

Grow a Church

Dan 2: 31-35

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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.

Nebuchadnezzar is told by Daniel that he, the Babylonian Empire, is the head of gold in the statue. Secular history tells us that the Medo / Persian Empire supplanted the Babylonian, that is what is represented by the breast and arms of silver of the statue. The belly and upper thighs of bronze depict the Grecian Empire ruled by Alexander the Great, the legs of iron and feet of iron and clay are the Roman Empire and the splintered Roman Empire which followed. As Nebuchadnezzar continued to look at the statue, a stone, not cut by hands, strikes the statue on its feet, crushing the rest of the statue into dust. 7 8 9 10 11

In verses 36-45 God, through Daniel, interprets the dream. Notice the interpretation of the stone that strikes the statue in verses 44-45;

Dan 2:44-45

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44 "And 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."

Daniel, in his interpretation of the dream, says that in the days of the Roman Empire the God of Heaven would set up a Kingdom that would endure forever. This brings out an important thought. Here are these great kingdoms of antiquity, kingdoms that were vast in their control, powerful in their armies, and dominant in their reign, yet they are all replaced, succeeded, by a bigger more powerful kingdom. Now along comes a kingdom, represented by the...

14

"The stone not cut with hands"

This kingdom is seemingly insignificant, it's called a stone, this stone strikes the feet of the statue which represents these great empires and causes the statue to crumble. This isn't to indicate that the stone had a more powerful army that defeated any of these governments, but rather that this new kingdom would exist, not under the rule or authority of any earthly power, but apart from earthly authority, apart from the rule of man, but under the authority of someone other than man. Remember the stone not cut with hands.

Notice the difference in the Kingdom that God sets up and the kingdoms of men:

The kingdoms of men, while seemingly so rich and powerful and at their time, world dominating, were all doomed to failure. As strong as they might appear at the height of their rule, someone else came along and overthrew them. The Babylonians were defeated by the Medes and Persians who were defeated by Alexander the Great, who, as great as he thought himself to be, it is

said that he sat and cried because he had run out of places to conquer, was supplanted by an even greater and more wide spread Empire in the Romans, which splintered into separate kingdoms, but were still powerful. Why did all these seemingly powerful world empires not last?

15 What is it about these worldly kingdoms that make them so vulnerable to collapse or defeat. The answer is really quite simple;

16 ***Worldly kingdoms fail because they are Worldly***

The Kingdom of God, that small stone that grew into a mountain, that would supersede the authority of any and all worldly powers would endure forever, it would be eternal. It would withstand the constant attacks from Satan and these so-called worldly powers and it would endure forever. **17** So, why does the Kingdom of God endure where all these others have not? Because it is not founded in this world but is built on the foundation of God's Love, **Jn 3:16**, and the truth that is Christ Jesus,

John 14:6

18

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth , and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

So let's come back to what Daniel says in **vs. 35** about the Kingdom that God establishes which we have already looked at.

19 ***“It will crush the kingdoms of man and grow to fill the whole Earth”***

This brings us to our topic for our lesson,

20 ***“Grow a Church”***

What do I mean by, Grow a Church. It seems rather presumptuous and audacious to think that we can help God grow His Church. Daniel says that God will establish the Kingdom, God will grow His Church. So, that said, we are going to look at how God has decided to do that. Christ says in...

Mark 16:15-16

21

15 "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. **16** "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned."

As we look at **Acts 2**, we see that those who believed and were saved through Baptism were added to the Church by the Lord. This illustrates for us the process of how man is added to the Church, but what is our role? Do we have a role, or is our responsibility confined to...

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| 22 | 1) Attendance | Heb 10:25 |
| | 2) Singing | Col 3:16 |
| | 3) Giving | I Cor 16:2 |
| | 4) Praying | I Th 5:17 |
| | 5) Preaching | Acts 14:7, |
| | 6) Partaking of the Lord's Supper | Acts 20:7 |

These are the functions of our worship, vitally important, commandments to be obeyed, examples to be followed, but is this what we are to understand **Acts 2:42** is saying;

Acts 2:42

23

42 And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

The answer is an absolute **YES**. We are to continue worshipping God, partaking of the Lord's supper, devoting ourselves to the study of the Apostles teaching, God's Word. But I believe that there is much, much, more to it. Note what is said in **2 Tim 2:15** and **1 Pet 3:15**...

