

January 2005 Issue No 1

Good News Unlimited

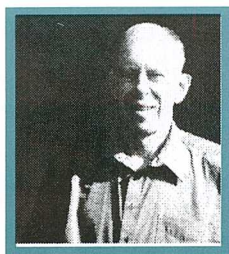


The Kingdom of the Gospel Part 1

Published by Good News Unlimited
www.goodnewsunlimited.org.au



Editorial



We have good news for all our readers (no pun intended). Commencing with this edition, GNU is taking the progressive step of producing a larger, quality magazine every month, instead of a bi-monthly as in the past. *The Good Newsletter* is being incorporated into the *Good News Unlimited* magazine, and will no longer be published as a separate paper. The GNU Board feels that this is a positive step that will give both unity and continuity to our monthly publication.

Some of the things that you may expect in the GNU magazine in 2005 are:

- ◆ Articles on the gospel by high profile Christians—authors, theologians, historians, church leaders, etc.

- ◆ Life-provoking articles by our loved contributors, Dr Desmond Ford, Ron Allen and Clem Moss.

- ◆ Articles to challenge readers to grow in their relationship with the Lord Jesus.

- ◆ A forum through which we will challenge you to step outside the square of your theological comfort zone. The purpose of this forum is not to present the doctrinal position of GNU, but to extend you and get you searching the Scriptures for yourself.

- ◆ An interactive section of letters to the editor.

- ◆ A guide on the theme of the month, for personal study and Home Groups.

- ◆ A section for previously unpublished stories (of about 1000 words) of how God transformed your life through the gospel. Readers are invited to make submissions, and there will be a book prize for each story we print.

- ◆ When space permits we will print stories of faith, hope and love that will appeal to both adults and children.

- ◆ A serial—*Modern Israel in Prophecy*, which is about the kingdom of the gospel—will commence in April.

It is our intention to put a magazine in your hands every month that will get you so excited you will want to share it with others.

Finally, GNU is in the process of organising an outreach to students in universities and tertiary colleges. We have a burden to share the gospel of the kingdom with the young people who are daily besieged by a philosophy that is openly antagonistic to the gospel. In order to do this well, GNU needs at least one ambassador in each of these institutions. If God lays it on your heart to be our representative, please contact either me or our office as soon as possible.

This outreach will be a drain on GNU's monetary reserves, but we are trusting God to meet these needs through you, our readers. If the Spirit of God gives you a conviction to share in this ministry, please contact the office re our 'University Outreach.' This is a prime investment opportunity for returns in eternity, where your 'treasure' of souls will endure forever. I'm sure you will agree with us that we need to save our young people—the Church's future—and give them the tools they need for both personal survival and evangelism.

Ritchie Way
Ritchie Way

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Good News Unlimited is an evangelical, non-denominational, nonprofit organization, with headquarters at South Tweed Heads, in New South Wales. GNU is dedicated to proclaiming the Everlasting Gospel. GNU is not a church, nor is it affiliated organically with any Christian denomination. Its ministry includes radio presentations, preaching appointments, public seminars and the dispersal of audio and video cassettes, also literature emphasizing the atonement of Christ. A number of GNU Fellowship groups meet regularly within Australia. GNU is supported

solely by donations from those who believe in its ministries. Gifts are tax deductible in Canada, New Zealand and the USA.

Unsolicited manuscripts of interest to Christians of all denominations are welcome, but without guarantee of return.

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THE KINGDOM'S KING

Ron Allen



To Jesus, the critical issue for his contemporaries was not what he had done, or what were the varying opinions about certain issues of theology that he had raised, rather, it was what did people think of him personally? 'Who do you say I am?' (Matthew 16:15).

Other thought-leaders have wanted to be judged on the merit of their ideas, not their characters. Long after his death, Charles Darwin is known by reason of his theory of origins. The same is true of John Newton. If it wasn't for his ideas on gravitation we would very likely know nothing of him. Not so with Jesus. He directs us to attest his teachings by his character.

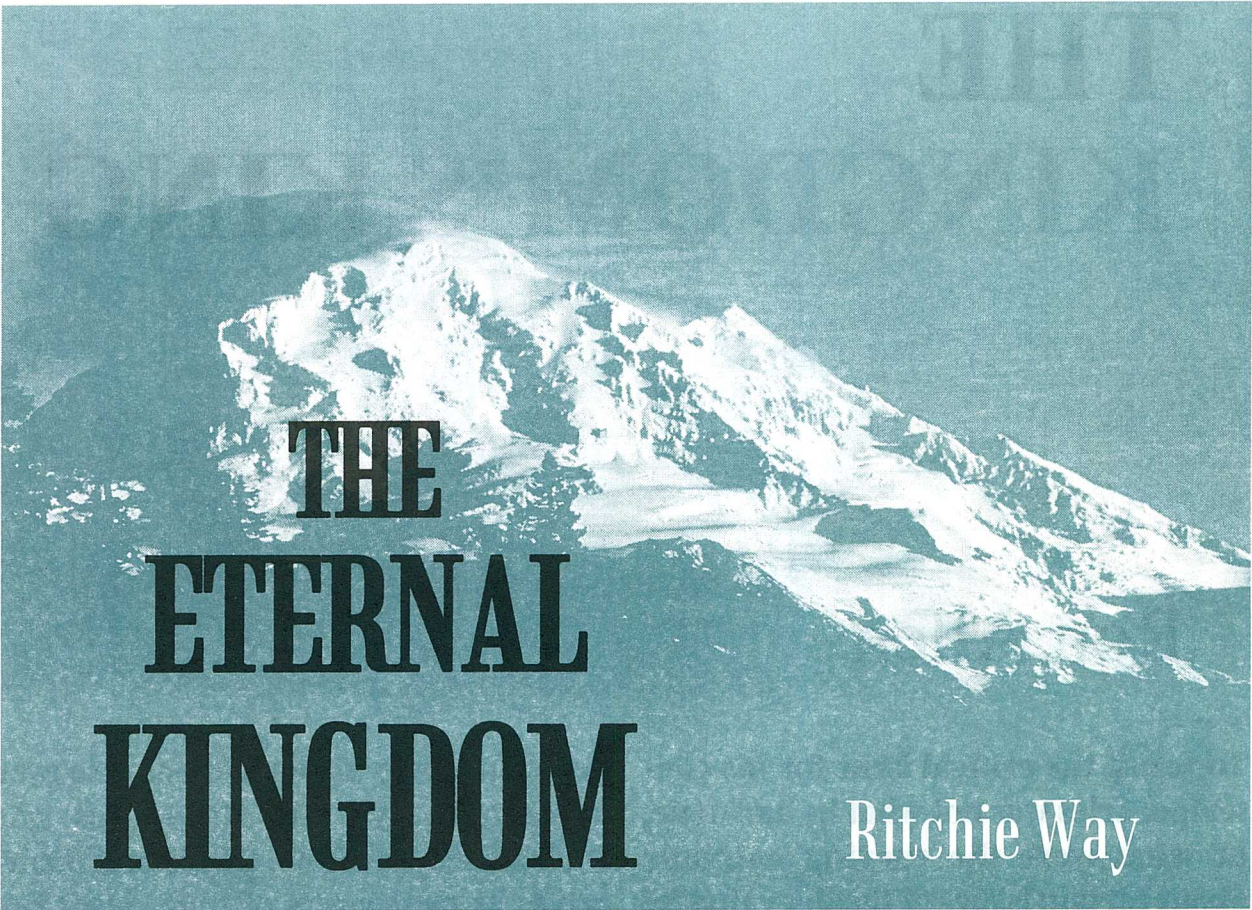
This he did, not once, but consistently. Someone asks, 'What must I do to have eternal life?' He replies, 'Follow me.' Another asks to be shown the Father. 'Have I been with you so long and you still don't know me?' is his reply. He taught truth by asserting, 'I am the truth.' For moral strength, rest for the spirit, pardon, peace and life eternal, he invited

people to come to him. No one else ever spoke quite like this. Not Moses, not Mohammed, not Plato. Others saw themselves as messengers of truth. Jesus believed *he was* the message.

