

STUDY XIII

THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD

The First Dominion--Its Forfeiture--Its Redemption and Restoration--
 The Typical Kingdom of God--The Usurper--Two Phases of the Present
 Dominion--The Powers that be, Ordained of God--Nebuchadnezzar's
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 Kings Briefly Examined--Claims of Christendom False--A Better Hope
 in the Fifth Universal Empire.

IN THE first chapter of the Divine Revelation, God declares his purpose concerning his earthly creation and its government: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

Thus the dominion of earth was placed in the hands of the human race as represented in the first man Adam, who was perfect, and therefore fully qualified to be the lord, ruler or king of earth. This commission to multiply, and fill, and subdue, and have dominion over the earth was not to Adam alone, but to all mankind: "Let *them* have dominion,"

etc. Had the human race remained perfect and sinless, this dominion would never have passed out of its hands.

It will be noticed that in this commission no man is given dominion or authority over fellowmen, but the whole race is given dominion over the earth, to cultivate and to make use of its products for the common good. Not only its vegetable and mineral wealth is thus placed at man's command,

but also all its varieties of animal life are at his disposal and for his service. Had the race remained perfect and carried out this original design of the Creator, as it grew in numbers it would have been necessary for men to consult together, and to systematize their efforts, and to devise ways and means for the just and wise distribution of the common blessings. And as, in the course of time, it would have been impossible, because of their vast numbers, to meet and consult together, it would have been necessary for various classes of men to elect certain of their number to represent them, to voice their common sentiments, and to act for them. And if all men were perfect, mentally, physically and morally; if every man loved God and his regulations supremely, and his neighbor as himself, there would have been no friction in such an arrangement.

Thus seen, the original design of the Creator for earth's government was a Republic in form, a government in which each individual would share; in which every man would be a sovereign, amply qualified in every particular to exercise the duties of his office for both his own and the general good.

This dominion of earth conferred upon man had but one contingency upon which its everlasting continuance depended; and that was that this divinely-conferred rulership be always exercised in harmony with the Supreme Ruler of the universe, whose one law, briefly stated, is Love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all

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thy mind;...and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Rom. 13:10; Matt. 22:37-40

Concerning this great favor conferred upon man, David, praising God, says: "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor; thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." (*Psa. 8:5,6*) This dominion given to mankind in the person of Adam was the first establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth. Man thus exercised dominion as God's representative. But man's disobedience to the Supreme Ruler forfeited not only his life, but also all his rights and privileges as God's representative ruler of earth. He was thenceforth a rebel, dethroned and condemned to death. Then speedily the kingdom of God on earth ceased, and has not since been established, except for a short time, in a typical manner, in Israel. Although in Eden man lost his right

to life and dominion, neither was taken from him suddenly; and while the condemned life lasts man is permitted to exercise the dominion of earth according to his own ideas and ability, until God's due time for him whose right it is to take the dominion which he purchased.

Our Lord's death redeemed or purchased not only man, but also all his original inheritance, including the dominion of earth. Having purchased it, the title is now in him: he is now the rightful heir, and in due time, and shortly, he will take possession of his purchase. (*Eph. 1:14*) But as he bought man not for the sake of holding him as his slave, but that he might restore him to his former estate, so with the dominion of earth: he purchased it and all of man's original blessings for the purpose of restoring them when man is again made capable of exercising them in harmony with the will of God. Hence the reign of Messiah on earth will not be everlasting. It will continue only until, by his strong iron rule, he will have put down all rebellion and insubordination, and restored the fallen race to the original

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perfection, when they will be fully capable of rightly exercising the dominion of earth as originally designed. When thus restored, it will again be the Kingdom of God on earth, under man, God's appointed representative.

During the Jewish age God organized the people of Israel as his kingdom, under Moses and the Judges--a sort of Republic --but it was typical only. And the more despotic rule afterward established, especially under David and Solomon, was in some respects typical of the kingdom promised, when Messiah should reign. Unlike the surrounding nations, Israel had Jehovah for their King, and their rulers nominally served under him, as we learn from *Psa. 78:70,71*. This is quite definitely stated in *2 Chron. 13:8* and *1 Chron. 29:23*, where Israel is called "the Kingdom of the Lord," and where it is said that Solomon "sat on the THRONE OF THE LORD, instead of David his father," who sat upon or exercised the rule of the same throne for the forty years previous, following Saul, the first king.

When the people of Israel transgressed against the Lord, he chastised them repeatedly, until finally he took away their kingdom entirely. In the days of Zedekiah, the last who reigned of the line of David, the scepter of royal power was removed. There the typical kingdom of God was overthrown.

