

1 - How to Know the Future



A Dream From the Past Speaks to the Present



2

An absent-minded scholar was riding the train one day, totally absorbed in his reading. The conductor walked by and asked for his ticket. The scholar reached into all his pockets but couldn't find it. He began checking again, rather frantically.

So the conductor said, very kindly, "Never mind, sir, don't worry. I'm certain you have it."

The scholar shot back in a panic, "But you don't understand, I've got to find it now! I need that ticket to know where in the world I'm supposed to be going!"

Millions of people around the world tonight are asking: "Where in the world are we headed?" The future appears uncertain. They are confused. They wonder where our world is going.

We don't need to wonder any longer. Twenty-six hundred years ago an ancient king's dream outlined the history of our world.



The biblical Book of Daniel, chapter two, tells the story of the remarkable dream.



The man who had the dream was at the time the ruler of Babylon – then the most powerful kingdom in the world.



In only his second year as king, Nebuchadnezzar went to bed one night with anxious thoughts on his mind. He, like all of us at times, was worried about the future. He wondered just how long his kingdom would endure. Finally he drifted off to sleep.

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When the king woke up from his fitful sleep, He was perplexed. He knew he had dreamed, and he knew that it was a dream of great importance, but he couldn't remember what it was!

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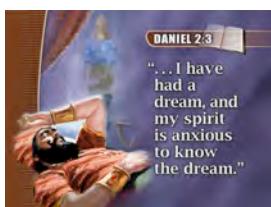


The Babylonians placed great importance on such things, so Nebuchadnezzar had astrologers, magicians, enchanters, and sorcerers who claimed to be able to tell mysteries and interpret dreams. Surely they could tell him what it was all about. Despite the early hour, they were summoned to the court. When they came in and stood before the king, he said to them,

(Text: Daniel 2:3)

“...I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream.”

Daniel 2:3.



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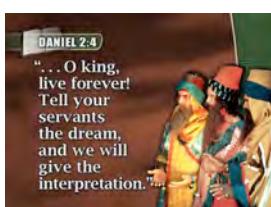


These so-called wise men were shocked! They had no way of knowing what the king had dreamed. If only he could tell them the dream, they were confident they could give him a believable explanation. So they said,

(Text: Daniel 2:4)

“...O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation.”

But Nebuchadnezzar was in no mood for bargaining with his well-paid wise guys.



10

(Text: Daniel 2:5, 6)

“The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, ‘My decision is firm:



11

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if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation,
you shall be cut in pieces,

12



and your houses shall be made an ash heap.

13



However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts,

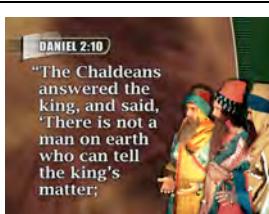
14



rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation.””

Verses 4-6.

Finally the wise men confessed,



(Text: Daniel 2:10, 11)

“The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, ‘There is not a man on earth who can tell the king’s matter;

16



therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean

17



... there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.””

Daniel 2:10, 11.

18

1 - How to Know the Future



19

King Nebuchadnezzar was so angry that he immediately issued a decree to execute all of the wise men!



20

There were at that time in Babylon Hebrew young men who had been forced to immigrate there after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed their city, Jerusalem. Daniel and his three friends had been so successful in their studies that they were evidently already classed among the wise men of the kingdom!

For some reason, however, the first they heard of this mysterious dream was when the officers came to take them for execution!

Daniel asked for time to pray to his God and ask for wisdom to be able to tell the king the dream. (Verses 12-15.)



21

What a responsibility rested upon Daniel's shoulders!

Not only were his and his three friends' lives at stake, but the lives of all the wise men of Babylon!

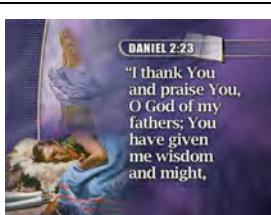
Daniel returned to his house and together with his friends prayed for a miracle.



