

In the uncertain times in which we live there are great reasons to study Bible prophecy. Of all the ancient texts the Bible is unique. Only the Bible speaks of a loving God who not only created mankind for a relationship with Himself but gave everything to restore this relationship when it was broken by sin. In His great plan to redeem His creation God not only has a plan but He has revealed it to us.

Why would God do such a thing? So people could understand that there is a God who cares and find their certainty in Him. The study of Bible prophecy is a most exciting adventure. As we open the pages of this ancient book – God’s Word to us – we will discover what God has told us about the day in which we live, the significance of what is happening in the world at present, and what is soon to take place in the near future.

Listen to what God says in Isaiah 46:9-10 ⁹ *Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.* ¹⁰ *I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.*

Here God clearly says He alone is God. The **only one** that can declare the end from the beginning! That’s what He promises us as we open His word, the Bible.

In this lesson we are going to lay a foundation now that we will build upon for the next several subjects. One of the ways that God reveals things to us is by using repetition and enlargement.

Daniel 2 contains an amazing prophecy where God predicts the rise and fall of earth’s kingdoms. What’s profound about this chapter is that it was written 600 years before the birth of Christ, but spoke of things that would happen right down to the time in which we live.

The background: Daniel was one of many young Jews who were taken captive by the empire of Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar had made a number of raids on Judea and Jerusalem. In one of those raids he had taken young men captive – after which he took them back to Babylon for re-education. Daniel was a rare young man. He continued to serve the true God of heaven even in his new home in Babylon (see Daniel chapter 1). Daniel Chapter 2 records for us the first amazing prophecy:

The Dream: In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had a dream one night while he was sleeping. The dream was so vivid and it troubled him so much that he could not go back to sleep. The only problem was he could not remember what he had dreamed! He was so upset about this that he summoned his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to come and tell him what it was that he dreamed. They talked among themselves a bit and come back saying “O king live forever! Tell your servants the dream and we will interpret it!”

A stalemate ensued, then the king became furious and ordered the execution of all his wise men, which happened to include Daniel and his three friends. As the commander of the king's guard prepared to carry out the death decree, Daniel intervened, and went to the king to ask for more time so that he could pray for God to interpret the dream. The king consented to give Daniel some time.

Daniel believed in the power of God and the power of prayer. You can just imagine Daniel and his three friends praying for God to answer their prayer – knowing that their lives depended on it. What a prayer meeting that must have been! That night as Daniel lay sleeping, God revealed the dream and its interpretation to him.

Daniel 2:19 ¹⁹ *During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven* ²⁰ *and said: "Praise be to the Name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his.* ²¹ *He changes times and seasons; He sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.* ²² *He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.* ²³ *I thank and praise You, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, You have made known to me what we asked of You, You have made known to us the dream of the king."*

I can only imagine how excited Daniel must have been when he reported this Divine intervention to his prayer partners and then to the king. The story continues Daniel 2:27 ...

²⁷ *Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about*

Now look at **verses 28** where Daniel gives the glory to God.

²⁸ *but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in **days to come (NKJV latter days)**. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these:*

Daniel said, "There is a God in Heaven who reveals secrets! - And He has made known what shall be in the days to come."

We're going to see in a moment that the dream that king Nebuchadnezzar could not remember, and which was revealed by Daniel's God, takes us from Daniel's day down the stream of time to the days to come – the latter days.

Could it be that the days to come referred to here are the days in which we are living right now?

Daniel preceded to reveal the dream! **Verses 31-35,**

³¹ *"You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance.* ³² *The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,* ³³ *its legs of*

iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. ³⁴ While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

This is exciting! In the interpretation of the dream, Daniel showed with certainty that God Himself is in control of this world.

Interpretation: So let's begin...What does the head of gold symbolize?

Daniel 2 Verses 37-38

*³⁷ You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; ³⁸ in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. **You are that head of gold.***

So the Bible makes it absolutely clear that the head of the image represented Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian kingdom, which ruled from 605 B.C to 539 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, Babylon would rule the world and indeed it did. **Babylon was a mighty nation.** Located about 100km south of the modern city of Baghdad, the city of Babylon was more than 100km around. It was surrounded by a double layer of walls which were some 90 feet high. Running through the center of Babylon ran the river Euphrates, providing the city with a constant water and food supply.