God's decision relative to the matter is expressed in the

words, "Thou profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord God: Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same....I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be NO MORE, *until* he come, whose right it is; and I will give it him." (*Ezek. 21:25-27*) In fulfilment of this prophecy the king of Babylon came against Israel, took the people captive and removed their king. Though afterward restored to national existence by Cyrus the Persian, they

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were subjects and tribute payers to the successive empires of Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, down to the final destruction of their nationality, A.D. 70, since which time they have been scattered among all nations.

The kingdom of Israel is the only one, since the fall, which God ever recognized as in any way representing his government, laws, etc. There had been many nations before theirs, but no other could rightfully claim God as its founder, or that its rulers were God's representatives. When the diadem was taken from Zedekiah and the kingdom of Israel was overturned, it was decreed that it should remain overturned until Christ, the rightful heir of the world, should come to claim it. Thus, inferentially, all other kingdoms in power until the re-establishment of God's kingdom are branded "kingdoms of this world," under the "prince of this world"; and hence any claims put forth by any of them to being kingdoms of God are spurious. Nor was this Kingdom of God "SET UP" at the first advent of Christ. (*Luke 19:12*) Then and since then God has been selecting from the world those who shall be accounted worthy to reign with Christ as joint-heirs of that throne. Not until his second advent will Christ take the kingdom, the power and the glory, and reign Lord of all.

All other kingdoms than that of Israel are Scripturally called heathen or Gentile kingdoms--"the kingdoms of this world," under the "prince of this world"--Satan. The removal of God's kingdom in the days of Zedekiah left the world without any government of which God could approve, or whose laws or affairs he specially supervised. The Gentile governments God recognized indirectly, in that he publicly declares his decree (*Luke 21:24*) that during the interregnum the control of Jerusalem and the world should be exercised by Gentile governments.

This interregnum, or intervening period of time between

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the removal of God's scepter and government and the restoration of the same in greater power and glory in Christ, is Scripturally termed "The Times of the Gentiles." And these "times" or years, during which the "kingdoms of this world" are permitted to rule, are fixed and limited, and the time for the re-establishment of God's Kingdom under Messiah is equally fixed and marked in Scripture.

Evil as these Gentile governments have been, they were permitted or "ordained of God" for a wise purpose. (*Rom. 13:1*) Their imperfection and misrule form a part of the general lesson on the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and prove the inability of fallen man to govern himself, even to his own satisfaction. God permits them, in the main, to carry out their own purposes as they may be able, overruling them only when they would interfere with his plans. He designs that eventually all shall work for good, and that finally even the "wrath of man shall praise him." The remainder, that would work no good, serve no purpose or teach no lesson, he restrains. *Psa. 76:10*

Man's inability to establish a perfect government is attributable to his own weaknesses in his fallen, depraved condition. These weaknesses, which of themselves would thwart human efforts to produce a perfect government, have also been taken advantage of by Satan, who first tempted man to disloyalty to the Supreme Ruler. Satan has continually taken advantage of man's weaknesses, made good to appear evil, and evil to appear good; and he has misrepresented God's character and plans and blinded men to the truth. Thus working in the hearts of the children of disobedience (*Eph. 2:2*), he has led them captive at his will and made himself what our Lord and the apostles call him--the prince or ruler of this world. (*John 14:30; 12:31*) He is not the prince of this world by right, but by usurpation; through fraud and deception and control of fallen

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men. It is because he is a usurper that he will be summarily deposed. Had he a real title as prince of this world, he would not thus be dealt with.

Thus it will be seen that the dominion of earth, as at present exercised, has both an invisible and a visible phase. The former is the spiritual, the latter the human phase--the visible earthly kingdoms measurably under the control of a spiritual prince, Satan. It was because Satan possessed such

control that he could offer to make our Lord the supreme visible sovereign of the earth under his direction. (**Matt. 4:9**) When the Times of the Gentiles expire, both phases of the present dominion will terminate: Satan will be bound and the kingdoms of this world will be overthrown.

The fallen, blinded, groaning creation has for centuries plodded along its weary way, defeated at every step, even its best endeavors proving fruitless, yet ever hoping that the golden age dreamed of by its philosophers was at hand. It knows not that a still greater deliverance than that for which it hopes and groans is to come through the despised Nazarene and his followers, who as the Sons of God will shortly be manifested in kingdom power for its deliverance.

Rom. 8:22,19

In order that his children should not be in darkness relative to his permission of present evil governments and concerning his ultimate design to bring in a better government when these kingdoms, under his overruling providence, shall have served the purpose for which they were permitted, God has given us, through his prophets, several grand panoramic views of the "kingdoms of this world," each time showing, for our encouragement, their overthrow by the establishment of his own righteous and everlasting kingdom under the Messiah, the Prince of Peace.

