

for Your loving interest in me personally. I thank You for telling us in advance the answers to our questions about the future of our world, and for guiding our world and for guiding our lives. I thank You for the certainty of Bible prophecy. Help me to accept it as Your true Word and to believe it always. And above all, help me to open my heart right now to Jesus, the Prince of Peace. In His name I pray. Amen.

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DISCOVER

ABOUT YOUR FUTURE

Drs. Patricia and David Mrazek saw a great deal of heart-break in their work. As pediatric specialists at the National Jewish Center for Immunology and Respiratory Medicine, they dealt with many suffering children. But they were struck by the fact that some kids bounced back from disaster while others were crushed by it. Why? Why, for example, does one slum child go to drugs, while another goes to college? Why do some abused children grow up to

become abusers themselves, while others become good parents?

The Mrazeks conducted an extensive survey to find answers to these questions. In their study, one overriding trait kept popping up among those kids who survived trauma and went on to build healthy lives. The secret? “A basic life view of optimism and hope.”

Hope made the difference. Hope, more than anything else, helps us beat the odds when they’re stacked against us.

But how do we get it? What can we base it on? The world often seems much too jagged for the bright balloons of hope we try to carry around. Just when we think we’re beginning to soar—something pops them.

We were all feeling proud and hopeful about the space shuttle in 1986; technology seemed to be opening doors into an unlimited future. But then the Challenger blew up right in our living rooms on television.

We were all jubilant about the end of the Cold War in 1989. A new world order of peace and harmony seemed within reach. But then Saddam Hussein began rolling his tanks across the borders, and age-old conflicts in what had been Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union erupted in bloodshed.

Human beings desperately need hope. But hope is hard to find in our world—UNTIL we look at it from the perspective of Bible prophecy. This DISCOVER guide examines a remarkable prophecy that has inspired countless individuals with a vibrant hope. The prophecy in Daniel 2 demonstrates, perhaps more clearly than any other, that God really is in control of history, that He really does hold the future in His hands.

Erasmus noted one passenger, however, who acted very differently. “Of all of us,” Erasmus wrote, “the one who remained most composed was a young woman who was holding a baby whom she was nursing. She was the only one who did not shout, weep, or bargain with heaven. She did nothing but pray quietly to herself while clasping the baby tightly on her lap.”

This prayer, Erasmus realized, was just a continuation of her regular prayer life. She did not ask for any exceptional favors. She seemed to entrust herself to God.

As the ship began to sink, this young mother was placed on a plank, given a spar to use as an oar, and sent out into the waves. She had to hold her baby with one hand and attempt to row with the other. Few thought she would survive the pounding surf.

But her faith and composure stood her in good stead. The woman and her child were the first to reach shore.

Hope in a trustworthy God can make all the difference—even when the world seems to be breaking up around us. We’re not out there on our own. A greater hand is guiding us and holding us up.

If you will come to Christ in full surrender, He will give you a faith that will see you through every storm. Discover the supernatural peace that Jesus promises:

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. . . . Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”—John 14:27.

“Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”—Matthew 11:28.

Dear Father in heaven: I do thank You today

innocent blood. Tyrants still plot in their strongholds.

But we can acknowledge a fact more important than all the headlines: history is heading toward a face-to-face encounter with Christ. I can prepare right now for history's great climax. The same hand that guided Daniel as he condensed millenniums of future history into a few paragraphs, can guide me as I try to make sense out of my life.

“If the LORD delights in a man’s way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.”

—Psalm 37:23, 24.

If God directs the movements of nations with such precision, surely He can guide each individual’s life.

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

—Matthew 10:29-31.

God’s gift of faith can become the antidote to all our worries and fears. The hope He inspires can serve as an anchor for our souls (Hebrews 6:19).

The sixteenth century scholar Erasmus related an incident during a sea voyage that stayed with him the rest of his life. His sailing vessel ran aground in a storm. As violent waves smashed against the ship and it began to break up, even the sailors panicked. The passengers were near hysteria. Most shouted for help to their patron saint, sang hymns, or pleaded loudly in prayer.

