



## **THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL—“THE GOD OF HEAVEN WILL SET UP A KINGDOM”**

**Reading: Daniel 2**

### **Daniel the Prophet**

At the time when Jeremiah was warning his people in Jerusalem that Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty king of Babylon, would return to destroy Jerusalem for their wickedness, Daniel was already a Jewish captive in Babylon. He had been taken into exile in an earlier campaign in BC 606, and placed among an elite group of Jewish captives whom Nebuchadnezzar had appointed to be educated in the wisdom and culture of Babylon (Daniel 1). Daniel remained there throughout the 70 years captivity that Jeremiah had foretold, rising to hold a position of prominence in the court because of his wisdom and integrity (Daniel 6:28; Jeremiah 25:8-12).

### **Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream (Daniel 2)**

In the second chapter of Daniel we read of a remarkable incident. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which impressed and disturbed him greatly. He saw a great image of a man whose head was of gold, his chest and arms of silver, his belly and thighs of brass, his legs of iron and his feet part of iron and part of clay. He then saw a stone smite the image on its feet with such force that it fell and was broken to pieces. The stone grew and became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. The dream was so vivid and the figure so bright and terrible that Nebuchadnezzar felt compelled to find out what it all meant.



He called for his magicians and astrologers to tell him both the dream and its interpretation. But of course they could not. When news of this reached Daniel he appealed to his God, who revealed that He had indeed made known in this dream what was to happen “in the latter days” (Daniel 2:28).

This is only one of several prophecies in the Bible that tell of “latter day” events.

### **The Image Dream (Daniel 2:28-45)**

Daniel proceeded to accurately describe the dream and the interpretation as God had revealed it to him. An artist’s impression is shown on the following page, together with Daniel’s interpretation and the way history has verified the details.

### **The God of Heaven will Set up a Kingdom (Daniel 2:44)**

This stone power and its work is clearly interpreted in verse 44 by Daniel when he says: “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever”.

### **Daniel interprets the image dream**

<b>The Head of Gold</b> Babylonian Empire BC 606-538	This represented Nebuchadnezzar and the Kingdom of Babylon (v37–38). This empire was ultimately overthrown by the Medo-Persian power in BC 538 (Daniel 5:28).
<b>Breast and Arms of Silver</b> Medo-Persian Empire BC 538-334	The Medo-Persian Empire is indicated. It overthrew Babylon but in turn was overthrown by Alexander the Great in BC 334.



<p><b>Belly and Thighs of Brass</b>          Grecian Empire          BC 334-67</p>	<p>Alexander the Great established the Grecian Empire by overthrowing the Medo-Persians. His conquests extended south into Egypt and as far east as the Indus River. After his death the territory over which he ruled was divided between his four generals.</p>
<p><b>Legs of Iron</b>          Roman Empire BC 67 -          AD 476 West          AD 1453 East</p>	<p>The Roman legions conquered the four divisions of the Grecian Empire, extending the territory west to the Atlantic. Eventually there was a western and eastern division. The West was ruled from Rome until AD 476 and the East from Constantinople until AD 1453.</p>
<p><b>Feet part of Iron and part of Clay</b>          Divided Europe</p>	<p>The Roman Empire was broken up and divided by the various invaders from the north and east such as the Vandals, the Goths, and the Huns etc. There has never since been one power to unite all the territories of the preceding world empires.</p>
<p><b>The Stone</b>          Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God</p>	<p>The stone smashes and destroys the image and all its components <b>“together”</b>. Daniel saw that in <i>“the latter days”</i> the powers ruling in the territory of these old empires would come together in a union or coalition, and that God will utterly destroy their united strength, replacing them with His Kingdom, ruled over by Jesus Christ. The stone power will then itself fill the whole earth (verse 35).</p>

**Note these interesting points in verse 44:**

- 1 At a set time God *will* set up a Kingdom
- 2 This Kingdom shall never be destroyed (as Babylon, Medo-Persia etc were)
- 3 The rulership of this Kingdom will not be left in the hands of men. Jesus Christ, with those faithful followers who have been made immortal at his return, will rule over it (Matthew 25:34; Luke 19:17)
- 4 God’s Kingdom, with Jesus Christ as King, will destroy all other political systems.
- 5 God’s Kingdom shall stand for ever (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Luke 1:31-33)

So in this fascinating dream and its interpretation we have the history of the world from the days of Nebuchadnezzar until the time when God will send Jesus Christ back to set up God’s Kingdom on earth.

This is the Kingdom that Jesus taught his disciples to pray for when he said: *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven”* (Matthew 6:10). We also read of this time when Jesus Christ will rule the world: *“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever”* (Revelation 11:15).

The prophet Daniel himself was given several visions that also reveal the history of the world from BC 606 through to the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

**God Rules in the Kingdom of Men**

One of the fundamental and very important lessons that we learn from the prophecies of Daniel is that God is in control of world events, and is progressing them according to His revealed plan.

Daniel so impressed this lesson on the mind of Nebuchadnezzar that this mighty king, ruler of the world at that time, was compelled to recognise the authority of Daniel’s God.

“And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he



doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Daniel 4:34-35).