That man's present effort to exercise dominion is not in successful defiance of Jehovah's will and power, but by his

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permission, is shown by God's message to Nebuchadnezzar, wherein God gives *permission* to rule, until the time for the setting up of Christ's kingdom, to the four great empires, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. (**Dan. 2:37-43**) This shows where this lease of the dominion will end.

As we now glance at these prophetic views, let us remember that they begin with Babylon at the time of the overthrow of the kingdom of Israel, the typical kingdom of the Lord.

Nebuchadnezzar's Vision of Earth's Governments

Among those things "written aforetime for our edification," that we, who are commanded to be subject to the powers that be, might through patience and comfort of the Scriptures have hope (**Rom. 15:4; 13:1**), is the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its divine interpretation through the

Prophet. *Dan. 2:31-45*

Daniel explained the dream, saying: "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

"Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

"This is the dream, and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings:

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for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. [There the Gentile kingdoms, or powers that be, were ordained of God.] And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.

"And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee [silver], and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be mixed; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron: forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with the miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle."

The student of history can readily trace, among the many smaller empires of earth which have arisen, the four above described by Daniel. These are termed UNIVERSAL EMPIRES--Babylon, first, the head of gold (*verse 38*); Medo-Persia, conqueror of Babylon, second, the breast of silver; Greece, conqueror of Medo-Persia, third, the belly of brass; and Rome, fourth, the strong kingdom, the iron legs and clay-mixed feet. Three of these empires had passed away,

and the fourth, the Roman, held universal sway, at the time of our Lord's birth, as we read, "There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that *all the world* should be taxed."

Luke 2:1

The iron empire, Rome, was by far the strongest, and endured longer than its predecessors. In fact, the Roman Empire still continues, as represented in the nations of Europe. This division is represented in the ten toes of the image. The

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clay element blended with the iron in the feet represents the mixture of church and state. This mixture is in the Scriptures termed "Babylon"--confusion. As we shall presently see, *stone* is the symbol of the true Kingdom of God, and Babylon substituted an imitation of stone--clay--which it has united with the fragmentary remains of the [iron] Roman Empire. And this mixed system--church and state--the Church nominal wedded to the kingdoms of this world, which the Lord calls Babylon, confusion, presumes to call itself Christendom--Christ's Kingdom. Daniel explains: "Whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men [church and world blend--Babylon], but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." They cannot thoroughly amalgamate. "And in the days of these kings [the kingdoms represented by the toes, the so-called "Christian kingdoms" or "Christendom"] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms; and it shall stand forever." ***Dan. 2:43,44***

Daniel does not here state the time for the end of these Gentile governments: that we find elsewhere; but every foretold circumstance indicates that today the end is nigh, even at the doors. The Papal system has long claimed that it is the kingdom which the God of heaven here promised to set up, and that, in fulfilment of this prophecy, it did break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms. The truth, however, is that the nominal Church merely united with earthly empires as the clay with the iron, and that Papacy never was the true Kingdom of God, but merely a counterfeit of it. One of the best evidences that Papacy did not destroy and consume these earthly kingdoms is that they still exist. And now that the miry clay has become dry and

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"brittle," it is losing its adhesive power, and the iron and clay show signs of dissolution, and will quickly crumble when smitten by the "stone," the true Kingdom.

Continuing his interpretation, Daniel states: "Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter; and the dream is certain and the interpretation thereof sure." *Verse 45*

The stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which smites and scatters the Gentile powers, represents the true Church, the Kingdom of God. During the Gospel age this "stone" kingdom is being formed, "cut out," carved and shaped for its future position and greatness--not by human hands, but by the power or spirit of the truth, the invisible power of Jehovah. When complete, when entirely cut out, it will smite and destroy the kingdoms of this world. Not the people, but the governments, are symbolized by the image, and these are to be destroyed that the people may be delivered. Our Lord Jesus came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. *John 3:17*

The stone, during its preparation, while being cut out, might be called an embryo mountain, in view of its future destiny; so, too, the Church could be, and sometimes is, called the Kingdom of God. In fact, however, the stone does not become the mountain until it has smitten the image; and so the Church, in the full sense, will become the Kingdom to fill the whole earth when "the day of the Lord," the "day of wrath upon the nations" or "time of trouble," will be over, and when it will be established and all other dominions have become subservient to it.