1. AN AMAZING BIBLE PROPHECY

About five hundred years before the birth of Christ, God gave the world a startling glimpse into the future through the prophet Daniel. He presented an outline of world history, from Daniel’s time to our own day.

This prophecy appears in the second chapter of Daniel. It actually originated in a dream God gave Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, some 2,500 years ago. The dream deeply troubled this monarch—but he couldn’t remember its main elements when he woke up! After all of Babylon’s wise men failed to help the king recall his dream or interpret it, a young Hebrew exile named Daniel arrived on the scene, claiming that the God of Heaven could reveal all mysteries.

Standing before the king, Daniel boldly declared:

“You looked, O king, and there before you stood A LARGE STATUE—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance.

“The head of the statue was made of pure 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 baked clay.

“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.

“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.”—**Daniel 2:31-35.** (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

This statue, at first glance, may seem to have little to do with finding hope in contemporary times. Babylonian imagery is a long way removed from the missiles and terrorists haunting our world. But hold on to your seats, because we're about to fast-forward through thousands of years of history—with God operating the remote.

2. THE PROPHECY INTERPRETED

After telling a very impressed Nebuchadnezzar exactly what he'd seen in his vision, the prophet Daniel explained:

“This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king.”—**Daniel 2:36.**

THE HEAD OF GOLD

What world power did Daniel tell the king the head of gold symbolized?

“You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; 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

universe that our little planet doesn't rate much attention—much less one individual life on it. But God has gone to great lengths to assure us that He is very much concerned with human history and each individual's history. He's given us a beacon:

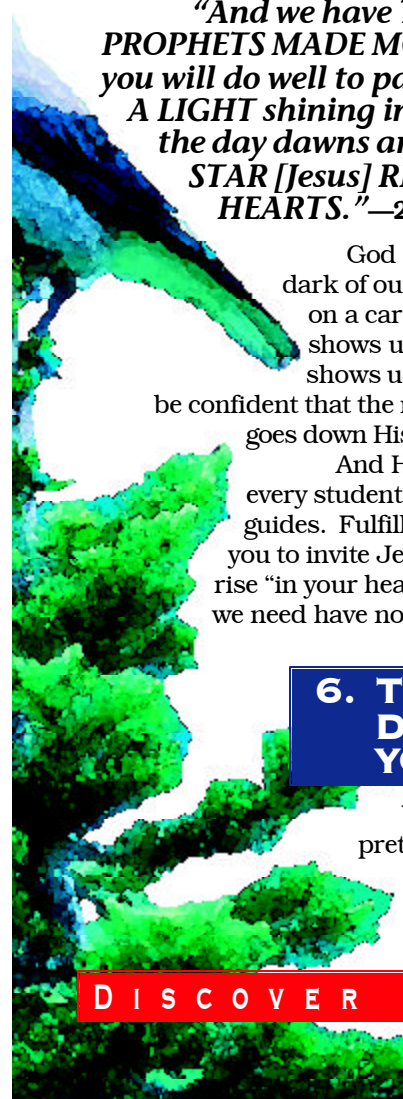
“And we have THE WORD OF THE PROPHETS MADE MORE CERTAIN, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to A LIGHT shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and THE MORNING STAR [Jesus] RISES IN YOUR HEARTS.”—**2 Peter 1:19.**

God uses Bible prophecy in the dark of our world just like headlights on a car we're driving at night. He shows us where we're going; He shows us what lies ahead. We can be confident that the march of history ultimately goes down His highway.

And He is guiding the lives of every student of the DISCOVER Bible guides. Fulfilled Bible prophecy urges you to invite Jesus, “the morning star,” to rise “in your hearts.” With Him as our Lord we need have no fears.