Babylon was a magnificent city – and it's King, Nebuchadnezzar was determined that his kingdom would last forever. But he was in for a shock, because as it turned out, **God had other plans.**

Daniel 2:39 states.

³⁹ "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours..."

Daniel looked into the face of the troubled king and gave him the news that his kingdom will come to an end. Just as silver is inferior to gold, so another kingdom, inferior to Babylon would come and conquer it, and in fact we learn that that is exactly what happened.

In the year 331 BC. Nebuchadnezzar's grandson Belshazzar was king and was having a great feast. On the very night that his kingdom would fall, he was throwing a party with plenty of wine, women and song.

Readt Daniel 5:1

Daniel 5:1 ¹ *King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. ² While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. ³ So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. ⁴ As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.*

⁵ *Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. ⁶ His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way.*

Wow – this king knew that something was wrong and it probably involved him!

He immediately called out for his enchanters, astrologers and diviners to be brought and commanded them “tell me what this means and I’ll make you number 3 in my kingdom!” As this was happening, Belshazzar’s mother came to the rescue and mentioned that there used to be a guy named Daniel who once interpreted dreams for his father Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel, by now a man in his 70’s, is found and brought before the king of Babylon once again to interpret a message from the God of heaven.

Daniel 5:24 ²⁴ *Therefore he (God) sent the hand that wrote the inscription. ²⁵ "This is the inscription that was written: **Mene , Mene , Tekel , Parsin (peres or upharsin NKJV)** ²⁶ "This is what these words mean: **Mene** : God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. ²⁷ **Tekel** : You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. ²⁸ **Peres** : Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." ²⁹ Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom. ³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, ³¹ and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.*

Now here is something really amazing, 150 years before he was born. God identified the very man that would capture Babylon.

It is recorded in Isaiah 45:1 ¹ *"This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:*

Cyrus (Persia) wasn't even born yet but God described him. Not only did God name the General, but he also told us how he would do it!

Inside the fortified city of Babylon, the Babylonians kept a 20 year food supply in case of siege. In fact, knowing that they could outlast any siege, history informs us

that at one stage as the armies of Medo Persia came against the walls of Babylon, the people on the walls threw food at the army below as if to say “We will outlast you!”

But Cyrus was a brilliant commander. Knowing that the river Euphrates flowed right through the city, he diverted it off course, and then marched his army down the dry river bed. Would you believe this took place the same night as the drunken feast when the bloodless hand wrote on the banquet wall – a feast so grand that the guards were apparently part of it and failed to secure the levy gates of the inner wall.

So as Cyrus and his armies marched under the outer gates and as they came up inside the city they found that the inner gates open and they marched in, and broke up the party. Indeed, Babylon fell to a lesser kingdom, without a battle, in just one night.

The Bible named Babylon. The Bible named Medo-Persia and its leader Cyrus even before he was born! We can trust the Bible!

In a world where you don't know what you can trust, you can trust the Word of God.

But God had revealed more to Daniel - After the head of gold, and the chest and arms of silver, we have the belly and thigh of brass. **Verse 39** (last part), “... *Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.*”

History verifies Bible prophecy by informing us that the kingdom which followed was Medo Persia. Also, the next kingdom to rule the earth was Greece.

Under the leadership of Alexander the Great, one of the world's greatest military leaders, the Grecian Empire conquered Medo-Persia in 331 B.C. and ruled the then-known world until 168 B.C.

In fact one historian said this about the rapidity with which the Greek soldiers under the leadership of Alexander the Great attacked and overthrew the Medes and Persians:

“There seems to me to have been some Divine hand presiding both over his birth and actions.”

Even secular historians recognize that in the rise and fall of nations a Divine hand was guiding. Let's come now to the fourth kingdom – represented in the dream by the metal iron. Daniel 2:40:

⁴⁰ *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.*

The fourth and final kingdom was Rome. A powerful kingdom that ruled the world from 168 B. C. to 476 A.D. – over 600 years! (Remember it was Rome that was ruling in the days of Jesus).

What happened next given that we're coming to the end of the image?