Call to mind now the promise made by our Lord to the overcomers of the Christian Church: "To him that overcometh

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will I grant to sit with me in my throne"--"and he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall *they* be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father." (*Rev. 3:21; 2:26,27; Psa. 2:8-12*) When the iron rod has accomplished the work of destruction, then will the hand that smote be turned to heal, and *the people* will return to the

Lord, and he shall heal them (*Isa. 19:22; Jer. 3:22,23; Hos. 6:1; 14:4; Isa. 2:3*), giving them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Daniel's Vision of Earthly Governments

In Nebuchadnezzar's vision we see the empires of earth, as viewed from the world's standpoint, to be an exhibition of human glory, grandeur, and power; though in it we also see an intimation of their decay and final destruction, as expressed in the deterioration from gold to iron and clay.

The stone class, the true Church, during its selection or taking out of the mountain, has been esteemed by the world as of no value. It has been despised and rejected of men. They see no beauty in it that they should desire it. The world loves, admires, praises and defends the rulers and governments represented in this great image, though it has been continually disappointed, deceived, wounded and oppressed by them. The world extols, in prose and verse, the great and successful agents of this image, its Alexanders, Caesars, Bonapartes and others, whose greatness showed itself in the slaughter of their fellowmen, and who, in their lust for power, made millions of widows and orphans. And such is still the spirit which exists in the "ten toes" of the image, as we see it exhibited today in their marshaled hosts of more than twelve millions of men armed with every

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fiendish device of modern ingenuity, to slaughter one another at the command of "the powers that be."

The proud are now called happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up in power. (*Mal. 3:15*) Can we not see, then, that the destruction of this great image by the smiting of the stone, and the establishment of God's kingdom, mean the liberating of the oppressed and the blessing of all? Though for a time the change will cause disaster and trouble, it will finally yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

But now, calling to mind the difference of standpoint, let us look at the same four universal empires of earth from the standpoint of God and those in harmony with him, as portrayed in vision to the beloved prophet Daniel. As to us these kingdoms appear inglorious and beastly, so to him these four universal empires were shown as four great and

ravenous wild beasts. And to his view the coming Kingdom of God (the stone) was proportionally grander than as seen by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel says: "I saw in my vision by night, and behold the four winds of heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings;...and behold another beast, a second, like a bear;...and lo another, like a leopard....After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth. It devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it; and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns." *Dan. 7:2-7*

The details relative to the first three beasts (Babylon the lion, Medo-Persia the bear, and Greece the leopard), with their heads, feet, wings, etc., all of which are symbolic, we pass by, as of less importance in our present examination than the details of the fourth beast, Rome.

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Of the fourth beast, Rome, Daniel says: "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly;...and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn were eyes, like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." *Dan. 7:7,8*

Here the Roman Empire is shown; and the divisions of its power are shown in the ten horns, a horn being a symbol of power. The little horn which arose among these, and which appropriated the power of three of them to itself, and ruled among the others, represents the small beginning and gradual rise to power of the Church of Rome, the Papal power or horn. As it rose in influence, three of the divisions, horns or powers of the Roman Empire (the Heruli, the Eastern Exarchate and the Ostrogoths) were plucked out of the way to make room for its establishment as a civil power or horn. This last specially notable horn, Papacy, is remarkable for its eyes, representing intelligence, and for its mouth--its utterances, its claims, etc.

To this fourth beast, representing Rome, Daniel gives no descriptive name. While the others are described as lion-like, bear-like and leopard-like, the fourth was so ferocious and hideous that none of the beasts of earth could be compared with it. John the Revelator, seeing in vision the same

symbolic beast (government), was also at a loss for a name by which to describe it, and finally gives it several. Among others, he called it "the Devil." (*Rev. 12:9*) He certainly chose an appropriate name; for Rome, when viewed in the light of its bloody persecutions, certainly has been the most devilish of all earthly governments. Even in its change from Rome Pagan to Rome Papal it illustrated one of Satan's chief characteristics; for he also transforms himself to appear

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as an angel of light (*2 Cor. 11:14*), as Rome transformed itself from heathenism and claimed to be Christian --the Kingdom of Christ.*

After giving some details regarding this last or Roman beast, and especially of its peculiar or Papal horn, the Prophet states that judgment against this horn would be rendered, and it would begin to lose its dominion, which would be *consumed* by gradual process until the *beast* should be destroyed.

This beast or Roman Empire in its horns or divisions still exists, and will be slain by the rising of the masses of the people, and the overthrow of governments, in the "Day of the Lord," preparatory to the recognition of the heavenly rulership. This is clearly shown from other scriptures yet to be examined. However, the *consuming* of the Papal horn comes first. Its power and influence began to consume when Napoleon took the Pope prisoner to France. Then, when neither the curses of the Popes nor their prayers delivered them from Bonaparte's power, it became evident to the nations that the divine authority and power claimed by the Papacy were without foundation. After that, the temporal power of the Papacy waned rapidly until, in September, 1870, it lost the last vestige of its temporal power at the hands of Victor Emmanuel.