Christians have not always followed Jesus' lead in this matter. Some groups have organized themselves around a particular doctrine, such as baptism, a worship style or a particular method of church government. Others have found a source of authority in the gifts manifested in the church. Jesus challenges every one of these centers of spiritual teaching, by insisting that he is the church's moral benchmark and its living law. In the kingdom of the gospel, Jesus is king.

Christianity took its rise, not in a clever thesis, or an elaborate philosophy, but in a scintillating person. Never before or since, has duty to God and man been transfigured from its usual freedom-denying mien, now to wear a face that elicits love, loyalty, devotion and glad usefulness.





THE ETERNAL KINGDOM

Ritchie Way

In the year 605BC the armies of Babylon under crown-prince Nebuchadnezzar, engaged and defeated the Egyptian army under Pharaoh Neco II at Carchemish (2 Kings 23:29; Jer 46:2). Following his victory over the Egyptians, Nebuchadnezzar colonised the former Egyptian territory of Hatti (2 Kings 24:7) and took hostages from the main cities. One of these hostages, a young man from Jerusalem, was Daniel.

With the help of his captives, the newly crowned King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, completely rebuilt the old city of Babylon. This great walled city, through which flowed the river Euphrates, became famous for its palaces, temples, and especially for the hanging gardens—one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Secure and living in luxury, Nebuchadnezzar wondered how long his magnificent empire would last. He recalled that other Mesopotamian empires, such as Sumer and Akkad, had come and gone. Would some great conqueror in the future proclaim over his kingdom, 'Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes'? That thought plagued him whenever his mind wasn't busy

with the affairs of state. One evening, when the future of Babylon weighed more heavily upon him than usual, Nebuchadnezzar fell asleep and dreamed a dream. In this dream, he saw a multi-metal idol, shining brightly in the midday sun.

The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay (Dan 2:32-33). As Nebuchadnezzar watched, his attention was drawn to an indestructible stone that had been cut out of a mountain by Divine power. This newly-cut stone, like a missile, hurtled from the sky and struck the idol with such force the metal god exploded into billions of microscopic smithereens that were sucked up and blasted all over the countryside, so that no two bits could be found together. The Divine Stone then settled in the image's place and grew and grew until it became a mountain that filled the whole earth.

Profoundly shaken by the vivid dream, Nebuchadnezzar summoned his advisors. His dream, which was unlike any other dream that he had previously dreamt, had obviously been sent by the gods and would, therefore, have some special significance. He believed that his advisors—who professed to have a special relationship with the gods—would be able

to get the interpretation for him. When they were unable to do so, Daniel, a Hebrew slave, offered to interpret the dream for the King.

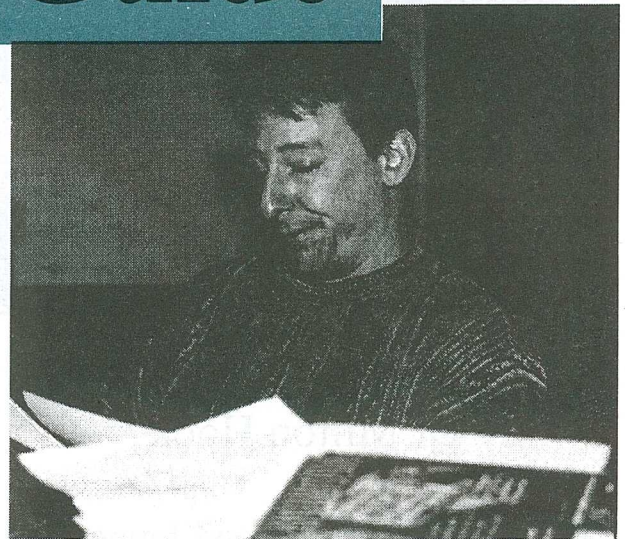
Daniel told the King that his dream had come from the God *YHWH*, and therefore only the God *YHWH* could provide the interpretation. He told the King that earthly kingdoms come and go, and that Nebuchadnezzar's would be no different from the rest. Like the kingdoms before it and the kingdoms that would come after it, Babylon had a beginning and Babylon would have an end. There's only one kingdom that will last forever, Daniel continued, and that

is the kingdom that the great God will set up in the days when the kingdom of iron and clay rules the earth. At that time, the Divine Stone will come and smite the feet of iron and clay, and that Stone will grow into a rock, and then into an enormous boulder, and ultimately into a mountain. And this mountain will become so great that it will eventually fill the whole earth. 'If you want to live forever, O king,' I can imagine Daniel telling Nebuchadnezzar, 'your only choice is to become a citizen of this kingdom that will never be destroyed.'

And to each of us is offered the same invitation.

Study Guide

CHRIST'S KINGDOM



John 4:25: Messiah (Christ) means King.

Luke 1:30-33: Jesus has a kingdom.

Matthew 28:18: Christ's kingdom was established by his death on the cross.

Revelation 12:10-11: Christ's kingdom is founded on his blood.

Luke 17:20-21: Christ's kingdom is a 'concealed' kingdom—not yet visible to the eye.

Matthew 13:31-33: Christ's kingdom would start small but would eventually fill the world.

Matthew 24:14: It is our duty to proclaim the gospel of Christ's kingdom to the entire world.

