




PROPHECY ODYSSEY


2

The Prophecy of History

AN AMAZING FACT:



Ancient Babylon had a massive impact on world history. It was a center of early mathematics, astronomy, and technological innovation. The Babylonians invented the wheel for work carts and chariots, the sailboat to trade on the Euphrates River, and cuneiform writing for records. Babylon also developed a unique numerical system based on a lunar calendar with 360 days in a year, 30 days in a month, and units for measuring time based on the number 60. This is why we divide hours into 60 minutes and minutes into 60 seconds. Babylonians also divided the starry heavens into 36 constellations, which is why we say there are 360 degrees in a circle. Interestingly, the Babylonian's sacred square is composed of 6 by 6 boxes, containing 36 segments. If added up sequentially, 1 + 2 + 3—on to 36—it totals 666.



Babylon was at its zenith of power during the rule of its last great king, Nebuchadnezzar II, who built the legendary Hanging Gardens for his wife. Historians tell us the 40-foot-high walls of the capital enclosed 200 square miles and were wide enough for chariot races on the top!



The vast kingdom of Babylon was opulent and prosperous, yet the king stirred in his royal bed wondering how long his golden era would last. With these questions troubling his mind, the mighty monarch drifted off to sleep. That night, a vivid dream flashed into his mind—something of a towering multi-mineral idol unlike anything he had ever seen.

Knowing this was no ordinary dream, the king threw aside his embroidered covers and told his servants to order all his magicians and astrologers to come at once. He was desperate to understand this dream! Little did he know, it had prophetic significance down to our day. Let's find out more ...



When you see a blank, use your Bible to look up the missing word and fill it in.



Why did God give the Babylonian king this dream?

DANIEL 2:28 *But there is a God in heaven who reveals*

_____, *and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the _____ days.*

NOTE: In the king's dream of the multi-mineral image, God outlined the rise and fall of the empires that would have a direct influence on His people through the following millenniums.



When the king's counselors failed to reveal and interpret the dream, what was Nebuchadnezzar's command?

DANIEL 2:12 *The king ... gave the command to _____ all the wise men of Babylon.*

NOTE: Some of the astrologers and magicians of Babylon claimed to have supernatural power, but when they could not reveal the dream to the king, they were shown to be powerless imposters. If the king had told them the dream, they would have simply manufactured a bogus interpretation. In his frustration, Nebuchadnezzar commanded all the wise men to be slain—even those who were not present.

Among those absent from the first meeting with the king was a God-fearing captive named Daniel, who had just been trained for the king's service.



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When Daniel learned about the death decree, what did he ask of the king, and what did he tell his friends?

A. **DANIEL 2:16** Daniel went in and asked the king to give him _____, that he might tell the king the _____.

B. **DANIEL 2:17, 18** Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision _____ to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this _____.

NOTE: Daniel requested a little time from Nebuchadnezzar and promised that he would reveal the dream and its meaning. The king, who was still eager to know the significance of his vision, granted Daniel's request.

Then Daniel and his friends appealed to the only source who could reveal the king's dream—they prayed to the God of heaven.



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What happened in response to the prayer of Daniel and his friends, and to whom did they give credit?

DANIEL 2:19 Then the secret was _____ to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

DANIEL 2:28 *There is a God in heaven who _____ secrets.*

NOTE: That night, in response to the heartfelt prayer of the young Hebrews, Daniel was given the very same dream Nebuchadnezzar had seen. Additionally, Daniel was given the meaning of the dream.

The rise and fall of empires may appear as if happening by the will of men, but Daniel's prayer of praise reveals the essence of divine intervention. Nothing happens that God is not already aware of and has not allowed. Sometimes we may not understand what is happening in our world today, but it is comforting to know that God is still sovereign. Only Daniel could reveal the dream to the king, yet he clearly gives the credit to the One who revealed the dream to him—the God of heaven.



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What two principal objects did Daniel say the king saw in his dream?