Nevertheless, during all that time in which it was being "consumed," it kept uttering its great swelling words of blasphemy, its last great utterance being in 1870, when, but a few months before its overthrow, it made the declaration of the *infallibility* of the Popes. All this is noted in the

*The fact that Rome is called "the Devil" by no means disproves a *personal* devil: rather the reverse. It is because there are such beasts as lions, bears and leopards, with known characteristics, that governments were likened to them: and so, it is because there is a Devil, with known characteristics, that the fourth empire is likened to him.

prophecy: "I beheld *then* [i.e., *after* the decree against this 'horn,' after its consumption had begun] because of the voice of the GREAT WORDS which the horn spake." **Dan. 7:11**

Thus we are brought down in history to our own day, and made to see that the thing to be expected, so far as the empires of the earth are concerned, is their utter destruction. The next thing in order is described by the words, "I beheld even till the beast was slain and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame." The slaying and burning are symbols, as well as the beast itself, and signify the utter and hopeless destruction of present organized government. In verse 12 the prophet notes a difference between the end of this fourth beast and its predecessors. They three successively (Babylon, Persia and Greece) had their *dominion* taken from them; they ceased to hold the ruling power of earth; but their lives as nations did not cease immediately. Greece and Persia still have some life, though it is long centuries since universal dominion passed from their grasp. Not so, however, with the Roman Empire, the fourth and last of these beasts. It will lose dominion and life at once, and go into utter destruction; and with it the others will pass away also. **Daniel 2:35**

No matter what may be the means or instrumentality used, the *cause* of this fall will be the establishment of the Fifth Universal Empire of earth, the Kingdom of God, under Christ, whose right it is to take the dominion. The transfer of the kingdom from the fourth beast, which for its appointed time was "ordained of God," to the fifth kingdom, under the Messiah, when its appointed season has come, is described by the Prophet in these words: "And behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given unto him [the Christ--head and body complete] dominion, and glory,

and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." This the angel interpreted to mean that "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and all dominions shall serve and

obey him." **Dan. 7:13,27**

Thus seen, the dominion of earth is to be placed in the hands of Christ by Jehovah ("the Ancient of days"), who shall "put all things under his feet." (**1 Cor. 15:27**) Thus enthroned over God's kingdom, he must reign until he shall have put down all authority and power in conflict with the will and law of Jehovah. To the accomplishment of this great mission, the overthrow of these Gentile governments is first necessary; for the "kingdoms of this world," like the "prince of this world," will not surrender peaceably, but must be bound and restrained by force. And thus it is written, "To bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written; this honor have all his saints." **Psa. 149:8,9**

As we thus view present governments from the standpoint of our Lord and of the Prophet Daniel, and realize their ferocious, destructive, beastly and selfish character, our hearts long for the end of Gentile governments and joyfully look forward to that blessed time when the overcomers of the present age will be enthroned with their Head, to rule, bless and restore the groaning creation. Surely all of God's children can heartily pray with their Lord--"THY KINGDOM COME, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Each of these governments represented in the image and by the beasts existed before it came into power as the universal empire. So, too, with the true Kingdom of God: it has

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long existed separate from the world, not attempting rulership, but awaiting its time--the time appointed by the Ancient of days. And, like the others, it must receive its appointment and must come into authority or be "set up" *before* it can exercise its power in the smiting and slaying of the beast or kingdom preceding it. Hence the appropriateness of the statement, "In the days of these kings [while they still have power] shall the God of heaven set up [establish in power and authority] a kingdom." And after it is set up, "it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (**Dan. 2:44**) Hence, however we may look for it, we must expect God's Kingdom to be inaugurated *before* the fall of the kingdoms of this world, and that its power and smiting will bring their overthrow.

Present Governments from Another Standpoint

Supreme right and authority to rule the world are and ever will be vested in the Creator, Jehovah, no matter whom he may permit or authorize to have subordinate control. Under the imperfections and weaknesses resulting from his disloyalty to the King of kings, Adam soon grew weak and helpless. As a monarch he began to lose the power by which, at first, he commanded and held the obedience of the lower animals by the strength of his will. He lost control of himself also, so that when he would do good his weaknesses interfered and evil was present with him; and the good he even would do he did not do, and the evil which he would not, he did.