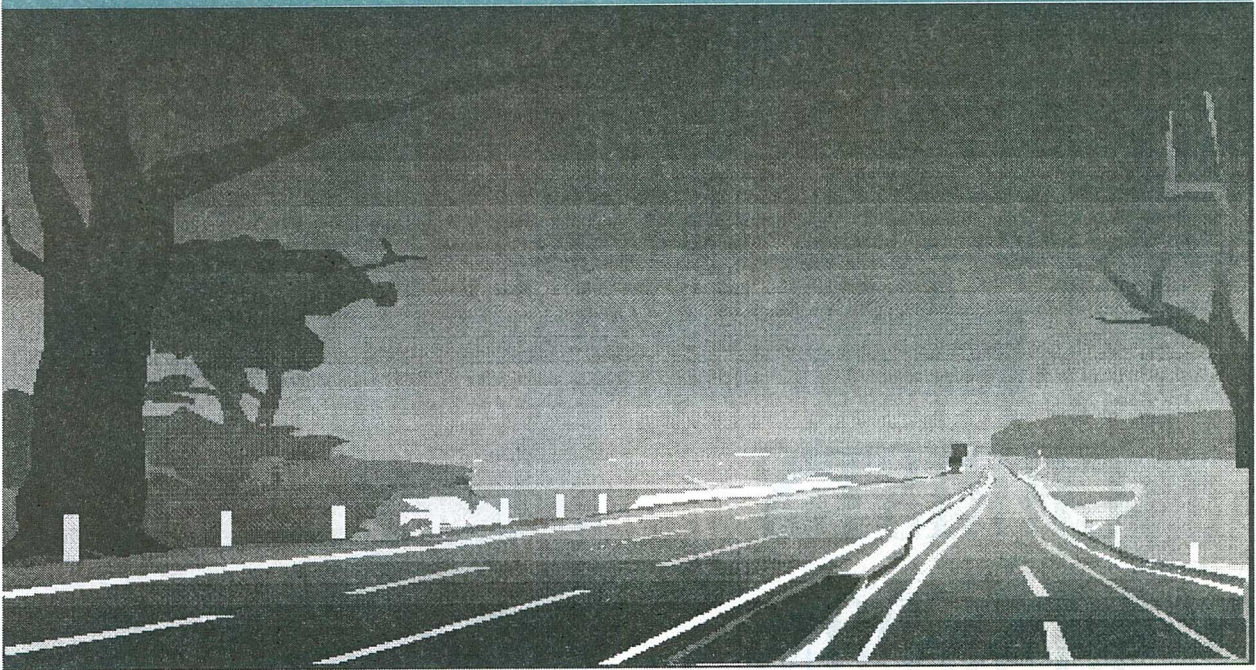
Matthew 13:44: We can only possess this kingdom if we give up everything belonging to Satan's kingdom.

Colossians 1:13: We are now citizens of Christ's kingdom (Revelation 1: 5-6; 5:9-10).

Daniel 7:27: After Jesus returns there will be only one kingdom—his, because all the kingdoms of this world will be given to God's people.

Matthew 25:34: The Father himself will welcome us into the glorified kingdom which he has prepared for us.

My Odyssey



Dr Milton Hook

I recall my childhood home. The Gospel is never mentioned despite numerous religious discussions. My parents are not agnostic. They simply take the 'good news' for granted, as if I would accept it as a natural consequence of growing up in a Christian home. And, years later, when I set up my own home, I admit with chagrin that I use the role model of my parents.

I hasten to add that my early years are crammed with pleasant memories. At the same time I recall many ambivalent encounters. I am not allowed, for example, to ride my bicycle to church on Sabbath, but other church members drive their cars to worship services. Their cars apparently help to make their Sabbaths a delight, but my bicycle-ban irks me.

The eating of flesh foods is also banned in

my boyhood home. It is considered unscriptural and unhealthy, yet I dutifully swallow bottles of slimy cod-liver oil — 'for the good of my health,' my mother intones.

Numerous behavioural mores like this are associated with a theoretical salvation process. The mantra is strident, 'Those who do not observe all the rules of Sabbath-keeping are eternally lost; those who eat meat will not go to heaven,'—*ad nauseam*.

My memory meanders to Grandma's kitchen. She is not as strict about diet. For lunch I am offered sausages in winter and polony sandwiches in summer. I relish them and suffer guilt pangs.

Similar feelings overcome me when I linger on the edge of a cricket oval one Sabbath afternoon, watching the game long enough to distract me from 'spiritual thoughts.' I am convinced my eternal destiny is in dire jeopardy. Yes, I am instructed, Jesus forgives my sins when I confess . . . but there is some small print, it reads, 'You must also keep all of God's law perfectly. After all, Jesus Himself kept them and any true disciple will imitate and duplicate his accomplishments.' How? Total surrender of one's will opens the channels for God's Spirit to enter into one's body, empowering and propelling one to perfect obedience. This high quality of personal morality is, in God's final judgment, mysteriously linked with his

forgiveness and righteousness. The formula guarantees eternal life.

For years I struggle with some of these philosophical and theological ideas. Different seeds are sown in my college days but they persist in peppering my preaching and teaching.

I cannot understand what total surrender of the will means. If I totally surrender my will I believe I am without the power of choice—robotic, inhuman. I therefore dismiss the assertion as gobbledegook.

I am mystified, too, by the idea of God's Spirit entering into me. I know a biblical term for the Holy Spirit is 'the Comforter,' one who comes alongside as a helper, not one who literally enters the body. The idea of God literally entering into created beings sounds to me too close to pantheism. I conclude that biblical expressions such as 'the Holy Spirit in you' are figurative pictures portraying spiritual intimacy.

And what does perfect obedience to God's laws really mean? I recall that the Pharisees thought they knew the answer, but Jesus raised the bar. 'You shall not kill' in Christ's Sermon on the Mount becomes 'You shall not be angry.' 'You shall not commit adultery' becomes 'You shall not look lustfully at a woman.' Is that as high as the bar goes or can it be placed higher? I suspect the absolute standard is higher, a quality of righteousness that only Jesus owns.

These modules are only part of the whole. I am a slow learner and do not see the big picture.

I attend Christian seminaries of two different denominations and further seeds of thought are sown in my mind.

Later, these seeds germinate in the hotbox of controversy in my church, when a vigorous debate comes to the boil and spills over into vitriol in some quarters concerning the doctrine of righteousness by faith. I am challenged to think through the issues for myself.

I go back to basics, to Scripture, to word meanings in Scripture's original languages, to the context and the times in which it was written. I conclude that the Bible word 'holy' does not mean moral perfection, as I was taught, but rather something, or someone, involved in the drama of exercising faith in God.

I discover the fine line between 'likeness' and 'sameness,' the Bible urging me to be 'like' Jesus in some respects but never demanding the impossible 'sameness.' Having come to the realisation my morals can never be as pure as those of Jesus, I realise I am forever dependant on his saving righteousness.

I notice, too, that the struggle of Paul's 'man of sin' in Romans 7:14-25 is a struggle in the present tense, a Christian's daily fight, not a struggle isolated in the unbeliever's past. I am convinced that genuine Christians never reach a plateau of sinlessness this side of glorification.

This is not a sudden Damascus Road experience for me. God is patient with my baggage from the past. Only gradually it dawns on me that salvation by faith is all by Christ and none by me. I conclude that the gospel must be simple. If it were not so, then only the intellectuals would be saved. I learn to fully appreciate the genius of Paul's inspired quotation, 'There is no-one righteous, not even one' Rom. 3:10,11; Ps 14:1-3; Eccl 7:20.

Having sought salvation through zealous law-keeping in his early years, Paul's mature crystallisation of the good news is, 'Now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known ... This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe ... All have sinned [past tense] and fall short [present continuous tense, i.e., keep on falling short] of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus' Rom 3:21-24. This becomes the focus of my life, my preaching, my teaching.

On the one hand, I remain convinced of the wisdom of God's law. The Sabbath, for example, brings untold blessings to families, personal health and spiritual vitality. Likewise, adherence to God's health maxims pays dividends. On the other hand, I am persuaded that no amount of law keeping opens the gates of heaven for me.

I feel assured that I remain essentially a sinner by nature, prone to fall far short by commission and omission with respect to God's standard. But I am counted a child of God by the *grace* of God. Every day I grasp the righteousness of Christ by faith. Faith never grows less essential in the event of any good deeds by me. Charity and good behaviour—whether it is feeble or strong—is simply my grateful response to the saving provision of Christ's perfectly adequate righteousness. I cannot add to Christ's righteousness. And it never becomes mine in reality. His righteousness always remains his and serves to be counted as mine in God's Judgment.

