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Teaching Notes

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I: The Rise and Fall of the World (Daniel 2)

II. The Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4)

I. The Rise and Fall of the World in Prophetic Perspective (Daniel 2)

A. John MacArthur's Quote

John MacArthur, Daniel 2, "The Rise and Fall of the World"

Attributed a quote to 18th century British Historian Alexander Fraser Tytler, whom he called "Alexander Tyler"

"The average age," says Tyler, "of the world's greatest civilizations has been 200 years."

"These nations have progressed through the following sequence: from bondage to spiritual faith, from spiritual faith to great courage, from courage to liberty, from liberty to abundance, from abundance to selfishness, from selfishness to complacency, from complacency to apathy, from apathy to dependency and from dependency back into bondage."

Origin of the quote is somewhat debunked by Loren Collins in "The Truth About Tytler" (<http://www.geocities.com/nerolsnilloc/library/tytler.html>); but the insight about history remains generally true

The Bible records the rise and fall of nations very plainly; and it says that the Sovereign Lord rules over all of that history:

Psalm 75:1-8 We give thanks to you, O God, we give thanks, for your Name is near; men tell of your wonderful deeds. ² You say, "I choose the appointed time; it is I who judge uprightly. ³ When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm. Selah ⁴ To the arrogant I say, 'Boast no more,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horns. ⁵ Do not lift your horns against heaven; do not speak with outstretched neck.'" ⁶ No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man. ⁷ But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another. ⁸ In the hand of the LORD is a cup full of foaming wine mixed with spices; he pours it out, and all the wicked of the earth drink it down to its very dregs.

No book of the Bible reveals this more plainly than the Book of Daniel

Daniel 4:29-32 Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰ he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" ³¹ The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. ³² You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes."

Daniel 5:30-31 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, ³¹ and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.

B. Context: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream in Daniel 2

1. Nebuchadnezzar, King of the Babylonians, conquers Jerusalem by the will of God
2. Judah taken into exile because of their sins
3. Daniel and his friends (Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah) also deported
4. Daniel 1: Nebuchadnezzar desires to train young men for service in his empire; Daniel and his friends among those to be trained; Daniel resolves not to defile himself with the king's food; God rewards Daniel with a special gift—the ability to interpret dreams; Daniel and his friends enter the king's service as counselors
5. Daniel 2: Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that deeply troubles him; he is so eager to understand the meaning and significance of the dream that he says to his counselors that anyone who can tell him his dream AND interpret it for him will be rewarded greatly, but if they cannot, they will be executed; the counselors obviously cannot do what the King asks, so the King gives the order to execute all the wise men of Babylon; Daniel and his friends are among those who will be executed; Daniel and his friends seek God's face in prayer for the revelation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; amazingly, God answers their prayer for a miracle and reveals the content of the dream and its meaning to Daniel
6. Daniel's praise centers on God's sovereign power over the nations

Daniel 2:19-23 During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven ²⁰ and said: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. ²¹ He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. ²² He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. ²³ I thank and praise you, O God of my

fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king."

C. The Dream Revealed (Daniel 2:31-35)

Daniel 2:31-35 "You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue-- an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. ³² The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. ³⁴ While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

1. Statue of a man
2. Various metals, changing in regions from head to foot
3. Supernatural rock cut out, smashes the statue completely
4. Pieces of the statue swept away by a wind; NO TRACE REMAINS
5. The rock becomes a huge mountain that fills the whole earth

