

The Rise and Fall of the World, Part 2

Scripture: Daniel 2:41–43

Code: 27-08

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Charles Malik is a native of Lebanon, raised in the Eastern Orthodox Church in the midst of an Islamic world. He was one of the founders of the United Nations' Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948 and has been his country's ambassador to the United States and to the United Nations. In the United Nations Dr. Malik has served as President of the General Assembly and President of the Security Council. A graduate of Harvard University, where he earned a M.A. and a Ph.D., he has been a visiting professor there as well as a resident professor at the American University in Beirut.

In late 1979 Dr. Malik gave an address entitled "The State of the World" at a pastors' advisory committee I attended at Arrowhead Springs. Malik believes the world is on the brink of disaster unless something dramatic happens. He gave a lengthy list of the crucial issues facing America and the western world as we enter into what may be the most chaotic period of our history.

A. An Analysis of Several World Problems

1. The nuclear arms race

Dr. Malik calls the nuclear arms race "the balance of terror" because it has the potential to end the world if the wrong man pushes the right button.

2. The strain in the western alliance

Dr. Malik also said America has not done well in maintaining its European ties. He saw the Soviet Union as gradually wooing the American allies in Europe so that they would be more prone to listen to them than the United States. There is a low level of commitment between us and our allies compared to what we once had in the past, and he believed that was bringing Soviet power closer to engulfing the world.

3. The perpetual retreat of the United States

Dr. Malik said America has continuously retreated from equality with its sworn enemies, and at that time observed it was standing in a position of weakness in the world.

4. The stress on money and machines

Dr. Malik also said that the West worships the great "gods" of mechanization, progress, technology, and modernization--idols made by our own hands. He pointed out that in recent years we have tried

to buy friendship and affinity around the world with money and machines apart from a loving concern for people. He said the only time he could find America sharing community of spirit with a foreign nation is through the efforts of obscure missionaries.

5. The secularism of western universities

From Dr. Malik's perspective, the main problem facing the world today is the western university system, in which all the world's policy makers have been educated. He criticized it as being humanistic, Freudian, naturalistic, secularistic, atheistic, and cynical--one that knows nothing about God, absolute standards, or a commitment to truth. He said that when a man like the Ayatollah Khomeini rises to power, no one in the West understands his motivation because they don't know what it means to be committed to absolutes.

6. The retreat of Christianity

Dr. Malik then pointed to three major revivals that have occurred in the world recently. One is the revival of atheism, which is sweeping through the East, through Europe, and through other parts of the world. There is also a revival of Judaism in the Zionist movement. And the third is the revival of Islam, which will sweep across the world if it continues at its present rate. Dr. Malik concluded that Christian truth no longer makes a significant impact on the world. He saw it as playing no part in the politics of the western world. Biblical Christianity in Europe is well nigh non-existent, while Christianity in America is fading into liberalism as well as secularism.

B. An Attempt to Secure World Peace

After his analysis of the decay of western civilization, Dr. Malik said something that shocked me, especially since he professed to be a Christian. He said that the only hope for the western world lies in an alliance between the Roman Catholic Church (one of the greatest unifying factors in Europe) and the Eastern Orthodox Church (which controls the western front of the Middle East). He believed that if those two powers don't solidify their control politically, Islam will march across Europe. Therefore he called for all Protestant Christians around the globe to join hands with the Pope so that the Christian world will be unified.

It is clear that Malik saw the globe in an imbalance: Islam and the East on the rise while the West wanes because a loss of absolutes leads to dissolution. He saw the Roman Catholic Church as a common factor in Europe and North and South America, and suggested it could provide the necessary unification to strengthen the western world. Dr. Malik was particularly concerned that the western world declare the eastern Mediterranean (Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and Egypt) as part of its domain.

That part of the world once belonged to Rome. And the prophet Daniel said that some day the Roman Empire would be revived (Dan. 2:41-43; 7:19-26). The things Dr. Malik said illustrate how fast we are moving toward the fulfillment of Daniel 2.

Daniel lived six hundred years before Christ, yet he outlined the course of history, even up to our own lifetime. We shouldn't be shocked at that. The Old Testament prophesied the destruction of Babylon (Isa. 13:19-22), Egypt (Ezek. 30:13-16), Tyre (Ezek. 26:1; 28:19), and Sidon (Ezek. 28:21-23), and they were destroyed exactly as foretold. It also prophesied that a man named Cyrus would

release Israel from captivity (Isa. 45:1, 13), and about two hundred years later he did (Ezra 1:1-4). One of the greatest proofs of the Bible's divine inspiration is fulfilled prophecy because the prophecies are externally verified in human history.

REVIEW

I. THE DREAM RECEIVED (vv. 1-30)

Every power and nation assumes it will exist forever--or at least hopes it will. One such nation was Babylon, technically known as the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Its first great king was Nebuchadnezzar, who received an important dream from God about the future kingdoms of the world.

II. THE DREAM RECALLED (vv. 31-35)

III. THE DREAM REVEALED (vv. 36-45)

Daniel explained the meaning of the dream. He told Nebuchadnezzar that he had seen a large statue representing four great world kingdoms, the first of which he himself ruled.

A. Babylon (vv. 37-38)

This empire lasted about seventy years and came to an end when the Medo-Persians invaded one night and devastated the Babylonians.

B. Medo-Persia (v. 39a)

Because of the twofold division of the Medes and the Persians, this empire is represented by the statue's chest and arms (v. 32).

C. Greece (v. 39b)

Nebuchadnezzar's dream predicted that Greece would "bear rule over all the earth." And Alexander the Great extended his empire from western Europe to India--an incredible feat for a man who lived only thirty three years. After Alexander died, his empire was divided among his four generals.