This Gospel is the most sublime truth Christianity has to offer the world. Bombs can only destroy bridges between Christendom and the rest of the world. I am obliged to meet the Muslim, the Jew, the Hindu, and the agnostic at the Bridge of Christian Love. Christ is the Saviour of the world. ♦

Discussion Point

I we continue not sure

hope faith agree

discuss

faith right
believe

GNU is a meeting of minds from a wide range of church affiliations, and therefore opinions expressed in our articles may differ from that of many of our readers. Recognising that opinions can differ and we all have much to learn and unlearn, we encourage our readers to participate in this forum.

Dear GNU

The 'R.B. Aust.' author in the September issue of *The Good Newsletter* 2004, admits his 'opposition to Adventist theology has been unrelenting.' How sad. How unnecessary. I am not an SDA, but intend to become a member soon. I have extensively researched the Investigative Judgement during the last sixteen months and have read mountains of material on the matter by authors of varying persuasions, including Dr Ford's, whose material I have considered most carefully.

I have discovered the gospel of Righteousness by Faith in my study of the Investigative Judgement, and would be happy to share the details with anyone who has an interest. The vast majority of Adventists are 'full on' the Gospel and well know that their standing before God is entirely reliant on simple faith in Christ's merits. The vocal few who fail to see this for a variety of reasons, are hardly representative of SDA theology.

Adventism today emphasises the gospel as in its earlier years. I direct the author of 'R.B. Aust.' to read *SDA Fundamental Belief* #10, p. 484 of *The Great Controversy* and A.G. Daniel's book *Christ Our Righteousness*. SDA gospel theology doesn't get much clearer than that.

Depreciating Adventism's position on the gospel is passé and detracts from GNU's loftier purpose of proclaiming the gospel. I see no such vilification in SDA literature. Our duty is to share the gospel with the unchurched, not to hen-peck believers. Will we be held accountable for the thousands of wasted hours crimping other believer's views at the expense of leading the unchurched to Christ?

H.K. Aust.

Dear H

Happy to talk with you, but don't want to get into attacking or defending the SDA Church. There is a great deal that I admire about the SDA Church and many of my best friends are SDA's.

On the other hand, my heart aches to see that the church has gone the way of most other churches. The pioneer Adventist, J. N. Loughborough, wrote: 'The first step into apostasy is to set up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is, to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth, to denounce heretics—those who do not believe that creed. And fifth, to commence persecution against such.' (*Review & Herald*, Vol. 18, p. 148).

He was, of course, denouncing other churches that drove the early Adventists from their fel-

lowship. But now, the wheel has turned full circle, Adventists have their own creed and they are driving out those who dare to tell them that some of their beliefs need revising.

While I feel there is a great deal I can share with SDA's I don't feel called to that ministry. Rather, I feel called to lay a solid foundation for the future, and to share the Gospel with our young people in the universities and tertiary institutions—to give a spiritual component to their education, that will keep them true to Christ and help them witness for him. That's what I want to do.

God bless you

Ritchie.

Hello

When Dr Ford speaks of no longer being 'within the womb' of his former church, I answer him ... it's not so bad, once you get used to it.

We were stripped of church offices and later 'excommunicated' because we merely associated with friends of Robert Brinsmead. We were asked to sign a paper saying we would be loyal to the church and not to Brinsmead. This was in 1964.

Needless to say, we felt the church had crossed the line and was operating more in a 'commu-

(Continued on page 11)



GNU SEMINAR 2005

The Riches of God's Grace in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

with Dr Desmond Ford & Pastor Ron Allen

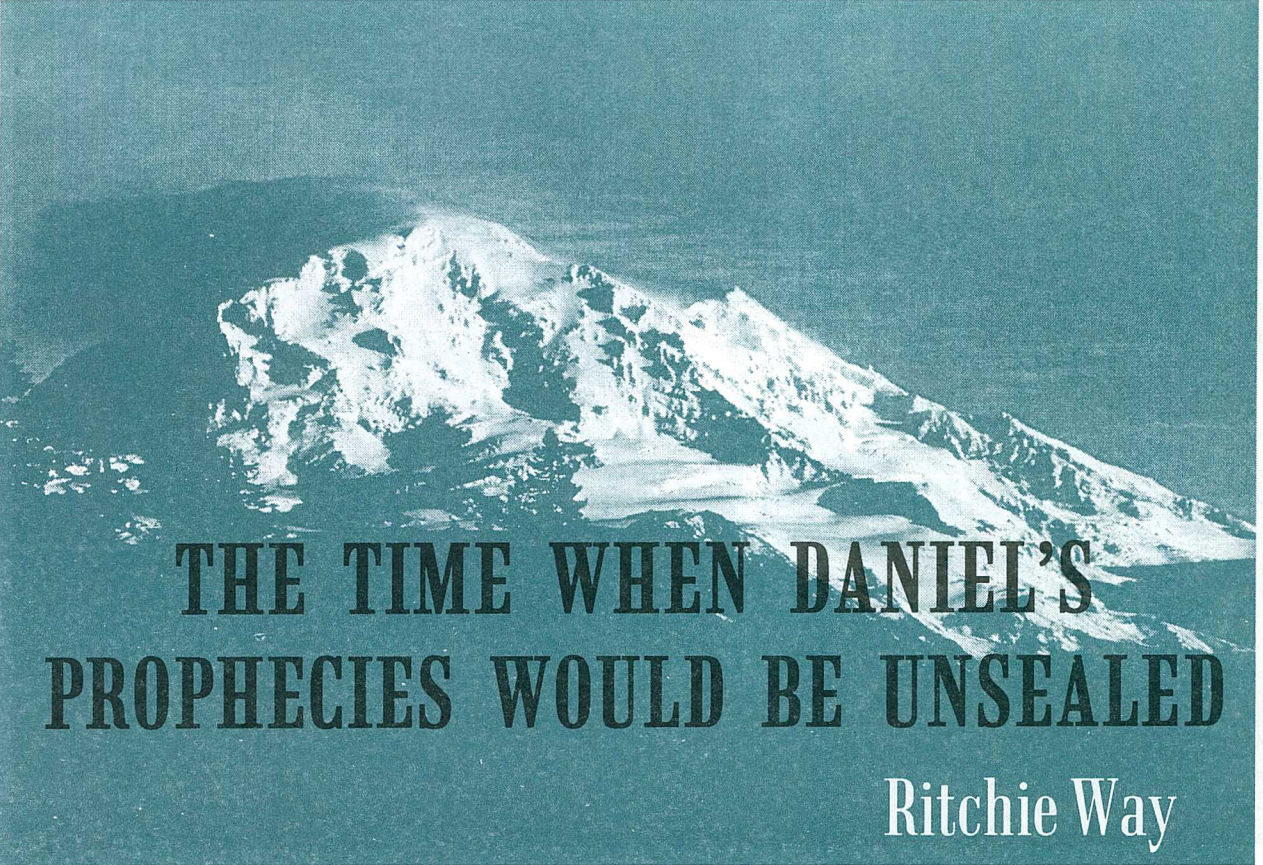
The letter to the Ephesian church is a concise, yet comprehensive summary of the Good News of Jesus Christ. It has been called the crown of St. Paul's writings; the divinest composition of man; the queen of the Epistles; the greatest, the maturest and the most relevant of Paul's works for our time; the distilled essence of the Christian religion and the most contemporary book in the Bible.