Hence, while making no attempt to excuse our rebel race, we can sympathize with its vain efforts to govern itself and to arrange for its own well-being. And something can be said of the success of the world in this direction; for, while recognizing the real character of these beastly governments, corrupt though they have been, they have been vastly superior

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to none--much better than lawlessness and anarchy. Though anarchy would probably have been quite acceptable to the "prince of this world," it was not so to his subjects, and his power is not absolute: it is limited to the extent of his ability to operate through mankind; and his policy must conform in great measure to the ideas, passions, and prejudices of men. Man's idea was self-government independent of God; and when God permitted him to try the experiment, Satan embraced the opportunity to extend his influence and dominion. Thus it was by wishing to forget God (**Rom. 1:28**) that man exposed himself to the influence of this wily and powerful though unseen foe; and therefore he has ever since been obliged to work against Satan's machinations, as well as his own personal weaknesses.

This being the case, let us again glance at the kingdoms of this world, viewing them now as the effort of fallen humanity to govern itself independent of God. Though individual corruption and selfishness have turned aside the course of justice, so that full justice has seldom been meted out to any under the kingdoms of this world, yet the ostensible object of all governments ever organized among men has been to promote justice and the well-being of all the people.

To what extent that object has been attained is another question; but such has been the claim of all governments, and such the object of the people governed in submitting to and supporting them. And where the ends of justice have been greatly ignored, either the masses have been blinded and deceived with reference to them, or wars, commotions and revolutions have been the result.

The dark deeds of base tyrants, who gained positions of power in the governments of the world, did not represent the laws and institutions of those governments, but in usurping authority and turning it to base ends they gave to

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those governments their beastly character. Every government has had a majority of wise, just and good laws--laws for the protection of life and property, for the protection of domestic and commercial interests, for the punishment of crime, etc. They have also had courts of appeal in matters of dispute, where justice is meted out to some extent, at least; and however imperfect those in office may be, the advantage and necessity for such institutions is apparent.

Poor as these governments have been, without them the baser element of society would, by force of numbers, have overcome the juster, better element.

While, therefore, we recognize the beastly character of these governments, as rendered so by the exaltation to power of a majority of unrighteous rulers, through the intrigues and deceptions of Satan, operating through man's weaknesses and depraved tastes and ideas, yet we recognize them as the best efforts of poor, fallen humanity at governing itself. Century after century God has allowed them to make the effort, and to see the results. But after centuries of experiment, the results are as far from satisfactory today as at any period of the world's history. In fact, the dissatisfaction is more general and widespread than ever before; not because there is more oppression and injustice than ever, but because, under God's arrangement, men's eyes are being opened by the increase of knowledge.

The various governments which have been established from time to time have exhibited the *average ability* of the people represented by them to govern themselves. Even where despotic governments have existed, the fact that they have been tolerated by the masses proved that as a people they were not capable of establishing and supporting a better government, though many individuals were always, doubtless, far in advance of the average standing.

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As we compare the condition of the world today with its condition at any former period, we find a marked difference in the sentiments of the masses. The spirit of independence is now abroad, and men are not so easily blindfolded, deceived and led by rulers and politicians, and therefore they will not submit to the yokes of former days. This change of public sentiment has not been a gradual one from the very beginning of man's effort to govern himself, but clearly marked only as far back as the sixteenth century; and its progress has been most rapid within the last fifty years. This change, therefore, is not the result of the experience of past ages, but is the natural result of the recent increase and general diffusion of knowledge among the masses of mankind. The preparation for this general diffusion of knowledge began with the invention of printing, about 1440 A.D., and the consequent multiplication of books and news periodicals. The influence of this invention in the general public enlightenment began to be felt about the sixteenth century; and the progressive steps since that time all are acquainted with. The general education of the masses has become popular, and inventions and discoveries are becoming everyday occurrences. This increase of knowledge among men, which is of God's appointment, and comes to pass in his own due time, is one of the mighty influences which are now at work binding Satan--curtailing his influence and circumscribing his power in this "Day of *Preparation*" for the setting up of God's kingdom in the earth.

The increase of knowledge in every direction awakens a feeling of self-respect among men, and a realization of their natural and inalienable rights, which they will not long permit to be ignored or despised; rather, they will go to an opposite extreme. Glance back along the centuries and see

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how the nations have written the history of their discontent in blood. And the prophets declare that because of the increase of knowledge a still more general and widespread dissatisfaction will finally express itself in a world-wide revolution, in the overthrow of all law and order; that anarchy and distress upon all classes will be the result; but that in the midst of this confusion the God of heaven will SET UP his Kingdom, which will satisfy the desires of all nations. Wearied

and disheartened with their own failures, and finding their last and greatest efforts resulting in anarchy, men will gladly welcome and bow before the heavenly authority, and recognize its strong and just government. Thus man's extremity will become God's opportunity, and "the desire of all nations shall come"--the Kingdom of God, in power and great glory. **Hag. 2:7**