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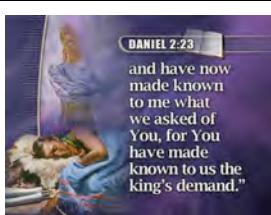
The God of heaven heard and honored those prayers! The Bible says that the God of Daniel that very night revealed the secret dream to him.

Daniel was so overjoyed at this answer to prayer that he said,



(Text: Daniel 2:23)

"I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might,



24

and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to us the king's demand." Verse 23.

What an amazing answer to prayer! What an opportunity for the true God to be introduced in the pagan kingdom of Babylon!

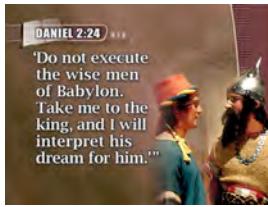
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(Text: Daniel 2:24)

“Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him:

25



‘Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him.’” Daniel 2:24, NIV.

Notice that Daniel did not take personal credit for this superhuman feat of revealing the secret dream:

(Text: Daniel 2:27, 28)

“The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king.

27



28

But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days...”

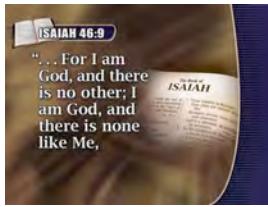
Verses 27, 28.



29

Daniel knew that there was only one God who could reveal the future.

In fact, the ability to write history before it happens is the evidence that the God of the Bible gives to show that He is the only true God:



30

(Text: Isaiah 46:9)

“... For I am God and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me,



31

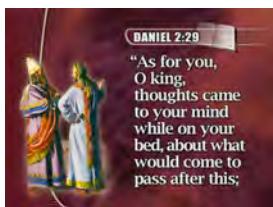
declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done...”

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32

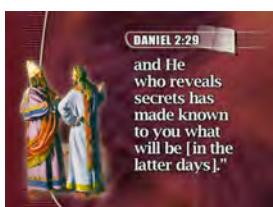
The God of Daniel was able to do what all the wise men of Babylon had failed to do. God could actually tell the king what he had dreamed *and* the thoughts he had been thinking before he went to sleep!



33

(Text: Daniel 2:29)

“As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this;



34

and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be.
[in the latter days]”

Daniel 2:29.



35

Yes, the God of heaven knew the cares and stresses on Nebuchadnezzar’s mind that night. He knew the king was worried about the future. And He wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know that the future was secure in His hands.

Next, Daniel begins to tell the dream:



36

(Text: Daniel 2:31)

“You O king, were watching; and behold, a great image!



37

This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome.”

Verse 31.



38

This image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,

1 - How to Know the Future



its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay."

39



40

Amazed, Nebuchadnezzar listens as Daniel describes the image exactly as he had seen it in the dream.

There was no doubt – this was the dream that he had seen!

Daniel continued:



41

(Text: Daniel 2:34, 35)

You watched while a stone was cut out without hands,



42

Which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.



43

Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together,



44

and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found.

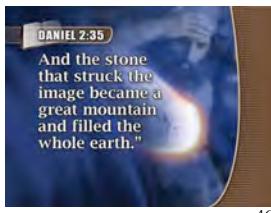


45

Since he worshipped such images as representations of his deities, the king must have been startled by this stone that violently shattered the whole image into dust so fine that the wind carried it completely away.

But there was one more part of this dream Daniel had yet to relate:

1 - How to Know the Future



46

(Text: Daniel 2:35)

And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

Daniel 2:29-35.



47

From beginning to end the whole dream was exactly as the king now remembered it! Imagine how amazed Nebuchadnezzar must have been to be told by this noble young man every detail of the dream just the way he had seen it himself!



48

But what was the meaning of the dream? That's the next part of the story – the interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar's dream predicted the rise and fall of key nations of the earth.



49

In just a few words God sketched the main course of history from Babylon's time – 600 years before Christ – to the climax of Earth's history at the end of time.

This was an interpretation Nebuchadnezzar was anxious to hear!