Mark your calendar now

Brisbane: April 29 & 30, 2005 at the Holiday Inn, Roma Street.

Sydney: May 7, 2005 at the Thornleigh Community Centre,
Cnr. Phyllis and Central Avenues.

Melbourne: May 20 and 21, 2005 at Carey Grammar School
Chapel, 349 Bakers Rd., Kew.



THE TIME WHEN DANIEL'S PROPHECIES WOULD BE UNSEALED

Ritchie Way

When Daniel wanted to know more about the prophecies that had been entrusted to him, the heavenly messenger said to him:

'Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed *until the time of the end*. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand' (Dan 12:9-10 emphasis supplied).

Daniel's prophecies could not be understood until the time of the end, because until that time, they would be like a scroll that had been rolled up and sealed.

So when would 'the time of the end' arrive, at which time Daniel's prophecies would be unsealed? In the August 1982 edition of the Good News Unlimited magazine, David Waterworth made the following perceptive comment: 'The prophecies of Daniel were sealed to the end. No one could understand the full import of this mysterious book until the end time should come. But when we read the New Testament closely, we find that the authors of those documents understand their age as the last age, even the end of the ages (Heb 1:2, 1 Cor 10:11). The Christian era is the last era, Christ is the last man. Who could best interpret the prophecies of Daniel but the One who sealed those prophecies? All of

Daniel's key themes, the judgment, the kingdom of God, the Son of Man, the cleansing of the sanctuary and everlasting life, find their culmination and best expression in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.'¹

Apocalyptic focuses on the end of time when God himself would visit our world. The New Testament teaches that God would visit our world twice—at the first and second advents. Daniel's prophecies—including the prophecy of Daniel 2—found their initial fulfillments in Jesus' first visit to our planet. The New Testament authors saw their time as 'the fulfillments of the ages' (1 Cor 10:11), 'the last times' (Jude 17-18), the 'last days' (Heb 1:2), and even 'the last hour' (1 John 2:18), for it was in their day that the Rock of Ages first broke into human history.

The heavenly messenger told Daniel that at the time of the end 'many will be purified, made spotless and refined' (Dan 12:10). That is exactly what happened in Jesus' day. Only those who don't know the Gospel stories would deny it. Jesus forgave people their sins (Matt 9:2); He purified them from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9) and made them both holy and perfect (Heb 10:10, 14).

Finally, the heavenly messenger told Daniel, 'None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand' (Dan. 12:10). Was that true

of Jesus' time? Reminding his disciples of Daniel 12:10, Jesus said, 'The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them' (Matt 13:11).

The Messiah himself was the one who came and increased knowledge. The woman of Samaria, who had been looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, said, 'I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us' (John 4:25). And the apostle John wrote,

'The Son of God has come and has given us understanding' (1 John 5:20). And that is the way it was: those who came to Jesus for answers understood, but those who turned their backs on him did not understand.

Jesus was the One who, in the last days, broke the seal and opened the understanding of his disciples to the mysteries of the book of Daniel. That is why, whenever Jesus preached that 'the kingdom of heaven/God' (e.g. Mark 1:15) was about to appear,

his hearers understood him to be referring to the kingdom mentioned in Daniel's prophecies.²

ENDNOTES:

1. *Daniel through the Eyes of Jesus*, GOOD NEWS UNLIMITED, Vol.2, No. 8, pp. 6-7.

2. There is only one 'kingdom of God' in Daniel. The kingdom of God in Daniel 2 is the same as the kingdom of the Most High in Daniel 7.



Discussion Point

(Continued from page 8.)

nistic' mode to request such a thing. We did not sign.

We look upon ourselves as having been 'cast out of the city', as Ezekiel was. We call ourselves 'field dwellers'. But it isn't a bad place to live. From this vantage point, you can understand a lot. I cannot renounce the inspiration of the Bible, nor can I seem to renounce the Ten Commandments as they were recorded. I'm not an Adventist, *per se*, but I'm not anything else.

All best wishes to others who have suffered. Just because we have not suffered physical death, we still make up an infinite group of martyrs. Where this all leads I don't know. But I wish more people like Dr Ford would look at the prophecies of Ezekiel. It is my belief that in the future Ezekiel's tongue will be loosened and those prophecies will mean a great deal to those of us who have been forced out of the city and dwell in the field.

Sincerely

L S Aust.

Dear L

Thanks for your email in which you spoke of your experi-

ence of departure from your parent spiritual community, to an existence 'without' as you put it.

Yes, others have found what you have. There is life after the death of disillusionment and rejection. I am glad you have found it to be so.

The body of Christ is much bigger than many people think—'plenty good room in my Father's kingdom', as the old Negro spiritual says.

May God continue to lead and bless you as you seek his service wherever you are.

Yours in Jesus

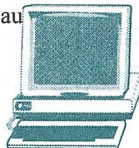
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Good News Unlimited Mission Statement

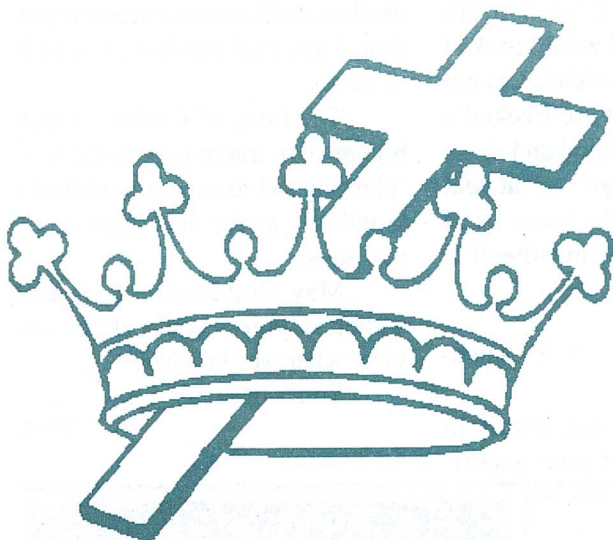
Christians united in offering to all, meaning and direction in their lives by a knowledge of God's encounter with humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ.

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October: \$20.00

November: \$20.00

ONLY ONE KING



For over 300 years after Jesus, Christians had a pretty tough time in the Roman Empire. Some, like the apostle Paul, were beheaded. Others were taken to the Circus Maximus and thrown to the lions, or were killed by wild bulls or gladiators in front of huge crowds of people. It wasn't an easy time for God's people.

In the year 308 a new Emperor was chosen. His name was Valerius Licinius. Christians were pleased with this man because he made laws that were good for them. But in the year 320 something strange happened to this emperor. Nobody knows exactly what the problem was, but it appears that he had a mental problem. Valerius Licinius made a new law, saying that he was god and all the soldiers in the Roman army had to worship him.

At that time a crack legion of Roman soldiers was stationed at Sebastea (now called Sivas) in Anatolia (now called Turkey). Their camp was about three hundred kilometers by road from the Black Sea. Licinius's decree came to their camp, and when it was read out not a soldier blinked. But their minds were racing, because the soldiers at Sebastea knew that there were a number of Christians in their legion.

The trumpet blasted and the herald proclaimed: 'Hear ye, O soldiers of the Sebastea legion: Emperor Valerius Licinius has proclaimed himself god, and no soldier is permitted to serve any other god but the emperor. Today every soldier in this legion is to signal that he has revoked allegiance to any other god and is to make a declaration of loyalty to the emperor at this altar, saying aloud, "Caesar is god."'

