those kings...*” referring to the kingdom of the feet so chronologically this event takes place in the end

- God is the one who launches the Stone and the Stone is Christ
- 1 Peter 2:7 **This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,"**
- **Daniel 2:34-35 and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.** ³⁵ **"Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time**
- **Daniel 2:44 it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms**
- The implication is that all of these kingdoms will be present in some form in the future—even though the iron kingdom of Rome destroyed the other three in verse 40, they are all finally destroyed in the end.
- One commentator makes this observation:
 - All four of the kingdoms are still represented today:
 - Babylon in Iraq, Persia in Iran, Greece in Syria and Egypt (right after Alexander the Great died four of his generals divided and controlled the Greek Empire. The two strongest generals, Ptolemy and Seleucid controlled Egypt and Syria respectively) and of course Rome in Europe.
 - The first three have expressed absolute hatred for Israel and have called for her inhalation . Support of Israel in Europe is at an all time low and going down.
- The point Daniel makes is God establishes His kingdom and is sovereignty is forever!
 - **Isaiah 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.** ⁷ **There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.**

- Daniel 2:45 **So the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."**
 - Do you think that there was any doubt in Nebuchadnezzar's mind!?

III. Daniel--God's Ambassador

Daniel 2:46 **Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense.** ⁴⁷ **The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery."** ⁴⁸ **Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.** ⁴⁹ **And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king's court.**

A. Daniel's Reward

- Nebuchadnezzar honors Daniel as the Great God's priest and spokesman
- Nebuchadnezzar gives credit to God as being the superior of all gods (not that he at this time believes that the God of Daniel is the only God but that He is the greatest of all gods)

B. Daniel's Promotion—not unprecedented:

- Genesis 41:39 **So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are.** ⁴⁰ **"You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you."** ⁴¹ **Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."**
- Jared Diamond states, "Individual idiosyncrasies throw wild cards into the course of history...but, they are scarcely relevant"
- Daniel's position in Nebuchadnezzar's court is hardly irrelevant

C. Daniel's Influence

- Daniel's godly friends, **Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego** are promoted into positions of authority and influence

- The Wise Men of Babylon were not killed—think of their amazement at the turn of events
- Grateful, jealous and envious, saved?
- Long term influence
- History of Israel
- Coming of Christ 1st and 2nd

Application

- **The comfort of knowing and trusting that God is absolutely in control of human events**
- **God's promises are true and trustworthy**
- **To believers**
 - **We are God's ambassador representing Him and proclaiming what is true about Him**
- **To non-believers**
 - **We are urging you to be reconciled to God**

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. ¹⁸ Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

2 Corinthians 5:17-21