6. THE KING'S DREAM AND YOU

Yes, the world can be a pretty jagged place. Terrorists can strike at random. Ancient animosities flare up again and again, and spill



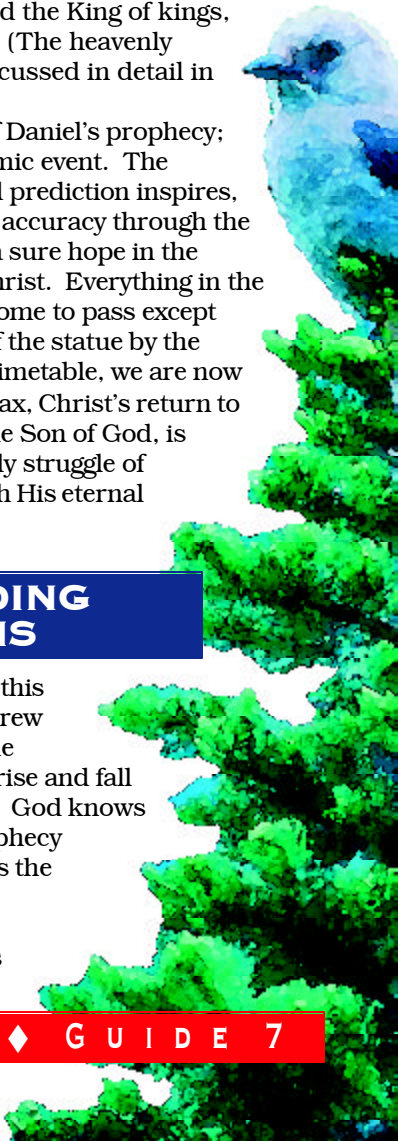
Soon Jesus will descend from heaven to “set up a kingdom.” His kingdom of happiness and peace. The stone that is to strike the statue and break it into pieces will fill the whole earth. Then Christ, the Rock of Ages and the King of kings, will rule the world forever! (The heavenly kingdom of God will be discussed in detail in DISCOVER guide 9.)

This is the climax of Daniel’s prophecy; everything leads to this cosmic event. The confidence which this grand prediction inspires, as it takes us with unflinching accuracy through the stages of history, builds to a sure hope in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Everything in the prediction of Daniel 2 has come to pass except the final act—the striking of the statue by the stone. According to God’s timetable, we are now approaching the grand climax, Christ’s return to our world. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is about to end the long, bloody struggle of human history and establish His eternal empire of love and grace.

5. GOD IS GUIDING THE NATIONS

When God revealed this prophecy to Daniel, the Hebrew prophet immediately saw the guiding hand of God in the rise and fall of nations (Daniel 2:20-22). God knows the past, and this Bible prophecy clearly shows that He knows the future as well.

Sometimes we may imagine that the Almighty is so occupied with His vast



over them all. YOU ARE THAT HEAD OF GOLD.—Verses 37, 38.

Daniel was, in essence, telling the ruler of that world’s greatest empire: “Nebuchadnezzar, your dream is a message from God. He represents your kingdom by the statue’s golden head.”

The head of gold depicts ancient Babylon quite authentically; historians refer to it as “the golden kingdom of a golden age.” Wealthier and mightier than any empire that preceded it, Babylon proudly dominated her world until 539 B.C.

THE CHEST AND ARMS OF SILVER

From a human perspective—and especially before the proud gaze of Nebuchadnezzar—Babylon looked for all the world like an empire that would last forever. But what does the prophecy say would happen next?

“After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours.”—Verse 39.

In fulfillment of God’s prediction, Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom crumbled into ruins when Cyrus, the Persian general, overthrew the Babylonian empire in 539 B.C. So the chest and arms of silver represent Medo-Persia, another mighty empire, with the Persians becoming predominant.

THE BELLY AND THIGHS OF BRONZE

What does this part of the great metal image represent?

“Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.”—Verse 39.



The belly and thighs of bronze symbolize the kingdom of Greece, which overthrew the Persians at the Battle of Arbela in 331 B.C. Alexander the Great conquered the Medes and the Persians, turning Greece into the world's third great empire. She ruled from 331 to 168 B.C.

THE LEGS OF IRON

What would follow Greece?

“Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom [said the prophet], 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.”—Verse 40.

After the death of Alexander, his empire weakened and split into rival factions until finally in 168 B.C., at the battle of Pydna, the “Iron Empire” of Rome crushed Greece. God used the iron legs of the great metal man to symbolize this fourth world empire.

