

Revelation's Biggest Surprise

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A budding industry today is *Space Tourism*, that expects we'll be able to book ourselves on space vacations within the next 10-20 years—if we can pay the price. If you're interested in space travel, interested in finding out “What's out there” beyond our earth, but you don't have the cash to invest, how about an eternity-long vacation that's offered to you free? God's ultimate reward for the redeemed is far more exciting than any journey in the cramped quarters of some man-made space shuttle!

Christ offers us the *ultimate* space journey. We'll travel with Him through the starry heavens. But first must come to pass the words of **Revelation 11:15** – “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord.” Throughout the ages, earthly kingdoms have arisen to challenge the kingdom of God. There has been a battle for the throne, a battle brought into sharp focus in the Old Testament Book of Daniel. Scripture contains two 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 Bible chapters is **Daniel 2**. A king dreamed of world events that spanned 2,500 years. Those events have come to pass with such precision that only the hand of God could have been involved. 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 what he had dreamt. So he called his wise men—who claimed to see into the future—and asked them to tell what he had dreamt. When they admitted that they could not, Nebuchadnezzar condemned them 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, he asked for time to pray for God to reveal the dream—and God did! Then Daniel, taking no credit to 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 end-times, the *close* of earth's history. The dream starts with Nebuchadnezzar and marches through history 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

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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?” What does it mean not only to Nebuchadnezzar but to you and me? 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** as “the breast and arms of **SILVER.**” Just a few pages ahead in your Bible, **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., but they too were overthrown by a third kingdom.

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. The political world brewed with corruption, crime infiltrated the streets, the work ethic was lost, sexual immorality was rampant. And as the mighty Roman Empire weakened from within, Rome was attacked from without and divided into ten smaller kingdoms.

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, for tomorrow is in the hands of *the God who guides history*—and who *loves* us!

The Lord of History has the last word . . .

History has followed this prophecy like a *blue-print* 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 barbarian tribes carved up the empire. They are:

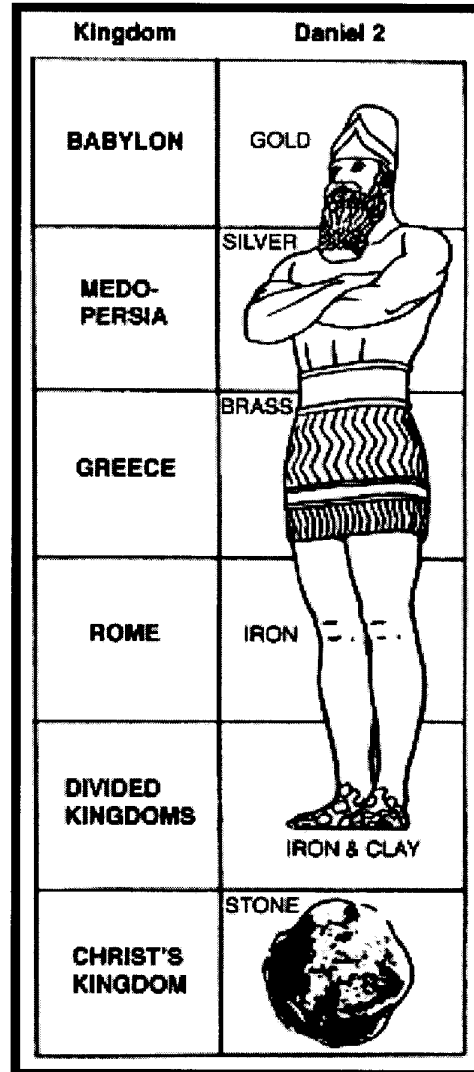
- Anglo-Saxons: *England*
- Alamanni: *Germany*
- Burgundians: *Switzerland*
- Franks: *France*
- Lombards: *Italy*
- Suevi: *Portugal*
- Visigoths: *Spain*
- Heruli
- Vandals
- Ostrogoths

The last three have no modern names, for they originally took over parts of the Empire but were eventually destroyed—“plucked up by the roots” as **Daniel 7:8, 20, & 24** foretold.

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, the world will never be united under one ruler again.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill stated: “Any man must have a blind soul who cannot see that some great purpose and design is being worked out here below.” 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 is left 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. The heavens will rumble with a great shout as trumpets blast and angels sing. Then Christ and the angelic host will swoop down in a cloud of glory to gather His faithful ones!



Quick Quiz

Our heavenly Father has *so much* He longs to teach us! Think of each seminar session as one in a series of steps leading upward—a series of “lessons from heaven.” May we learn our lessons well, so we in turn can teach others. God’s Word, the Bible—our Textbook for this seminar—offers **Learning Unlimited!**

#2 - Revelation’s Biggest Surprise

1. Daniel took NO credit or glory to himself when he told the king, “But as for me, this secret is not revealed to _____ for any wisdom that _____ have more than any living.”

To check your answer, see Daniel 2:30.

2. Instead, Daniel’s *first words* to the king directed that monarch’s thoughts to *divinity* when he said: “There is a _____ in _____ that revealeth _____.”

To check your answer, see Daniel 2:28.

3. Just as the gospel hymn praises God by singing “He’s got the whole world . . . in His hands,” so Scripture asserts the Supreme Rulership of God by saying, “He _____ kings, and _____ kings. . . . The most High _____ in the kingdom of _____, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.”

To check your answer, see Daniel 2:21 and 4:17 (compare Psalms 75:6-7).

4. Is predictive prophecy just for *past* events of *Old Testament* times, or does it extend into our *own* day and age even into *the future*? Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar that God would reveal “what shall be in the _____ days,” and John the Revelator was told to “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which _____ be _____.”

To check your answer, see Daniel 2:28, 45 & Revelation 1:19.

5. The “**Blueprint of History**” delivered by God in a dream seems dependable, for it has *already* been fulfilled in all particulars for 2500 years, but can we trust it for the *remainder* of earth’s history? God says: “The dream is _____, and the interpretation thereof _____.”

To check your answer, see Daniel 2:45.