D. The Dream Explained (Daniel 2:37-45)

Daniel 2:37-45 You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; ³⁸ in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. ³⁹ "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. ⁴⁰ Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron-- for iron breaks and smashes everything-- and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. ⁴¹ Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. ⁴² As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. 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. ⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands-- a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. "The great God

has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

1. Various metals in descending order represent the flow of human history from one empire (kingdom) to the next
 - a. Head of gold = Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon
 - b. Chest & arms of silver = (Medo-Persian Empire)
 - c. Belly & thighs of bronze = (Greek Empire)
 - d. Legs of iron = (Roman Empire)
 - e. Feet "partly iron, partly baked clay" = ??
2. Rock cut out but not by human hands = Kingdom of Christ
 - a. Supernatural origin
 - b. Cut out of a mountain (see verse 45)
 - c. Destroys all other kingdoms
 - d. All vestiges of former kingdoms swept away without leaving a trace
 - e. Rock becomes a huge mountain that fills the whole earth
 - f. Kingdom described directly in vss. 44—a kingdom God Himself establishes that will endure forever... never be destroyed, not left to another people

E. The Final Kingdom

1. note when the Kingdom of God is set up: lit. "in the days of those kings"
2. key question: which kings? Does it refer to all of them or perhaps to the final kings, the "ten toes" kings?
3. note the increase of the size of the rock, and how it fills the whole earth

Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

4. note also how it is cut out from a mountain and becomes a mountain itself

Matthew 13:33 He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."

F. The “Ten Toes” of the Statue

1. note how much attention to the feet the account gives... vss. 41-43

Daniel 2:41-43 Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. ⁴² As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

2. from this comes the famous “feet of clay” phrase, referring to a hidden character flaw that brings down a great leader... similar to an “Achilles heel”
3. the fatal flaw of all human kingdoms: sin and death... it brings every great empire to its knees

Genesis 3:19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.

Job 4:18-19 If God places no trust in his servants, if he charges his angels with error, ¹⁹ how much more those who live in houses of clay, whose foundations are in the dust, who are crushed more readily than a moth!

[Houses of clay =mortal human bodies, taken from the earth]

Sin and death brings all great empires to the ground because the great men who built the empire pass it on to sons who didn't... the sons are usually spoiled rotten and are unready to accept responsibility for the empire:

Ecclesiastes 2:16-21 the wise man, like the fool, will not be long remembered; in days to come both will be forgotten. Like the fool, the wise man too must die! ¹⁷ So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. ¹⁸ I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. ¹⁹ And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. ²⁰ So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. ²¹ For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune.

4. the feet of clay also seen to be somehow a continuation of the fourth kingdom, the one of iron, since there is both iron and clay

G. Premillennial Interpretation

1. Kingdom of God established at the Second Coming of Christ, not before
2. Key interpretive issue: the link between the toes of the statue, the horns of the fourth beast in Daniel 7, and the Ten Kings of Revelation 17

Daniel 7:7 "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast-- terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

Daniel 7:24-26 The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. ²⁵ He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. ²⁶ "But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.

Revelation 17:3 Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 17:12-14 "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings-- and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

3. their view:
 - a. the feet of clay represent a "final form of the Roman empire"
 - b. the final form is especially characterized by conglomeration, admixture, varying degrees of weakness and strength... caused by the fact that the people are unlike each other and really don't get along well
 - c. Christ sets up his millennial kingdom by smashing the confederacy of ten kings who gave their power to the Antichrist
 - d. This smashing occurs at the Second Coming

2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

Revelation 19:11-15 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

H. My Final Take

1. Christ sets up His Kingdom in the era of the rise and fall of the earth
2. He Himself is personally responsible for the crushing of every empire that there ever has been or ever will be
3. He does all of this for the growth of His own Kingdom through the world little by little
4. Christ will crush the final form of all human empires (the reign of the Antichrist) when He returns in glory
5. the Kingdom ought not to be seen as merely the millennial kingdom, for that lasts only a thousand years
6. rather this passage says the God of Heaven sets up a kingdom that will **never end, nor will it be left to another...** it will last forever
7. the link between the ten toes and the ten horns of Daniel 7 and the ten kings of Revelation 17 is possible but not definite
8. the way that the Kingdom of Christ spreads in hidden fashion against the backdrop of the rise and fall of the world, and Christ's sovereign power in bringing anti-Christ empires to an end while continuing history should not be lost