Caesar Augustus ruled the Roman Empire when Jesus was born about 2000 years ago (Luke 2:1). Christ and His apostles lived during the period represented by the legs of iron. Gibbon, the 18th century historian, no doubt had Daniel's prophecy in mind when he wrote: “The arms of the [Roman] republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid steps to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the Ocean; and 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.”—Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (John D. Morris and Company),



entire people with fanatical zeal haven't been able to revise Daniel's prophecy. The outcome of two world wars confirms this fact: God holds the future in His hands; God is ultimately in control. That's certainly enough to give us hope and peace of mind, to give us confidence in His plan for our lives.

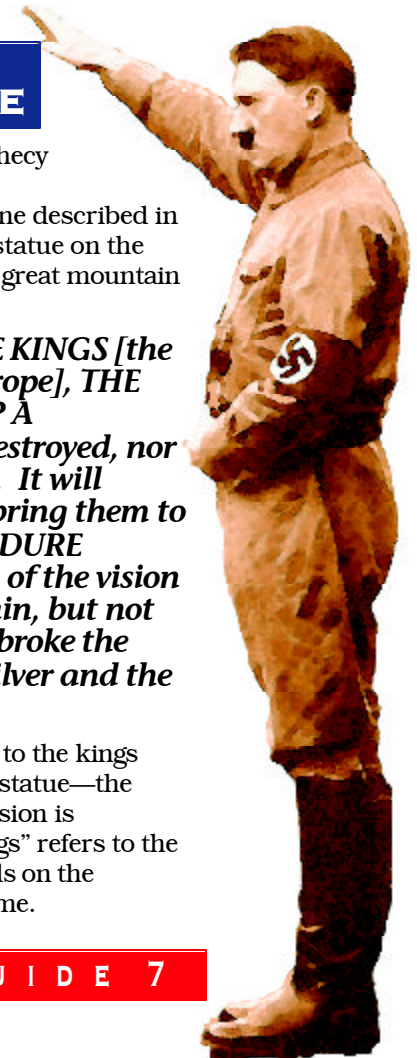
4. A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

Only one part of Daniel's prophecy remains unfulfilled.

What is the meaning of the stone described in verses 34 and 35 that is to strike the statue on the feet, grind it to powder, and become a great mountain which fills the whole earth?

“IN THE TIME OF THOSE KINGS [the modern nations of Western Europe], 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. 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.”—Daniel 2:44, 45.

“Those kings” could refer only to the kings symbolized by the feet and toes of the statue—the rulers of modern Europe. The conclusion is inescapable. “In the time of those kings” refers to the present day. Our modern world stands on the threshold of the greatest event of all time.



pattern has persisted. Only the mind of God could have foreseen the grand sweep of history so accurately.

Truly, as Jesus said, “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). He also declared:

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”—Matthew 24:35.

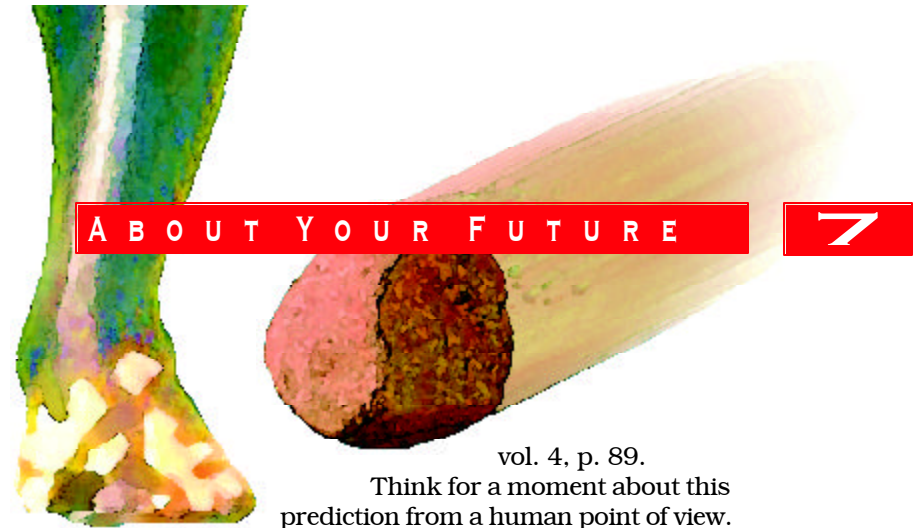
Fourteen hundred years of history show that no human power, or combination of powers, has been able to break the force of these words of Bible prophecy: “The people will be a mixture and will not remain united.”