50

(Text: Daniel 2:38)

Looking straight at the king, Daniel said: "You are this head of gold."

Verse 38.

Babylon was the head—a nation represented by pure gold!

A smile of satisfaction must have crossed the king's face as he heard those words.



51

Historians confirm that gold was a fitting symbol to represent the kingdom of Babylon.

Gold was lavishly used to embellish the buildings of Babylon.

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52

The fabulous hanging gardens were one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World!



53

Had Daniel been a clever politician trying to make a name for himself in Babylon, he would have stopped the interpretation of the dream right there – while the king was happy! But Daniel had a message that God wanted revealed to the world—a message not just for his time, but one that would be relevant to the end of Earth’s history.

So Daniel humbly but boldly declared to the king:



(Text: Daniel 2:39)

“After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours.”
Daniel 2:39.

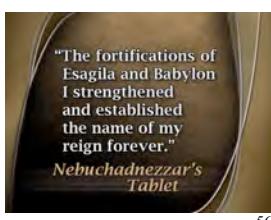


55

The king’s smile of satisfaction must have quickly faded when he heard those words from Daniel.

Babylon’s proud monarch did not intend that any other nation should ever rule the world.

Archeologists discovered in the ruins of Babylon a tablet describing this intention:



56

“[By] the fortifications of Esagila and Babylon I strengthened and established the name of my reign forever.”

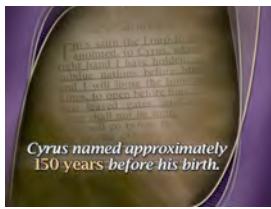


57

Nebuchadnezzar wanted his kingdom to last forever. But God said that it would not. Another kingdom would take its place!

In fact, God had already prophesied exactly how the city would be taken, nearly 200 years before its fall!

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God even told by whom it would happen: Cyrus the Mede. His name was given in prophecy 150 years before he was born!

58



59

(Text: Isaiah 45:1)

God, through the prophet Isaiah, had said:

"Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him



60

and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut."

Isaiah 45:1.



61

During the reign of Belshazzar, the arrogant and proud grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus the Mede laid siege to Babylon. Inside, Belshazzar and his nobles were not worried. In fact, they were partying. As they drank wine from the golden vessels taken by Nebuchadnezzar from the temple in Jerusalem, they praised the gods of Babylon.

They had no idea that the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel were in the process of being fulfilled.



Cyrus could not break down the walls, as they were too high and too thick, so he devised another way:

He would divert the river that ran through the center of the city, and his army would go down the river bed until they found a way into the city.

Someone, through carelessness or treachery, had left the massive inner gates of bronze unguarded and open!



62

The king was killed and his government overthrown.

On October 13, 539 B.C., the golden kingdom of Babylon came to an inglorious end, just as the prophecies had predicted!

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The coalition government of the Medes and Persians was certainly inferior to the glorious Babylonian Empire, but it ruled the Middle East for two centuries.

Daniel predicted that the kingdom of silver would be surpassed by yet another as well:



(Text: Daniel 2:39)

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

Daniel 2:39 NIV.

Did that come to pass? Yes, indeed!

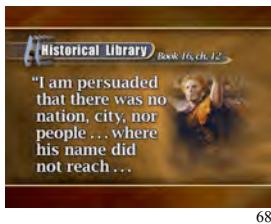


This prediction was fulfilled when the brilliant young general, Alexander the Great, defeated Darius III of Persia in the Battle of Arbela in 331 B.C. and the third world empire was Greece!

Fittingly, much of the armor worn by the Greek infantry was made of brass, the third metal in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.



At the youthful age of 25, young Alexander became ruler over one of the most extensive empires the world had known.



The Greek historian Arian, writing about Alexander, said, “I am persuaded that there was no nation, city, nor people ... where his name did not reach....”



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

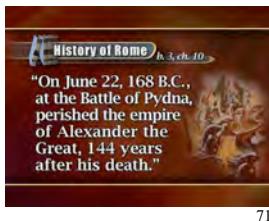
--Historical Library, book 16, chapter 12.