2 Tim 2:15

24

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

1 Peter 3:15

25

15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

God tells us that we have a responsibility to Him and to ourselves to know His word and to take every opportunity to tell others about Him. That is the true impact of **Mark 16**. Yes the great commission was given to the disciples, but it is also there for us in principle to teach as many as we possibly can.

So, back to our original question...

26

How has God chosen to Grow His Kingdom?

1 Cor 1:18-25

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18 For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Where man has chosen to use force of arms or deception of persuasive words to grow their kingdoms, only to see them fall, God has chosen what man sees as foolishness, in the form of preaching, to spread His Word, through which man can come to believe in God through Christ, if he will but obey that Word. With this understanding, we are getting closer to understanding God's process.

God established His Kingdom, as prophesied in Daniel through His son Christ. Christ came in the form of man, lived perfectly in accordance to the Law, making Him the only man to earn His salvation through His perfect life. He taught his disciples and sent them the Comforter to help them in their task of presenting His word to the world. Now according to...

1 Cor 13:8-13

28

8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. 11

When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. **12** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. **13** But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

The comforter was temporary, to help until such time as that which is perfect is come, that perfect Law of Liberty, **James 1:25**, the full and complete Word that will lead man to a covenant relationship with God through Christ.

2 Tim 3:16-17

29

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; **17** that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Every good work. This obviously implies that there is a work that the man of God, us, should be doing. Whose responsibility is it to preach to and teach others about God, Christ, and what they have done for us. It is ours.

How does God grow His Church? He uses His children, you and I, to be the messengers of His truth to the world. But the responsibility for how people receive that truth is theirs entirely.

30 In **Matthew 13** we see the parable of the sower. That's you and I, the seed is the Word of God, the ground on which it falls is the heart of the one that hears it. Some will reject it immediately, those described as the side of the road, who choose to not understand, and Satan comes and snatches the Word away.

What does that mean? How does Satan take away the word? I believe that happens when someone becomes so entrenched in the world that they utterly reject any and all that God says in His Word and they retain none of what could be helpful to them, at least in the context of doing right because God commands it. They reject not only God's truth, but God Himself.

Then there is the one, who seemingly receives the truth, acting upon it, but the roots are shallow and there is no effort made to establish the root system through study and prayer, and when trials come, the truth is rejected and that one falls away.

And then there is the thorny ground, the one who receives the truth, but doesn't turn from the world, tries to live in both worlds and the truth is choked out by the allures of Satan and this world.

Finally, the good ground is the one that has a good heart and a willingness to accept the truth, to study to show themselves approved and to follow in the Apostles teaching and doctrine.

The real point is that the sower did not quit sowing, even though three out of four that the seed was sown on failed to bear fruit. Our responsibility is not to try and determine who might or might not receive the Word. It is not for us to judge. Our responsibility is to sow.

NOTE;

1 Cor 3:6-7

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6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. **7** So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

32 We don't cause the growth, God does. The danger is that we begin to tire of sowing the seed and not seeing any results, or seeing those that seem like they are going to respond, only to fall away. We become discouraged, we slowly stop making the effort to take every or even any opportunity to teach, and soon we find ourselves being that one who attends services, participates in the worship, but that becomes the extent of our service, we don't step out of our comfort zones to share God with anyone else. We make something of an effort if we can't avoid it, but we don't go out of our way to find that opportunity. Look back at the sower in Matthew, he did not regard the ground on where he sowed. He just sowed.

Brethren, we all need to step out of our comfort zones beginning today. We have a wonderful opportunity every day of our lives to preach and teach the Word of God. Our prayer, brethren, should be that our efforts here in Oakdale will be blessed by God and that the congregation will grow spiritually, and that others in the community will come to hear God's truth.

Our job is to sow the Word, if increase is to come, it will come from God.

I am reminded of what Paul told Timothy in....

2 Tim 4:1-2

33

1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: **2** preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

Our responsibility is to teach God's word in it's entirety, it's simplicity, and it's purity, neither adding to nor taking away. We must allow the Word of God to work through us as we carry it to others and try to help them to...

34

HEAR

Romans 10:17

Allowing God to develop in them

FAITH

Hebrews 11:6

A working faith that motivates to

REPENT

Luke 13:3

Leading them to acknowledge Christ

CONFESS

Matt 10:32-33

Living Christ in both word and deed

BAPTIZED

Acts 2:38

Obedying the commandment of God

35

Leading to Salvation through Christ.