Daniel 2 Verses 41-42, ⁴¹ *Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay.* ⁴² *As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.*

The Kingdom shall be what? The Bible says the kingdom shall be divided. And in fact Rome was divided. Indeed exactly like the Bible says.

The breakup of the Roman empire (a well-documented fact) occurred due to the barbarian tribes that came down from the North. They overthrew Rome.

In perfect fulfillment we see today there have been four and only four world kingdoms since the days of Babylon.

But now the prophecy gets more amazing, and God prophecies the next events. God says Rome, the fourth kingdom, will be divided, like the feet and toes, with some divisions weak and some strong.

Just as the body has 10 toes, when Rome fell it was also divided into 10 tribes! When the power of Rome finally ended In 476 A.D., it did not fall to another world kingdom, rather it was conquered by the Barbarian tribes from the north.

The result was a divided empire – taken over by the following tribes, seven of which are still around today (modern-day names in brackets).

The ALAMANNI (German),
VISIGOTHS (Spanish),
FRANKS (French), SUEVI (Portuguese),
BURGUNDIANS (Swiss-Austrian),
ANGLO SAXONS (English),
LOMBARDS (Italian)
and the HERULI, VANDALS, and OSTRO-GOTHS. (These last three no longer exist, another fulfillment of a prophecy we will cover later.)

Here again we see an amazing fulfillment of prophecy, now it gets even more dramatic!

Daniel 2:43 ⁴³ *And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.*

*(KJV "And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall **mingle themselves with the seed of men**: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.")*

Here God predicted that these kingdoms would intermarry, but *never* unite. Throughout history men have attempted to unite Europe by a "mingling of seeds". That is to say, intermarriage. God said, Europe would be divided and that's the way it has been, despite the European Union's attempts to unite European countries.

On the walls In Fredricksberg Castle in Denmark, is a family tree of Europe. In fact, in this family tree, you have King Frederick and Queen Diana. This family tree shows how all royal families of Europe at that time were all united through King Frederick and Queen Diana in an attempt to 'mingle their seed' to unite Europe.

God said they would mingle their seed but they shall not cleave one to another. They tried it by marriage and they tried it by war. Charlemagne, Hitler, Stalin, Napoleon, and others. Yet all these men, with their mighty armies were stopped dead by the words of the Bible: **"They will not remain united."** When Napoleon was defeated in 1815 at the Battle of Waterloo, it is reported that he said, "God all mighty is too much for me." Indeed he is.

The God in heaven is still in control of this world and has a divine plan. Here it is:

Verses 44-45,

⁴⁴ "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

Think about it: Where in this prophecy do you think we are? (Are we in the feet? The toes? The toenails?)

God says in the days of those kings (kingdoms), He will set up *His* kingdom, which shall stand forever! Everything is in place. **The next world kingdom will be God's!** Revelation paints a beautiful picture of the coming kingdom:

Revelation 21: 1-5, *1Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and **God himself will be with them and be their God.** 4He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or*

mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." 5He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

The Bible informs us that during the time of divided Europe, God will intervene and that the very next kingdom upon this earth will be the **kingdom of God** (a theme mentioned often by Jesus in the gospels).

The Promise to Return: As Jesus was spending one of his last nights upon this earth, he chose to spend it with his disciples. It was there that he began to share with them that he was leaving them, but He made a promise...

John 14:1-3, *¹"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."*

Application to your life:

1. **God is Omniscient** – He knows everything. Nothing takes Him by surprise. Tonight the Bible has shown you that He knows about the rise and fall of nations and kingdoms. Surely He knows about your personal life and history too? Jesus tried to share this same lesson with the audiences of His day: "INSERT MATTHEW 6:25-33
2. The Bible wants you to know that **God loves you** so much that He sent his son Jesus to come to live on this earth and to make it possible for us to be part of God's eternal kingdom – the home of righteousness. How? John 3:16 Why? Because **He wants you to experience FOREVER** in His kingdom for FREE!!!! All you have to do is believe in Jesus Christ – He is your 'ticket' to Eternal Life.

But when will God's kingdom come? Can we know for sure? The Bible assures us that Jesus Christ will return very soon to take all those who have made 'seeking His kingdom and His righteousness' their first priority in life.

Next Study #2: The Rapture and the Second Coming