

The most obvious interpretation of the picture would seem to be that it represents a sudden cataclysmic event: a divine force suddenly attacks the statue, utterly destroys it and replaces it by a completely different type of kingdom. If taken this way it points to the second advent of Christ and reminds us of Paul's prediction of a time when "the Lord Jesus will overthrow [the lawless one] with the breath of His mouth and destroy [him] by the splendor of his coming" (2 Thes. 2:8). If this is what is meant the whole series of dynamic events involved in this third part of the dream is still future.

A number of commentaries suggest a different interpretation.³ They consider the picture to be greatly condensed. In their opinion what is predicted is not a sudden catastrophic change but rather a development in which the rock grows slowly and overcomes the statue gradually so that eventually the rock will fill the whole earth and the statue will completely disappear. Since prophecy is often foreshortened this possibility deserves careful consideration.

Thus, so far as the present vision is concerned, two interpretations are suggested, each beginning with a situation in which wicked human government controls most of the world and each ending with a situation in which every trace of such government has disappeared and the beneficent kingdom that God will set up in its place will fill the whole earth.

It should be noted that in either case a great part of what is predicted is still future. In the one case it looks to a great cataclysmic sudden future event. In the other it looks to a gradual development that eventually produces the same result. In both cases it reaches to the complete end of wicked human government.

Some treatments of this dynamic section might give the impression that the prediction is limited to the first coming of Christ and the beginning of His church. Such an impression can be ruled out immediately. Not only do those who think that it describes the cataclysmic events connected with the return of Christ consider that the chapter reaches to the very end of the age, those who hold that the rock