After the decree had been read, the soldiers were lined up and ordered to file past the altar, take a pinch of incense from the bowl and sprinkle it on the altar fire, while saying, 'Caesar is god.' When the declaration of loyalty ceremony was over, the officer in charge reported to the commander that forty soldiers had refused to declare that Caesar was god. These men had been arrested, their weapons had been taken from them and they had been put into prison under the charge of the warden, Aglios.

Later the commander himself visited the prison to plead with the men to reconsider, for the sake of Rome and their own lives. 'I know you men,' he said. 'You are among the best men in this legion, you are good men who can be trusted. I don't want to lose you. Worship your own god, if you must, but at least do what is commanded. Just file past the altar, offer a pinch of incense on the fire and say, "Caesar is god."'

A spokesman for the group stepped forward. 'Sir,' he replied, 'We are more than willing to serve Caesar, to give our lives for him and the empire if need be, but we will not deny Jesus. There is only one Eternal King and that is Jesus, not Caesar.'

The commander left feeling very sad. Caesar had commanded that soldiers who refused to obey the decree were to be executed. However, because

these men were Roman citizens, the commander did not have the authority to execute them himself. He had to wait for the arrival of the Inspector General the following week.

When the Inspector General arrived, the commander told him about their problem. 'We have got forty men here, who are Christians and while they are prepared to die for the emperor and empire, they refuse to acknowledge Caesar as god. What are we to do?'

'Look,' replied the Inspector General, 'do you believe Caesar is god? I don't! I would wager that most of the army doesn't, but we have to have some sort of unity in these things or there would be chaos, so, for the sake of unity in the army we all need to compromise a little.'

'I have already suggested that to them, but I'm afraid there's one thing these men won't do, sir . . . compromise. To them, it is treachery to their Lord, Jesus.'

'Then we will have to make examples of them, won't we?'

'Excuse me for objecting, sir, but these soldiers are among our best and most trusted men. It seems crazy to me that we are doing the work of our enemies by killing our own soldiers. We should be killing the enemies of Rome, not our own loyal men.'

'Perhaps there is another way,' mused the Inspector General, 'I have an idea that may just do the trick. It may force the men to compromise.'

'I wish you luck,' the commander commented wryly.

It was mid-winter and snowing. The ground was frozen hard and a nearby lake was covered with ice. The Inspector General ordered that the forty soldiers be brought to the edge of the lake. When they were assembled, he told them they were to be stripped naked and sent out on the ice until they changed their minds. Other soldiers would be stationed all around the small lake to prevent their escape. On the shore was the altar, beside it a heated bathhouse and a big pot of hot soup. The Inspector General said that those who changed their minds and offered incense while declaring, 'Caesar is god,' could have some hot soup and warm up in a hot bath before being restored to the ranks.

The forty men then had their clothes taken from them and were sent out naked onto the frozen lake. The surface of the ice was slippery and they had to hold onto each other as they went, to stop slipping over. At the centre of the frozen lake they sang with loud voices, 'Forty soldiers standing for Jesus.' These shivering men huddled together for warmth, their voices coming across the ice to the men on the shore. But as the night advanced their voices got weaker and weaker. Eventually one man came stumbling in. 'I will offer incense to Caesar,' he cried. 'I will offer incense to Caesar.' He went to the altar, put some incense on the hot coals and croaked, 'Caesar is god.' He was then given some hot soup after which he staggered into the bathhouse and fell into a hot bath.

One of the officers standing there watching all this, was Aglios, the jailer. During the week that these men had been in his custody he had gotten to know them pretty well. He had spent many hours talking with them and had learned that they were good men, men who could be trusted, men who were prepared to die for what they believed in. As he watched and listened, across the lake came the voices, very faintly now, 'Thirty-nine soldiers standing for Jesus.' Tears welled up in his eyes.

Suddenly Aglios gritted his teeth and wrenched his sword out of its scabbard. The screech of metal got the attention of the other soldiers standing nearby. Aglios raised his sword above his head, and then thrust it as far into the cold earth as he could drive it. He then quickly took off his helmet and hung it on the sword handle, after which he undid the straps on his breastplate, lifted it over his head and laid it on the ground. The shivering soldiers nearby watched silently as he removed all his clothing. Then, completely naked, he slipped and slithered across the ice to the thirty-nine. The men on the lake sang with new strength in their voices. Their song came across the ice to the soldiers on the shore, 'Forty soldiers stand-

ing for Jesus.'

Over the next few hours the voices of the men on the lake got weaker and weaker. Eventually they fell silent, nothing could be heard except the wind whistling snowflakes through the bare trees on the



shore. The soldiers around the lake, even though they were wearing their winter uniforms, were so cold they had to march back and forth and stamp their feet in an effort to keep warm.

When morning came a squad was sent out onto the lake to find out what had happened. The forty Christian soldiers were frozen solid. The squad had to return for axes to cut their frozen bodies out of the ice. They then got others to come and carry them to the shore where the statue-like bodies were covered with snow to wait for burial when the ground thawed in the spring.

The next day the Inspector General sat down and wrote a report about what had happened, and

sent it off to Rome. It was so shocking that the senate in Rome persuaded the emperor to withdraw his decree. He did, and from that point forward, the persecution of Christians was stopped. But it stopped only because forty brave soldiers were prepared to die for Jesus.

We are entering an age similar to that of the forty martyrs of Sebastea, an age in which the followers of the Lamb stand alone against a worldly philosophy that is intensely antagonistic to them. In this environment GNU intends to uphold Jesus as the only One worthy of our worship and devotion—the One we live for, and, if necessary, the One we will die for.



Dr Desmond Ford
*The Pattern of the Future
as Typified in Passion Week
and Pentecost:*
**The Roles of Terrorism,
Globalism & the Everlasting Gospel**



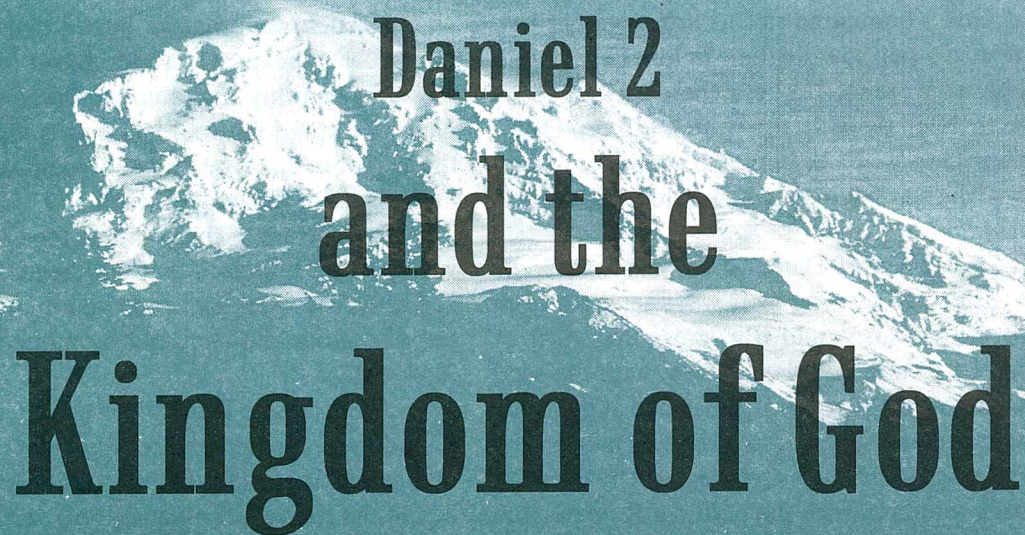
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Come and hear Dr Ford as he begins 2005 with a topic that is of great interest to each one of us, he will look forward to seeing you at these extra special meetings.