Knowing this to be the purpose of God, neither Jesus nor the apostles interfered with earthly rulers in any way. On the contrary, they taught the Church to submit to these powers, even though they often suffered under their abuse of power. They taught the Church to obey the laws, and to respect those in authority because of their office, even if they were not personally worthy of esteem; to pay their appointed taxes, and, except where they conflicted with God's laws (**Acts 4:19; 5:29**), to offer no resistance to any established law. (**Rom. 13:1-7; Matt. 22:21**) The Lord Jesus and the apostles and the early Church were all law-abiding, though they were separate from, and took no share in, the governments of this world.

Though the powers that be, the governments of this world, were ordained or arranged for by God, that mankind might gain a needed experience under them, yet the Church, the consecrated ones who aspire to office in the coming Kingdom of God, should neither covet the honors and the emoluments of office in the kingdoms of this world,

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nor should they oppose these powers. They are fellow citizens and heirs of the heavenly kingdom (**Eph. 2:19**), and as such should claim only such rights and privileges under the kingdoms of this world as are accorded to *aliens*. Their mission is not to help the world to improve its present condition, nor to have anything to do with its affairs at present. To attempt to do so would be but a waste of effort; for the world's course and its termination are both clearly defined in the Scriptures and are fully under the control of him who in his own time will *give us* the kingdom. The influence of the *true* Church is now and always has been small--so small as to count practically nothing politically; but however great it might appear, we should follow the example and teaching of our Lord and the apostles. Knowing that the purpose of God is to let the world fully test its own ability to govern itself, the true Church should not, while in it, be *of* the world. The saints may influence the world only by their separateness from it, by letting *their light* shine; and

thus through their lives the spirit of truth REPROVES the world. Thus--as peaceable, orderly obeyers and commenders of every righteous law, reprovers of lawlessness and sin, and pointers forward to the promised Kingdom of God and the blessings to be expected under it, and not by the method commonly adopted of mingling in politics and scheming with the world for power, and thus being drawn into wars and sins and the general degradation --in glorious chastity should the prospective Bride of the Prince of Peace be a power for good, as her Lord's representative in the world.

The Church of God should give its *entire attention* and effort to preaching the Kingdom of God, and to the advancement of the interests of that Kingdom according to the plan laid down in the Scriptures. If this is faithfully done, there will be no time nor disposition to dabble in the

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politics of present governments. The Lord had no time for it; the apostles had no time for it; nor have any of the saints who are following their example.

The early Church, shortly after the death of the apostles, fell a prey to this very temptation. The preaching of the coming Kingdom of God, which would displace all earthly kingdoms, and of the crucified Christ as the heir of that Kingdom, was unpopular, and brought with it persecution, scorn and contempt. But some thought to improve on God's plan, and, instead of suffering, to get the Church into a position of favor with the world. By a combination with earthly powers they succeeded. As a result Papacy was developed, and in time became the mistress and queen of nations.

Rev. 17:3-5; 18:7

By this policy everything was changed: instead of suffering, came honor; instead of humility, came pride; instead of truth, came error; and instead of being persecuted, she became the persecutor of all who condemned her new and illegal honors. Soon she began to invent new theories and sophistries to justify her course, first deceiving herself, and then the nations, into the belief that the promised millennial reign of Christ HAD COME, and that Christ the King was represented by her popes, who reigned over the kings of the earth as his vicegerents. Her claims were successful in deceiving the whole world. "She made all nations *drunk*" with her erroneous doctrines (***Rev. 17:2***), intimidating them by teaching that eternal torment awaited all who resisted her claims. Soon the kings of Europe were crowned or

deposed by her edict, and under her supposed authority.

Thus it comes that the kingdoms of Europe today claim to be Christian kingdoms, and announce that sovereigns reign "by the grace of God," i.e., through appointment of either Papacy or some of the Protestant sects. For though the Reformers abandoned many of Papacy's claims to ecclesiastical

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jurisdiction, etc., they held to this honor which the kings of earth had come to attach to Christianity. And thus the Reformers fell into the same error, and exercised the authority of monarchs in appointing and sanctioning governments and kings, and denominating such "Christian kingdoms," or kingdoms of Christ. So we hear much today of that strange enigma, "*The Christian World*"--an enigma indeed, when viewed in the light of the true principles of the Gospel. Our Lord said of his disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And Paul exhorts us, saying, "Be not conformed to this world." ***John 17:16;***

Rom. 12:2

God never approved of calling these kingdoms by the name of Christ. Deceived by the Church nominal, these nations are sailing under false colors, claiming to be what they are not. Their only title, aside from the vote of the people, is in God's *limited* grant, spoken to Nebuchadnezzar--until he come whose right the dominion is.