II. The Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in

*the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.
¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

A. The Origin of the Word “Rapture”

1 Thessalonians 4:17 *After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up (Latin = rapio) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*

B. A Biblical Doctrine

1. the church will be caught up from earth to meet the Lord in the air
2. additional scriptural support:

Matthew 24:30-31 *"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.*

3. not necessary to believe in the secret rapture in order to believe in the rapture

C. Placing the Rapture on the Prophetic Timeline

1. pretribulation = before the seven year tribulation during which the Antichrist is reigning
2. mid-tribulation = in the middle of that seven year period
3. at the Second Coming of Christ

D. The Pretribulation Rapture Explained and Supported

1. also known as the “Secret Rapture” because it happens suddenly, for some time zones in the middle of the night, certainly in the middle of life, with no warning at all except that already given in Scripture
2. all the true believers in Christ will be raptured... some extend it to children before the age of accountability
3. everyone not raptured are said to be “left behind”, hence the name of the popular series by Tim Lahaye and Jerry Jenkins
 - a. these folks are not necessarily going to hell
 - b. they may still repent and become “tribulation saints”
 - c. thus we cannot imagine that God is against putting some of His children through the wrath of Revelation or the reign of the Antichrist

4. scriptural support advanced by those who hold this view

- a. allows the Lord to come at any time, making these warnings more poignant

Matthew 24:42-44 *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*

- b. other passages

Matthew 24:37-42 *As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.*

Coming of the lawless one will not occur until something is 'taken away'... pretrib folks say this refers to the rapture of the church

2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 *And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. ⁷ For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.*

The fact that the church will not suffer wrath is another key concept:

1 Thessalonians 5:9 *For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

- c. Hermeneutics of Revelation by Dispensational Premillennialists

- i) Revelation 1-3 refers to the present, Church Age

- ii) Key pretrib verse:

Revelation 3:10 *Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.*

- iii) Revelation 4:1 represents the rapture of the church...

Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

iv) of great importance to this view is that the church is not mentioned at all from 4-18, and makes its reappearance at Revelation 19

E. The Predominance of the Pretribulation Rapture Theory

1. the majority of American Evangelicals hold the pretrib view if they hold any view at all
2. it is almost a shibboleth in some seminaries and missions agencies... the idea is that if you don't believe in the pretrib rapture, you don't believe in the literal interpretation of the bible and are probably not an inerrantist
3. however, other pretrib folks take a more balanced view, recognizing legitimate grounds for disagreement

F. Problems with the Pretribulation Rapture Discussed

1. major problem: the secret rapture or two second comings is not clearly taught anywhere in scripture
 - a. all of the verses used to support it can be interpreted in context another way and still be faithful
 - b. the approach to Revelation is not very literal after all, especially on Revelation 4:1
2. central issue for me: only one "Second Coming of Christ" is taught openly in Scripture, and it is very public, not secret at all

[NASB] *1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.*

Matthew 24:26-30 "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷ For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸ Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. ²⁹ "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' ³⁰ "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

- a. of special importance... 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, the clearest passage in the bible on the rapture, seems plainly to be describing the Second Coming of Christ
 - b. note also someone is making a u-turn... Christ is coming down, the church is going up
3. concerning "tribulation saints" and not receiving wrath...
- a. God has consistently put his people through immense suffering throughout all church history
 - b. Daniel 7 says the little horn will war against the saints and defeat them

Daniel 7:21-22 As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

- c. Romans 8, 2 Peter 2 shows God's power of protecting saints in the midst of suffering while protecting their souls

Romans 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Peter 2:7-9 if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men ⁸ (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)-- ⁹ if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

G. An Appeal for Charitable Discussion

The Pretribulation Rapture of the Church should not be used as a litmus test for biblical fidelity... a variance of views can be supported by faithful bible exegetes

Ephesians 4:3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.