

AND AFTER THEE...

And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. 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.

— Daniel 2:39-40

Since the world began, there have been kingdoms and civilizations which have come and gone, and the diversity of those civilizations was probably immense. Their cultures and languages were unique to themselves. Some were ruled by benevolent rulers, and others by despots. Some allowed their inhabitants to dwell in peaceful existences, while others were ruled by tyrants who ruled with an iron fist, causing anguish and travail among those whom they ruled.

And like the drifting sands of the world's deserts, which are pushed about by the wayward winds, covering all in its path — so were those kingdoms as they gradually, but surely, were swept away, disappearing beneath the sands of time. Added to a history of which only God knows in totality are the acts and deeds, good or bad, of all men, whoever they might have been and whenever they may have dwelt on the earth.

In each era of time that was then the present for each civilization — the present that then was was the stage upon which those who were had lived their lives; after all, each man's present is/was his only reality — the long ago past as well as the far away future remained as times of which he was never to experience — being destined for others. They may have all lived and died in their times, having never learned nor suspected of others who lived and died in their own times.

Man viewed his life and times from the perspective of his present reality, and that reality was his world — and, as a candle melts its tallow to expose more of its wick to burn, little realizing that it is shortening its own existence, so too does man when he consumes his strength with the passage of days. He seems to hear not the small voice which says, “And after thee...”

Regardless of the life and events of the present, one can be assured that the ticking of the divine clock is constant. The political scene, whether benevolent or cruel, is destined for eradication. As Shakespeare wrote in his play, when Caesar had been assassinated by Brutus, Cassius, and the conspirators, and afterward Antony, speaking at Caesar's funeral, says, “The evil that men do lives after them,” he then continued, “The good is oft interred with their bones. So let it be with Caesar.”

Whether men's souls are either tossed and churning, like the silt disturbed by the waves of an angry sea, or resting in peaceful slumber, depends on their past brief existence, which will also disclose their eternal future. "As a tree falleth, so shall it lie." Therefore, the call of "today is the day of salvation if you will hear His voice" is of vital importance in the now and in the hereafter! The gospel can only be "good news" if obediently responded and adhered to – Acts 2:38 will either be the most beautiful and gracious message one may be blessed to hear, or it will be the ringing accusation of eternity for those who reject it.

Man's myopic view could never envision the great panorama seen only by God. It is God, not man, who sees through the heavy veil of time and sees clearly all that has been and all that is to be. Man may delight or be troubled about his present and feel that everything important abides in his timeframe, yet God knows that man's brief existence is only a small thread in the fabric of time. Kingdoms will rise only to fall, and civilizations will, for a while, shine like the sun, only to disappear behind the clouds. The vapor appears above the boiling pot only to fade as it rises.

It is for this reason that man must not grasp firmly the here and now as his anchor in the stream of time. The events of pleasure or of heartbreak in man's short sojourn are only temporary, and for real life, he should reach beyond his present into eternity by grasping God's hand, Who can lead him to everlasting life. Regardless of the present's trying times where evil men may wax worse and worse, the man who clings to the Almighty will endure the unfairness of the now because of the hope in God's tomorrow.

Kingdoms and their peoples need to hear the voice which proclaims, "And after thee..." Kingdoms are not here to stay; the longer they have existed, the shorter time they have to exist. There is only One that the streams of time can never catch and carry away in its rapids, and that One is God — all else is like the opening bud of a flower and is cut down in a day. "And after thee..."