But it’s not for a lack of trying. Several men of great military genius have done their best to unite Europe. Napoleon Bonaparte came nearer than any other man to reaching his goal. At the beginning of his military career he boasted, “In five years I shall be master of the world.” He stated his aims very clearly: “The conquest of Russia, Europe, the world.”

Napoleon’s troops appeared invincible for some time and swallowed up a great deal of real estate. But while marching to Moscow, the French forces bogged down in an early winter and Russian troops decimated Napoleon’s men. Why did he fall short of his goal? Because God has said: “The people will be a mixture and will not remain united.” Napoleon had by far the best army in Europe, but it was no match for the Word of God. As he fled from the battle field of Waterloo, he cried out, “God Almighty is too much for me!”

Kaiser Wilhelm II and Adolf Hitler created the most powerful armed forces of their day. But each failed to unite Europe under their rule. Why? Because God’s word was at stake: “The people will be a mixture and will not remain united.”

Dictators who have succeeded in arming an



vol. 4, p. 89.

Think for a moment about this prediction from a human point of view.

How could Daniel, a Hebrew living in the time of Babylon, have any idea of how empires would succeed each other hundreds of years in the future? We have a hard time figuring out what the stock market is going to do next week! And yet Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome followed each other exactly as predicted—like obedient schoolboys in a line.

Is God in control of the future? Can we have hope on the basis of His grand plan? Daniel 2 answers with a resounding, Yes! But there’s even more.

THE FEET AND TOES OF IRON MIXED WITH CLAY

Would a fifth world power follow Rome?

“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. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.”—verses 41, 42.

The prophet predicted, not a fifth world empire, but a division of the iron monarchy of Rome. Rome would fracture into ten kingdoms, as

symbolized by the feet and toes of the image.

Did this actually happen? It certainly did. During the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian Era barbaric invaders from the north poured down on the decaying Roman Empire, delivering blow after blow. Finally ten of the tribes gained most of the territory of Western Rome, and ten independent nations established themselves within the boundaries of Western Europe. Thus the toes symbolize the modern nations of Europe today. The prophecy was literally fulfilled, and history again harmonizes with what God foretold. Seven of the ten nations of divided Western Rome remain on the map of Europe today and relate directly back to Daniel's prophecy.

TEN TOES - TEN MAJOR TRIBES IN THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

Anglo-Saxons	<i>(England)</i>
Franks	<i>(France)</i>
Alamanni	<i>(Germany)</i>
Lombards	<i>(Italy)</i>
Ostrogoths	<i>(later destroyed)</i>
Visigoths	<i>(Spain)</i>
Burgundians	<i>(Switzerland)</i>
Vandals	<i>(North Africa, later destroyed)</i>
Suevi	<i>(Portugal)</i>
Heruli	<i>(Disappeared after a few centuries)</i>

3. OUR DAY IN BIBLE PROPHECY

Does Daniel's prophecy predict that efforts

would be made to unite the post-Roman empire nations of Europe under one ruler?

“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.”—Daniel 2:43.

Over and over powerful men have tried to unite Europe, but they fall short of the goal every time. “The people will be a mixture and will not remain united” is the verdict of prophecy. It declares that France, England, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Switzerland will never re-shape into one great power and “remain united.”

Living as we do after centuries of nationalism, it's hard to grasp how dramatically Daniel's prophecy identified a major break in history. Up until the collapse of Rome the world had been dominated by empires—starting all the way back with Egypt and Assyria. But after Rome the world carved itself up into nation-states, and that