A. DANIEL 2:31 *You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great*

_____.

B. DANIEL 2:34 *You watched while a _____ was cut out without hands.*

NOTE: The first thing the king saw was a great image made of the following mineral elements:

1. The head was made of **gold**.
2. The chest and arms were made of **silver**.
3. The belly and thighs were made of **brass**.
4. The legs were made of **iron**.
5. The feet were made of **iron and clay**.

Next, the king saw a stone that had been cut out without hands.

At this point, King Nebuchadnezzar was no doubt sitting spellbound on the edge of his throne. Daniel had related the dream *precisely* as God had given it to him. Now the king eagerly waited, wondering what the dream meant. Daniel proceeded to explain the interpretation as the Lord had revealed it to him, and we would do well to accept it just as He gave it. The only safe way to interpret the Bible and its prophecies is to allow the Bible to explain itself.



What does the head of gold represent?

DANIEL 2:38 *You are this _____ of gold.*

NOTE: The king was regarded as the head of the state. This is why Nebuchadnezzar represented Babylon, the empire that began the prophecy. Babylon, also called the Chaldean Empire, ruled the world from approximately 612 to 539 BC as one of the mightiest empires of antiquity—one that could aptly be described as the head of gold. Notice that the prophecy begins in Daniel's time.



Would the Babylonian kingdom last forever?

DANIEL 2:39 *But after you shall arise _____ kingdom inferior to yours.*

NOTE: Babylon's supremacy would not last forever. Succeeding kingdoms, inferior to Babylon, would rule in their turn. Just as silver is inferior to gold, so the kingdom that followed Babylon enjoyed diminished glory. Led by Cyrus in 539 BC, the Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylon and reduced it to ruins. The Medo-Persians were the ruling world power from 539 to 331 BC. During their reign, all taxes had to be paid in silver.



What metal would represent the kingdom that followed Medo-Persia?

DANIEL 2:39 *Then another, a third kingdom of _____ ... shall rule over all the earth.*

NOTE: The brass kingdom of Greece came into power when Alexander the Great conquered the Medo-Persians at the Battle of Arbela in 331 BC. Greece remained in power until about 168 BC. Greek soldiers were called "brazen-coated" because their armor was all bronze. Notice how each succeeding mineral depicted in the image is less valuable, yet more enduring than the one before it.



What metal represents the fourth kingdom?

DANIEL 2:40 *The fourth kingdom shall be as strong as _____.*

NOTE: The iron monarchy of Rome conquered the Greeks in 168 BC and enjoyed world supremacy until Rome was overrun by the Ostrogoths in AD 476. Rome is the kingdom that dominated the world when Jesus Christ was born. Notice how Daniel foretold a thousand years of world history with unerring accuracy. The rise and fall of these four world empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome—are clearly foretold in the Bible and proved by the history books.



What would happen after the fall of the Roman Empire?

DANIEL 2:41, 42 *The kingdom shall be _____ As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile.*

NOTE: When the Roman Empire began to crumble in AD 476, it was not overtaken by another world power. Instead, barbarian tribes conquered and divided it—just as Daniel prophesied. Ten of these tribes evolved into modern Europe. They were the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Alemanni, Sueves, Anglo-Saxons, Heruls, Lombards, and Burgundians. Seven of them still exist today in Europe. For example, the Anglo-Saxons became the English, the Franks became the French, the Alemanni became the Germans, and the Lombards became the Italians.

It should not go unnoticed that the number one building material in the world today is concrete. A prophet in Daniel's time could only identify this as iron mixed with clay.



Would these ten kingdoms ever succeed in uniting?

DANIEL 2:43 *They will mingle with the seed of men; but they will _____ to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.*

NOTE: Through marriage, alliances, and treaties, men have vainly attempted to reunite the European continent under one rule. All throughout history, leaders such as Charlemagne, Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, Mussolini, and Hitler have fought to build a new European empire; but these words of Scripture have stopped every single would-be world ruler.