Daniel 2 and the Kingdom of God

Ritchie Way

Because Daniel was of noble birth, he wasn't required to dig irrigation canals, build levees, make bricks, or work the fields with the other slaves. Instead, together with three other highborn Jews, he was exposed to the culture of Babylon in the King's court.

When Daniel heard that Nebuchadnezzar was threatening to execute his spiritual advisers unless they could explain the significance of a dream he'd had, Daniel turned to the Lord for help. In reply, the Lord showed Daniel why he had given this dream to Nebuchadnezzar, and what it all meant.

Armed with this new knowledge, Daniel requested an audience with the King. He told the King that the God in heaven had given him his dream to reveal what would take place in the future (Dan 2:45). 'The idol's golden head', said Daniel, 'represents Babylon.' On hearing this, the King knew at once that his kingdom would not last forever, because another nation—represented by the silver chest and arms—would rule the ancient world after Babylon. And history reveals that this is exactly what happened. In the year 539BC, Media and Persia united, to crush Babylon.

Persia eventually over-shadowed Media to be-

come the dominant world power, but in the year 330BC, Alexander the Great, with his Greek army, conquered her. Greece, represented by the bronze belly and thighs, was a great nation, but disintegrated and was taken over by Rome. The Roman legs of iron then ruled the world unchallenged, until the God of Heaven set up his eternal kingdom at the time the iron was weakened by the admixture of clay.

The feet of the dream-image was made 'partly of iron and partly of baked clay' (Dan 2:33). A clue that is almost always overlooked is that the metal in the feet of this image is the same metal that the legs were made of—iron. Now if the iron in the legs represents Rome, consistency would require the iron in the feet to also represent Rome. The only difference between the substance of the legs and the substance of the feet is that the iron of the feet had clay mixed in with it.

It is also significant that the clay was the only part of the image that was not a metal. As the four metals in the image represented four political powers, it would seem safe to assume that the non-metal, clay, would depict a non-political power. What non-political power united with Rome in the days when the God of Heaven set up his kingdom on earth? Verse 43 offers us a clue to this mystery. A literal translation of the text reads:

And as you saw the iron mixed with the clay of the clay, they shall be mixed with the seed of men.

But they shall not adhere to one another, even as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of these kings, the God of Heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.¹

The words, 'they shall be mixed with the seed of men' would have reminded the Hebrews, at that time, of God's command not to mix together two kinds of seed when sowing their fields (Lev 19:19). The Hebrews were told to keep their various seeds separate to teach them that they should keep God's seed (their God-given beliefs and practices) separate from 'the seed of men' (the world's beliefs and practices).

The prophecy of Daniel 2 reveals that God's people, instead of keeping their ways separate from those of the world, would transgress the spirit of Leviticus 19:19 and mix themselves 'with the seed of men.' The worldly power in existence at the time, depicted by verse 43, was Rome (represented by the iron). The religious Hebrews (represented by the clay) would mix, or unite, with the political Romans (the seed of men) for an evil purpose. In the understanding of one religious commentator, 'The mingling of churchcraft and statecraft is represented by the iron and the clay.'²

It is a fact of history, that the Jews (the clay), who hated the Romans (the iron), united with the Romans to have the Messiah executed on a cross (John 19:11; Acts 3:13). The Jewish religious leaders, who claimed to be God's people, used the corrupt methods of the world to get rid of the radical teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, who had become a thorn in their side.

On the other hand, some Christians believe that the feet and toes of the image, represent the break-up of the Roman Empire into several smaller kingdoms, some of which would be strong like iron, and others, brittle as baked clay. But this view, which sees the feet and toes as representing several kingdoms (plural) contradicts verse 41 which says 'this will be a divided kingdom' (singular). Daniel portrays it as a single kingdom which is divided into two quite different factions: The political faction (iron) and the religious faction (clay). The political faction would have the iron-like strength of Rome, while the religious faction would have the unbending brittleness

of Judaism.

Daniel revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that the Divine Rock, which he saw in his dream, would smite the feet of the image and destroy the kingdoms of man and replace them with God's worldwide mountain (kingdom) on earth:

Nebuchadnezzar had hoped that his kingdom would last forever. God had shown him, however, that every earthly kingdom would come to an end. Only one kingdom would have no end, and that was the kingdom that God himself would set up on earth in the days of the image's feet.

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed ... This is the meaning of the vision of the Rock cut out of a mountain—but not by human hands (Dan 2:44-45).

According to Daniel's prophecy, the mountain Kingdom began with the coming of the Divine Rock that struck the image on the feet of iron and clay, i.e., at the time the Romans (iron) and the Hebrews (clay) were in an alliance to destroy Jesus. So if we were to put a date on the collision between the Rock and the image, it would be during the first advent of Jesus. And, according to Scripture it was Jesus' death on the cross at the hands of the Jews and the Romans and his subsequent resurrection, which established his Kingdom here on earth, a Kingdom that will eventually

spell an end to all the kingdoms of man.

There are really only two spiritual kingdoms in this world: the kingdom of man, represented by

the image of a man and the Kingdom of God, represented by the mountain that began as a Divine Stone.

The prophecy of Daniel 2 reveals, that while the iron and clay would join together, the alliance between them would ultimately fail because iron and clay cannot be successfully amalgamated (v. 43). You can put iron and clay together, but they won't stick together. Judaism united with Rome for as long as it was necessary to destroy Jesus, then the alliance fell apart and the two nations went to war against each other—with disastrous results for the Jews.

When the repentant criminal who was crucified with the Lord, prayed, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.' Jesus answered

Daniel revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that the Divine Rock, which he saw in his dream, would smite the feet of the image and destroy the kingdoms of man and replace them with God's worldwide mountain (kingdom) on earth:

him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise' (Luke 23:42-43). Here, in Jesus' own words, is the precise time when he would come into his Kingdom. It would be set up 'today'—the very day Jesus died for the sins of the world. Jesus established his Kingdom (paradise) by his death that very day. And that very day, the dying criminal became a citizen of that Kingdom. Christ's Kingdom is not just a future event, it is also a present reality. People are becoming citizens of his Kingdom now, in this present age (Phil 3:20).

The followers of Jesus have been commissioned to preach, not just the Gospel, but 'the Gospel of the Kingdom' (Matt 24:14; 4:23).

²E.G. White, MS 63, 1899 (Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia: Ellen G. White/SDA Research Centre).

³The expression 'without hands' means not by human power but by divine power (see Col 2:11, & cf. Acts 7:48 with Acts 17:24).

⁴The kings referred to here are Gentile kings. 'The time of those kings' is, therefore, an expression that parallels 'the time of the Gentiles' (Luke 21:24). It stands in contrast to 'the Day of the Lord' when the God of heaven would set up his kingdom on the earth.