The claim that these imperfect kingdoms, with their imperfect laws and often selfish and vicious rulers, are the "kingdoms of our Lord and his Anointed" is a gross libel upon the true Kingdom of Christ, before which they must shortly fall, and upon its "Prince of Peace" and righteous rulers. ***Isa. 32:1***

Another serious injury resulting from that error is that the attention of the children of God has thereby been attracted away from the promised heavenly kingdom; and they have been led to an improper recognition of and intimacy with earthly kingdoms, and to almost fruitless attempts to engraft upon these wild, worldly stocks the graces and morals of Christianity, to the neglect of the gospel concerning the true Kingdom and the hopes centering in it. Under this deception, some are at present very solicitous that the name of God should be incorporated into the Constitution

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of the United States, that *thereby* this may become a Christian nation. The Reformed Presbyterians have for years refused to vote or hold office under this government, *because* it is not Christ's Kingdom. Thus they recognize the impropriety of Christians sharing in any other. We have great sympathy with this sentiment, but not with the conclusion, that if God's *name* were mentioned in the Constitution, that fact would transform this government from a kingdom of this world to a kingdom of Christ, and give them liberty to vote and to hold office under it. O, how foolish! How great the deception by which the "Mother of harlots" has made all nations drunk (**Rev. 17:2**); for in a similar manner it is claimed that the kingdoms of Europe were transferred from Satan to Christ, and became "Christian nations."

Let it be seen that the best and the worst of earth's nations are but "kingdoms of this world," whose lease of power from God is now about expired, that they may give place to their ordained successor, the Kingdom of Messiah, the Fifth Universal Empire of earth (**Dan. 2:44; 7:14,17,27**) --this view will do much to establish truth and to overthrow error.

But as it is, the actions of Papacy in this regard, sanctioned by the Protestant Reformers, go unquestioned among Christian people. And since they should uphold the Kingdom of Christ, they feel themselves bound to champion the present falling kingdoms of so-called Christendom, whose time is fast expiring; and thus their sympathies are often forced to the side of oppression, rather than to the side of right and freedom--to the side of the kingdoms of this world, and the prince of this world, rather than to the side of the coming true Kingdom of Christ.

Rev. 17:14; 19:11-19

The world is fast coming to realize that the "kingdoms

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of this world" are not Christlike, and that their claim to be of Christ's appointment is not unquestionable. Men are beginning to use their reasoning powers on this and similar questions; and they will act out their convictions so much more violently, as they come to realize that a deception has been practiced upon them in the name of the God of Justice and the Prince of Peace. In fact, the tendency with many is to conclude that Christianity itself is an imposition without

foundation, and that, leagued with civil rulers, its aim is merely to hold in check the liberties of the masses.

O that men were wise, that they would apply their hearts to understand the work and plan of the Lord! Then would the present kingdoms melt down gradually--reform would swiftly follow reform, and liberty follow liberty, and justice and truth would prevail until righteousness would be established in the earth. But they will not do this, nor can they in their present fallen state; and so, armed with selfishness, each will strive for mastery, and the kingdoms of this world will pass away with a great time of trouble, such as was not since there was a nation. Of those who will be vainly trying to hold to a dominion which has passed away, when the dominion is given to him whose right it is, the Lord speaks, urging that they are fighting against him--a conflict in which they are sure to fail. He says:

"Why do the nations tumultuously assemble, and the people meditate a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure [saying], *I have anointed my king* upon my holy hill of Zion....Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the

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Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss [make friends with] the Son [God's Anointed] lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way; for his wrath may soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in him."

Psa. 2:1-6,10-12

The Kingdom Near

"Watchman, tell us of the night--
What its signs of promise are.
Traveler, o'er yon mountain's height,
See that glory-beaming star!
Watchman, does its beauteous ray
Aught of hope or joy foretell?
Traveler, yes, it brings the day--
Promised day of Israel.

"Watchman, tell us of the night--
Higher yet that star ascends.
Traveler, blessedness and light,
Peace and truth its course portends.
Watchman, will its beams alone
Gild the spot that gave them birth?
Traveler, ages are its own;
See, its glory fills the earth.

"Watchman, tell us, does the morning
Of fair Zion's glory dawn?
Have the signs that mark its coming
Yet upon thy pathway shone?
Traveler, yes: arise! look round thee!
Light is breaking in the skies!
Gird thy bridal robes around thee!
Morning dawns! arise! arise!"