

UNLOCKING THE MYSTERIES OF REVELATION THROUGH BIBLE PROPHECY

2 The Key to the Future

Throughout the ages, earthly kingdoms have arisen to challenge the kingdom of God. There has been a battle for the very throne of God, a battle brought into sharp focus in the Old Testament Book of Daniel. Scripture contains two major books of end-time prophecy: Daniel and Revelation. Unlocking Daniel's symbols makes Revelation's prophecies clear. And Jesus' statement in **Matthew 24:15** directs us to understand "Daniel the prophet . . . whoever reads, let him understand."

One of the most fascinating chapters of the Bibles is **Daniel 2**. There we read that a king dreamed of world events that spanned 2,500 years. Those events have come to pass with such precision that only God have laid it out so precisely. It's a prophecy that proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is in control of history. It is a prophecy that's been almost totally fulfilled . . . almost, but not quite.

Daniel 2:1 says: "In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him." This was the king who ruled the great Babylonian Empire 500 years before Christ, the king who built the luxurious Hanging Gardens—one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, which seemed of great significance, but when he awoke he could not remember the dream at all. So he called his *wise men*—who claimed to see into the future—and asked them to tell him the dream and what the dream meant. When they admitted that they could not, Nebuchadnezzar condemned them all to death.

Now young Daniel, though a prisoner of war in Babylon, was counted among the "wise men" for his gifted intelligence and understanding. When the king's captain came to execute Daniel and his friends, Daniel asked for time to pray for God to reveal the dream—and God did that very thing! Then Daniel—taking no credit himself—went before Nebuchadnezzar and told the king that no mortal man could reveal the dream. "But *there is a God in heaven* who reveals secrets, and He has revealed . . . what will be *in the latter days*."-**Daniel 2:28**. The king's dream focused on the end-times, the *close* of earth's history. The dream starts with Nebuchadnezzar and marches throughout history down to the current day.

So Daniel told the king what he had dreamed: "You, O king, were watching: and behold, a great image! . . . *This image's head was of fine 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 clay.* You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."-**Daniel 2:31-35**.

The King was excited! "Yes, that's it! That's it!" he cried. "That's *exactly* what I saw! But Daniel, what does

it mean?" Daniel continued: "You, O King, . . . are this head of **gold**." -**Daniel 2:37-38**. The *Babylonian Empire* of Nebuchadnezzar (which made more lavish use of *gold* than any kingdom since) was secure as the dominant world power from 605 B.C. to 539 B.C., but he was to be overthrown by a kingdom represented in **Daniel 2:32**.

This second empire is "the breast and arms of **silver**." Just a few pages ahead in your Bible in **Daniel 5:28** the next world ruling power is named: the joint empire of *the Medes and the Persians*. Again, a fitting symbol: the two arms joined at the chest to show two kingdoms—Medes and Persians. They ruled the world for two centuries, from 538 B.C. to 331 B.C. Then a third kingdom was to follow.

This third kingdom, depicted in verse 32 as the "belly and thighs of **bronze**," was the *Greek Empire* of Alexander the Great. And what did Alexander's men wear into battle? Bronze—bronze breastplates, bronze helmets, bronze shields, bronze swords. Once again, God chose a fitting symbol to describe the kingdom that would rule the world from 331 B.C. to 169 B.C.

But history doesn't end with this third kingdom. Greece did not rule the world forever, for there was a fourth metal after the gold of Babylon, the silver of the Medes and Persians, the bronze of Greece. The next kingdom is represented by **iron**. **Daniel 2:40** says, "The fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron." The iron monarchy of *Rome* was the last world kingdom, which in 168 B.C. overthrew the Greeks.

Just as legs form the longest part of the body, Rome had the longest reign of any other of the world powers. For more than 500 years, half a millennium, Rome was invincible. But what did the Bible predict would happen next? **Daniel 2:41-43** says, "Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of clay and partly of iron, so this will be a *divided* kingdom."

History confirms that this seemingly unconquerable Roman Empire crumbled for two reasons—from within and from without. From within—wealth poured into Rome through taxes collected from all over the world and the simple Roman life was replaced with luxury and pomp. And as the mighty Roman Empire weakened from within, Rome was attacked from without and divided into ten smaller kingdoms just as predicted by the ten toes of the statue.

Where are we living today? Right down in the *toenails* of history! Every part of this prophecy has come to pass except one. Listen—Daniel told the king in **verses 34 & 44**: "You watched while a **stone** was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. . . . The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. . . . It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." That *Rock* cut out without hands symbolizes Jesus Christ, who will come to establish His kingdom.

Why is it important that you know about the dream of an ancient king? Simply this: Nebuchadnezzar's dream portrayed history before it was lived, and once you realize the Bible can be trusted with the past, you'll know without a doubt it can be trusted to predict those things still to come. Today we have hope because tomorrow is in the hands of *the God who guides history*—and who *loves* us! God is the One who holds the key to the future!



History has followed this prophecy like a *blueprint* and will continue to do so. The political workings of this planet are not random. God has been guiding, controlling, and overruling all along.

God through the prophet Daniel foretold the breakup of the Roman Empire into **ten toes** of the Image, representing the **ten kingdoms** into which Rome was divided when so-called barbarian tribes carved up the empire.

Daniel 2:41-43—**Ten toes**, ten kingdoms, and just as **iron** and **clay** won't mix together, so the ten kingdoms will not be joined. No matter how many battles are fought, no matter how many *Hitlers* or *Napoleons* or *Charlemagnes* seek to conquer those around them, the world will never be united under one ruler again.

So inescapably did Daniel's prophetic portrayal correspond to its historical fulfillment that the great English historian Edward Gibbon, though not a Christian or Bible believer himself, wittingly or unwittingly used Scriptural language in his monumental *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* when he wrote: "The images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the iron monarchy of Rome."

History has played itself out. Only one kingdom remains to be established. Soon Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Rock of Ages, the One who paid such a remarkable visit to this planet 2000 years ago, is going to pay us another visit. And He's going to make *quite an entrance* the second time. Let us purpose to be among those ready to meet the Lord!