⁵The common application of the rock of Daniel 2 to the second coming of Jesus, skips over the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, as if this central event to Scripture and the people of God never happened.

Daniel 2 is about God's coming kingdom, but had Jesus not died and been resurrected again, God's kingdom would never have been set up on earth.

ENDNOTES:

¹Unfortunately, some modern translators, in trying to make sense of this difficult passage, have interpreted it in accordance with their own beliefs.



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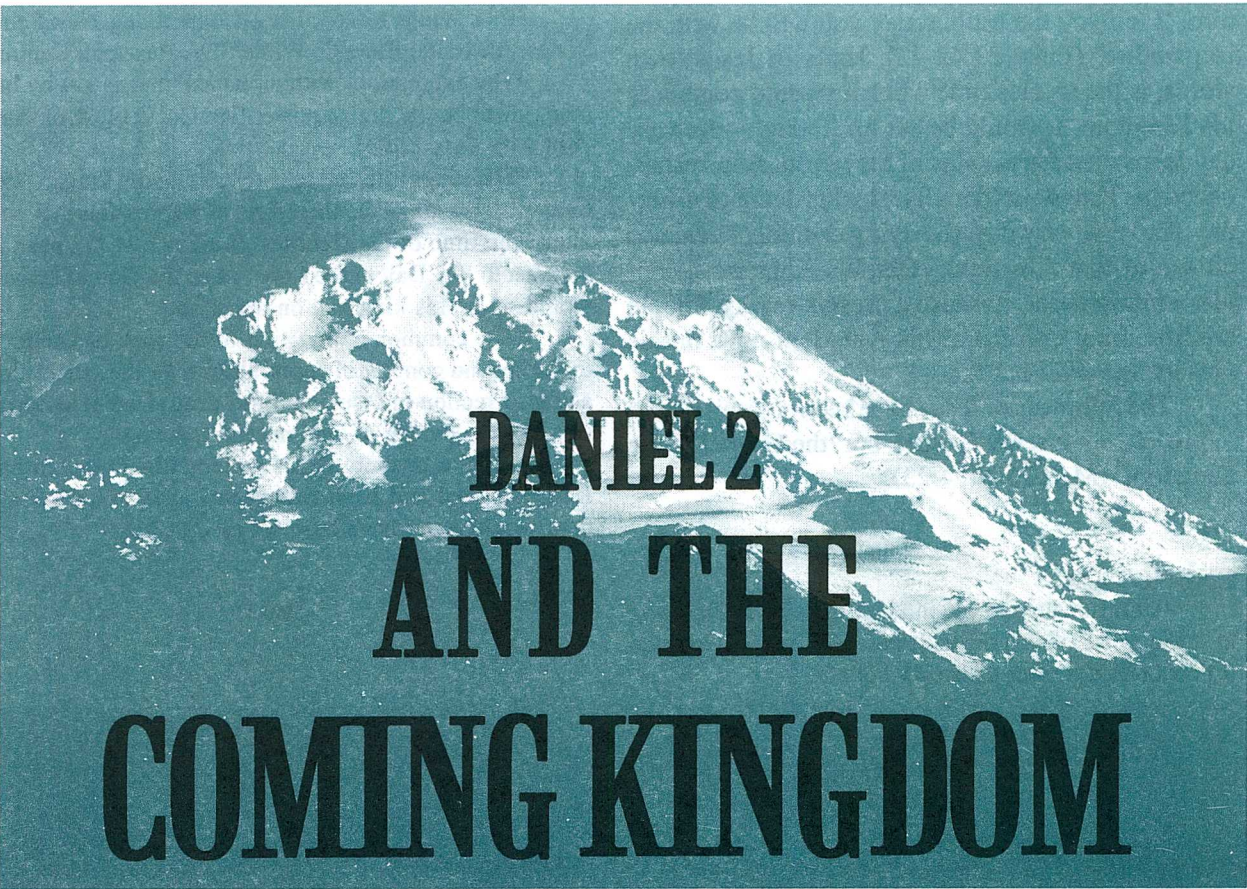
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DANIEL 2 AND THE COMING KINGDOM

Ritchie Way

Daniel 2 reveals that God would set up His kingdom on earth at the coming of the Messiah (the Divine Rock). The New Testament, however, reveals that the Messiah has two comings, which suggests that Daniel 2 could have two fulfillments: one at each coming. We have already seen that Nebuchadnezzar's dream had a fulfillment with the first coming of Jesus; let us now see if it could have another fulfillment at the Second Coming.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream, as given by Daniel, can be outlined as follows:

| REFERENCE | SYMBOL | KINGDOM |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Daniel 2:37-38 | Gold | Babylon |
| 39 | Silver | Medo-Persia |
| 39 | Bronze | Greece |
| 40 | Iron | Rome |
| 41-43 | Iron & Clay | Religio-political union |
| 44 | Stone—mountain | The eternal kingdom. |

It is generally understood that the feet and toes of iron and clay represent the various kingdoms—some with the strength of iron and some as brittle as baked clay—that arose in the old territory of the Roman Empire. This interpretation, however, excludes Australia, Russia, China, Japan, North and South America and much of Africa etc. from the Second Advent. The feet and toes of the image must, therefore, represent something other than the so-called ten kingdoms that took over from Rome.

As we saw in the first advent fulfillment of this prophecy, the iron and clay in the feet and toes represented the political and religious groups that were antagonistic to each other, but which joined together in order to oppose the kingdom of God. But iron and clay cannot be fused together, which is why their union

fell apart soon after it had been accomplished. And that is what the book of Revelation teaches.

Revelation 17 pictures a woman riding on a beast. This woman represents religious power and the beast that she rides on represents political power. In other words, political power supports the religious power, but the religious power holds the reins, just as it did in Jesus' day.

We are told that this woman commits adultery with the kings of the earth. Just as she abandoned her true husband, Christ, and united with worldly power and authority instead, in order to achieve her objectives, so the Jewish authorities joined with Rome to destroy Jesus. Afterwards, however, Rome turned against the Jews, destroying their city and temple. Those who were not killed in the war were sold as slaves all around the Mediterranean.

In the same way, in the last days the religious authorities in the world will join with the political authorities to get rid of Christ's representatives on earth. And, for a time, it will appear that the union of Church and State is succeeding. But, when the evil ways of the Church become intolerable, the State will turn on her and destroy her. 'The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her

flesh and burn her with fire' (Rev 17:16).

Today, more than ever before, the Church is getting involved in politics in order to accomplish its ends. History has numerous examples of the evil that results when any religion dominates politics, whether that religion be Islam, Hindu, Buddhist or Christian. It is good that the lives of politicians be guided by the principles of justice, mercy and humility, but it is an evil when a particular religious culture uses physical force to impose its will upon dissenters. That is something that God himself has refused to do. He did not stand behind Eden's Tree of Knowledge with a big stick, waiting to whack the knuckles of the first person to pick its fruit.

Daniel & Revelation reveal that, in the end-time, the iron and the clay (the beast and the prostitute) will unite to make war upon Christ in the person of his people. Just as the Church used the State to impose its will and punish dissenters during the Inquisition, so will the Church of the end-time. When that happens Christ—the Rock—will appear and destroy the kingdom of man and set up his own kingdom that 'shall fill the whole earth.' And that kingdom, unlike its predecessors, will 'endure forever' (Dan 2:44).



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