Revelation 13 does tell us there will be another attempt to establish a universal religion, but Daniel's prophecy clearly states that the world will remain politically divided for the rest of history.



Who will set up the final kingdom?

DANIEL 2:44 *And in the days of these kings the _____ of _____ will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.*

NOTE: The next great universal kingdom will be the kingdom of heaven, which is described in Matthew 25:31–34.



What does the stone do to the other world kingdoms?

DANIEL 2:34, 35 *A stone was cut out without hands, which _____ the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ... And the stone that struck the image became a great _____ and filled the whole earth.*

NOTE: The stone cut without human hands represents God's kingdom. It will not be a conglomeration of earthly kingdoms but a total replacement (Revelation 21:1). The Scriptures declare that when Jesus Christ returns to Earth, He will completely consume all the world's kingdoms and establish an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 2:44). What exciting news! All history is moving toward this climactic conclusion, when the Son of God shall return in majesty to bring in the kingdom of everlasting righteousness.

King Nebuchadnezzar may have thought he had defeated the true God when he besieged Jerusalem and plundered the temple (Daniel 1:1, 2), but he was shown quickly that God is ruler over all. Human events are under His control, and ultimately, He will win the conflict. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the ten divisions of Europe may have sought to usurp divine authority and destroy the people of God, but all earthly kingdoms will eventually be demolished by the coming of Christ.



After hearing Daniel's clear interpretation of the dream, what did Nebuchadnezzar say about the Lord?

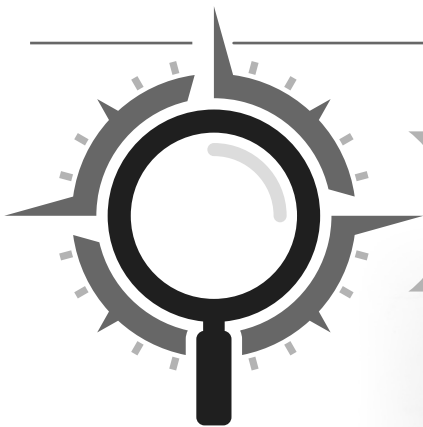
DANIEL 2:47 *The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the _____ of _____, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret."*

NOTE: Having seen that God has complete control of world events, even Nebuchadnezzar readily acknowledged that the God whom Daniel served was above all the heathen gods of Babylon. How quickly the picture had changed! Daniel and his friends, because of their faithfulness to God, were elevated from their initial captivity in Babylon to positions of prominent leadership in the kingdom (Daniel 2:48, 49). God always honors those who honor Him (1 Samuel 2:30).

» YOUR RESPONSE

Recognizing that God is in full control of earthly events, are you willing to let Him have full control of your life?

ANSWER: _____



FURTHER STUDY

Nebuchadnezzar's Statue

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GOLD = BABYLON

The head of gold represented Babylon, which was the ruling world power from 612 to 539 BC.

SILVER = MEDO-PERSIA

The chest of silver represented Medo-Persia, the ruling world empire from 539 to 331 BC.

BRONZE = GREECE

The thighs of bronze represented Greece, the dominant world ruler from 331 to 168 BC.

IRON = ROME

The legs of iron represented Rome, which enjoyed world supremacy from 168 BC to AD 476.

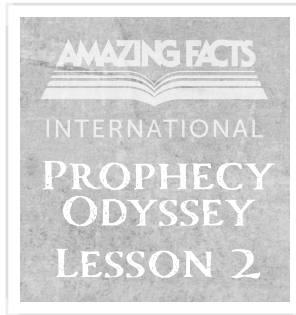
IRON AND CLAY = DIVIDED EMPIRE

The feet that were partly iron and partly clay represented a divided empire that would not cleave together. No single power has ruled the world since AD 476, and it will remain divided until Christ's return.

STONE = CHRIST'S ETERNAL KINGDOM, HIS WORD, AND HIS LAW



Notes:



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