D. Rome (vv. 40-43)

1. Reviewed from the past (v. 40)

The fourth empire revealed in the dream had the strength of iron: "As iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things ... shall it break in pieces and bruise." The legions of the Roman Empire extended everywhere, tramping the known world into submission.

LESSON

2. Revived in the future (vv. 41-43)

"Whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with 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 broken [brittle]. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men, but they shall not adhere one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay."

a) Its deficiency

The feet of iron and clay imply that the revived Roman Empire will be weak and vulnerable. That's because it will be composed of both what is firm and what is brittle. The original Roman Empire was strong in that its government was solidly organized, its armies well-disciplined, and its policies well-defined, as evidenced by the Pax Romana--the Roman peace. But weakness will characterize the future Roman Empire. That's because the weakness is not located in the legs (like ancient Rome), but in the feet.

Verse 43 identifies the weakness as the mingling that will take place with "the seed of men." Scholars have attempted various suggestions, but I believe it simply refers to human beings. The problem in the final form of the Roman Empire is that there will be too many rulers; solidarity will be missing. At the top of the image is the gold head--the only part of the image identified as a ruler and not as an empire. The Babylonian Empire possessed a unique solidarity because one man had complete control. The increasingly diverse authority of the other empires represented by the statue implies that the more decentralized government becomes, the more susceptible it is to internal problems. As soon as government becomes diverse enough to give people the power to vote themselves inordinate amounts of money from the public treasury, the people, through their selfishness, can destroy democracy.

The diversity of the revived Roman Empire will be its destruction. It won't have the solidarity that the Roman Empire once had. Rather, it will be a confederacy and its power will be distributed among too many people.

b) Its division

The final form of the Roman Empire will have a tenfold division, represented by the ten toes of the image (Dan. 2:41). The ten toes of the image and the ten kings (Dan. 7:24) indicate that the final form of the Roman Empire will be a ten-nation confederacy. God doesn't arbitrarily invent meaningless numbers. The same number is used the same way in Revelation 17:12.

c) Its duration

Since the Roman Empire there has never been another world empire. Napoleon tried it, Hitler tried it, and neither of them could do it. Now the Soviet Union has tried it and has fortunately been unsuccessful. Revelation 13:12 tells us a beast that is mortally wounded but that rises again. I

believe that's a picture of Rome's death and subsequent revival. In its final form the Roman Empire will consist of ten nations, perhaps represented by the European Community or something like it.

d) Its dictator

The Bible tells us that out of the ten-nation confederacy will arise one ruler, called the "little horn" in Daniel 7:8. He is also called "that man of sin ... the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3) and the "antichrist" (1 John 2:18). He will be a great world ruler who will pull together the ten-nation coalition. That eventually will provoke the great battle of Armageddon. Watch Europe--it will rise again. Once the ten-nation confederacy takes its form and antichrist establishes his rule, it won't be long until the prophetic stone smashes all opposition and fills the whole earth (Dan. 2:35). That stone is none other than Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

We've learned that there will be a succession of world dominions from Nebuchadnezzar to the return of Christ. The Old Testament never described any world powers between the two Roman empires. However, Daniel did differentiate between the legs of iron and the feet made of iron and clay to indicate the weakness of the empire's final form. The ten-nation confederacy, under the rule of the antichrist, will fight against Christ and attempt to prevent Him from establishing His Kingdom. But the battle won't last very long because Christ will crush the dominions of Satan and the world. Christ's kingdom is coming. How exciting it is to be alive in a day when we can see those things on the horizon!

I am reminded of the hymn "Lo! He Comes" by Charles Wesley:

Lo, He comes, with clouds descending,
Once for our salvation slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending
Swell the triumph of His train:
Alleluia, alleluia!

God appears on earth to reign.
Ev'ry eye shall now behold Him,
Robed in dreadful majesty;
Those who set at naught and sold Him,
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,
Deeply wailing, deeply wailing,
Shall the true Messiah see.

Now the Savior, long expected,
See, in solemn pomp appear;
All His saints, by man rejected,
Now shall meet Him in the air:
Alleluia, alleluia!

See the day of God appear.
Yea, amen! let all adore Thee,
High on Thine eternal throne;
Savior, take the pow'r and glory,
Claim the kingdom for Thine own:
O come quickly, O come quickly,
Alleluia! come, Lord, come!

Focusing on the Facts

1. Why did Dr. Malik conclude that the western university system is one of the most serious problems facing the world?
2. What is the condition of Christianity in Europe, and in what direction is it heading in America?
3. What is one of the Bible's greatest proofs of divine inspiration? Why?
4. What do the feet of iron and clay seem to indicate about the revived Roman Empire?
5. Describe the weakness of the final form of the Roman Empire.
6. What do the ten toes of the statue represent when compared with Daniel 7:24 and Revelation 17:12?
7. Who will be the dictator of the ten-nation confederacy?
8. Did the Old Testament reveal the time gap between the two empires of Rome? How did it hint that there would be two different empires?

Pondering the Principles

1. Do you agree or disagree with Dr. Malik's analysis of the crucial issues facing America and the West? Why or why not? Do you agree with his proposed solution for unification? Why or why not? Of the six areas Dr. Malik mentioned, determine the ones that affect you either directly or indirectly and determine to uphold biblical truth whenever given the opportunity.
2. Meditate on Psalm 2. Praise God that His Messiah shall be victorious over all opposition. Thank Him for the joy that comes from putting your trust in His Son.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2026 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).