Alexander died before his 33rd birthday of a fever.

After his death, his empire was weakened and split into several parts until finally,

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71

"On June 22, 168 B.C., at the Battle of Pydna, perished the empire of Alexander the Great, 144 years after his death." – *History of Rome*, book 3, Chapter 10.

So far, the prophecy has clearly been fulfilled by this succession of empires!

As you remember, the dream predicted four world empires, one after another. Here is how Daniel described the final empire to King Nebuchadnezzar:



72

(Text: Daniel 2:40)

"And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron..." (Daniel 2:40).



73

Indeed, iron was an appropriate metal to represent the Roman Empire.

Rome would rule with an iron-fist over an even wider expanse of territory than the preceding empires – and for centuries longer.



74

Her Caesars called themselves gods and demanded the worship and obedience of all men.

It was during the time of Roman rule that two events of great importance took place in this nation.



75

First, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. It was a Roman taxation decree that took His parents to the city of David, but His birth there was a fulfillment of Messianic prophecy.



76

Second, Jesus was crucified in Judea, under Roman authority.

A Roman governor allowed Jesus to be condemned, and Jesus was nailed to the cross by Roman soldiers.

But now the pattern of the prophecy changed.

No single WORLD EMPIRE would follow Rome.

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77

(Text: Daniel 2:41, 43)

Daniel wrote: "Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron,



78

so this will be a divided kingdom . . .



79

... so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united,



80

any more than iron mixes with clay." Daniel 2:41, 43.



81

The dream here predicted that no fifth empire would rise uniting Rome's territory, but a division of what had been the Roman Empire would occur.



82

Through luxury, political corruption, and moral decay, Rome lost its stability and strength, becoming an easy prey for barbaric tribes that began to challenge the Empire between A.D. 351 and A.D. 476. These invasions divided the empire and formed the foundations of the nations located in Europe today.



83

Ten of these divisions are listed as follows by most historians:
Alamanni - Germans, Burgundians - Swiss, Franks - French,
Lombards - Italians, Saxons - English

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84

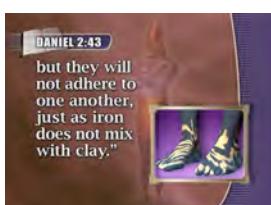
Suevi - Portuguese, Visigoths - Spanish;
The Heruli, Ostrogoths, and Vandals are considered by historians to have been wiped out or merged with other groups so that no unique nation remains today.



85

(Text: Daniel 2:43)

“As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men;



86

but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.”

Daniel 2:43.



88

God’s proclamation that these kingdoms will never be reunited as one empire still limits what these nations can do. Europe will stay divided. Even with the European market and a common currency, it is still divided.



87

Daniel said that they would even “mingle themselves with the seed of men.” In other words, they would intermarry royalty.



89

In a palace in Denmark, the family tree of the royal families of Europe is pictured.

Just as God predicted, they intermarried! They hoped it would prevent wars and bring unity, but it didn’t work.



90

Many of the wars fought in Europe were really family squabbles! God had predicted that they would not stick together.

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No attempts to put the Roman Empire back together will ever last, just as iron and clay will not stick together!

Think of the many attempts that have been made to reunite Europe under one government.

What happened to these powerful leaders who tried to unite divided Europe?



Exiled on the isle of Elba, Napoleon—that mighty warrior of France in the early 1800s—had to admit that perhaps God Almighty was too much for him.

Indeed, God was too much for all of them!

92



God had said, “THEY SHALL NOT CLEAVE ONE TO ANOTHER!”

If only the old Roman Empire could be reunited the Bible could be proven false. But these seven words of Daniel’s interpretation have withstood the ingenuity and determination of some of history’s greatest leaders! Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is still standing true today.



Back to our story, King Nebuchadnezzar must have been astonished by these amazing predictions.

Through his dream God had foretold the rise and fall of great world empires.

The last empire would be succeeded by a number of nations – some strong, some weak, but all hopelessly divided.



But what would happen next?

With obvious joy and confidence, Daniel now came to the astounding climax of the dream of the great image. He wrote:

95



(Text: Daniel 2:44, 45)

“In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed,

96

1 - How to Know the Future



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."

97



"This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain but not by human hands—

98



A rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

99



the great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true, and the interpretation is trustworthy."

Daniel 2:44, 45.

100



The next great event on the stage of human history will be the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom, represented by the stone "cut out without hands." His kingdom will be founded, not by the hands of men, but by the mighty hand of God—a kingdom that will fill the whole earth.



(Text: Revelation 11:15)

Then will be fulfilled the prophecy,

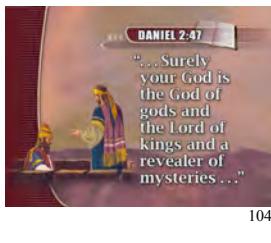
"...The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord ... and He shall reign forever and ever."

Revelation 11:15.



When Daniel finished telling the king his sensational vision and God's astounding interpretation, King Nebuchadnezzar rose from his throne and humbly prostrated himself before Daniel in honor of Daniel's great God, whose wisdom and power had been so impressively demonstrated.

1 - How to Know the Future



(Text: Daniel 2:47)

The king said to Daniel, "...Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries..."

Daniel 2:47.

Truly, Daniel's God is the God I want to be my God—the God who holds the future in His hands!



Yes, friend, "The dream is certain, and interpretation is sure!"
The journey is almost over!

Perhaps you, like Nebuchadnezzar, sometimes worry about the future.

This dream is for you!

It tells us living today that we don't need to worry about the future. The suffering and stress that sin has brought into this world is all going to pass away.

The God of heaven isn't going to leave this world in the hands of human rulers. He's going to come again to make everything right!



You don't need to worry about the future, my friend. Nebuchadnezzar's dream tells us that we're living just before the coming of Jesus! He will be the One who establishes the eternal kingdom on this earth. And He wants you to be a part of that beautiful tomorrow!

He wants to speak these words to you:



(Text: Matthew 25:34)

"...Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you..." Matthew 25:34.

But how can you know you'll be there? How can you know you'll have a place in His eternal kingdom?

You can be certain that you will be there if you will by faith do what the thief on the cross did as he hung next to Jesus.



He couldn't get any closer to Jesus, but he knew that he was a sinner and that he needed to be saved from those sins that he had committed.

He looked over at the Savior of the world and saw the blood running down His face from His thorn-pierced brow.

His heart was touched. He confessed his sins and cried out,

1 - How to Know the Future



(Text: Luke 23:42)

“Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

Luke 23:42.

And Jesus gave him the assurance that he would be with Him in that kingdom.



You, too, can receive that same assurance that you will be with Christ in His kingdom that is soon to come.

Do you want that assurance?

Do you want a heart filled with hope in place of the worry and stress of this world?

Do you want your life to be in the hands of the God who knows and controls the future?

You can rest securely in His hands.

That's what I want this evening.



He is calling us today.

He is inviting us to come today.

He is appealing to our hearts right now.

Would you like to join me in saying tonight, “Yes, Lord, I will completely trust you. Please be my Savior from this world of sin. Please make me by your grace a citizen of your eternal kingdom”? Is that your desire?

You can do this with me just now as we pray.

[Suggested Prayer]

“Dear Father in heaven, thank you for being a God who knows the future – including ours. Thank you for providing for the eternal happiness of each one of us, a future free from suffering and sin, stress and worry. Thank you Lord, for inviting us tonight to be a part of your incredible kingdom. So tonight we want to place our lives in your hands. We want to place our worries and fears in your hands. We want to place our sins on you, our Savior, and with the thief on the cross we want to ask you to save us by your grace in your kingdom. Thank you for the promise that you are coming soon. As we continue to learn more about the hope-filled prophecies in the Bible foretelling this earth’s final events, prepare us for each one as we keep our hearts surrendered to you. Bless each family and each home represented here, we pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.”