Daniel had told him that:

"The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Daniel 4:17). Nebuchadnezzar now acknowledged this to be so.

### **Daniel's Dream – The Nations Depicted as Animals (Daniel 7)**

Daniel himself was given a remarkable dream which also foretold the succession of world empires from his time through to the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth. The dream and its interpretation are given in Daniel 7. In this dream the four succeeding world empires were portrayed as different animals. We are not left to wonder what the animals represented as Daniel asked and was given the answer. *"These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever"* (Daniel 7:17-18). The broad interpretation tells once again of the four world empires which will finally be replaced by the Kingdom of God. The saints are those faithful servants of God who are alive at the coming of Jesus Christ, or are resurrected and made immortal by him. Their role will be to reign with him in the Kingdom of God.

The four animals mentioned were:

- The Lion – representing the Babylonian Empire
- The Bear – representing the Medo-Persian Empire
- The Leopard – representing the Grecian Empire
- The dreadful and terrible Fourth Beast – representing the Roman Empire

Each animal has distinguishing aspects that Bible students for well over 1500 years have identified as these four world empires. An example of this can be seen with the Leopard which had four heads and four wings. History records that after Alexander the Great died the Grecian Empire was divided into four divisions, each given to one of his generals. This answers to the four heads and four wings. Under God's inspiration, Daniel predicted this about 300 years before it happened.

### **The Fourth Beast**

A logical question that may come to mind is: "If the Roman Empire was broken up around 400 AD, where do we find details of the events from then till now?" God has in fact revealed them very clearly.

You will notice that the Beast had ten horns. Daniel asked what these meant and was told, *"The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise"* (Daniel 7:24). Here we are again introduced to the breaking up of the Roman Empire into various kingdoms, which is exactly what history records happened in Europe. We saw this in the details of Daniel 2.

Then Daniel saw "another little horn" spring up among the ten horns and become pre-eminent. This horn had *"eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things"* (v 8). Again we are given clues to identify this horn which developed out of the Roman Beast. It was a power that *"made war with the saints* (the faithful followers of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ), *and prevailed against them* (v21), persecuting any who refused to accept its authority and teaching. This horn represents a religious system claiming authority to make religious decrees. However its decrees oppose the truth of God's word. We read: *"And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws"* (v 25). History well records the development of this apostate Christian religion that has wielded enormous political and religious power, particularly in the territory of the old Roman Empire. Greater detail of this false Christian religion that developed is found in subsequent prophecies in 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 13-19.

So God revealed to Daniel a broad sweep of the major political and religious developments down through the ages to this present time in which we live. Once again, history validates this amazing prophecy.



**‘Thy Kingdom Come’—The Kingdom will Come**

Daniel concluded this prophecy also with the promise that God will intervene in world affairs and set up His Kingdom here on earth. We read:

- *“the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever” (v18)*
- *“the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (v22)*
- *“ the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him” (v27)*

Thus in these two prophecies (Daniel 2 and 7) Daniel has clearly foretold that every political system and false religious system will be swept away when Jesus Christ comes to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. As we consider the past 6000 years of dismal suffering and heartache under man’s rule, how thankful we are that God is in control and will soon send Jesus Christ to rule this world in righteousness (Acts 17:31).

**Daniel Foretells Events at “the Time of the End” (Daniel 11:40-12:3)**

Daniel not only gave a broad overview of world history until the Kingdom of God is set up on earth, but also spoke of those events leading up to the establishment of that Kingdom. He revealed that, at *“the time of the end”* (v40), a military power designated *“the king of the north”* will sweep down into the Middle East through Israel and into Egypt. This northern power is identified by many scholars as a confederacy of nations led by Russia.

Notice the main points:

- The events take place at *“the time of the end”* (v 40)
- A northern power makes a swift military move into the Middle East, intent on gaining control over Israel and Egypt (Daniel 11:40:43)
- This northern military power is destroyed in Israel (Daniel 11:44-45)
- Jesus Christ returns and the dead are raised (Daniel 12:1-2)
- The righteous are given immortality to rule for ever with Christ (Daniel 12:3)

Daniel 12:1-3 shows that at the same time as this invasion of Israel from the north takes place (namely, at *“the time of the end”*), the resurrection of the dead also takes place.

- *“there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time”*
- *“at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book”*
- *“many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake”*
- *“some to everlasting life”*
- *“and some to shame and everlasting contempt”*
- *“they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament”*
- *“they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever”*

With the Middle East now continually in a state of tension and many nations of the world in foment, there is no doubt that we are living in those very days that plainly declare that Jesus Christ will soon return to the earth to set up God’s Kingdom.

**Appendix – “The Latter Days”**

The “latter day” prophecies in the Bible are of great interest to Bible students. We therefore make a few brief comments on one of these prophecies found in Ezekiel 38. Here both verses 8 and 16 speak of these events taking place in *“the latter years”* and *“the latter days”*. This prophecy is



closely associated with “*the time of the end*” prophecy of Daniel 11:40-12:3. Ezekiel 38 tells of a confederacy of military powers, predominantly from the north, that will come to invade Israel “*in the latter days*”. These moves will be challenged by another group of powers, but finally God will intervene, with the result that He will be acknowledged and revered by all people of the earth.

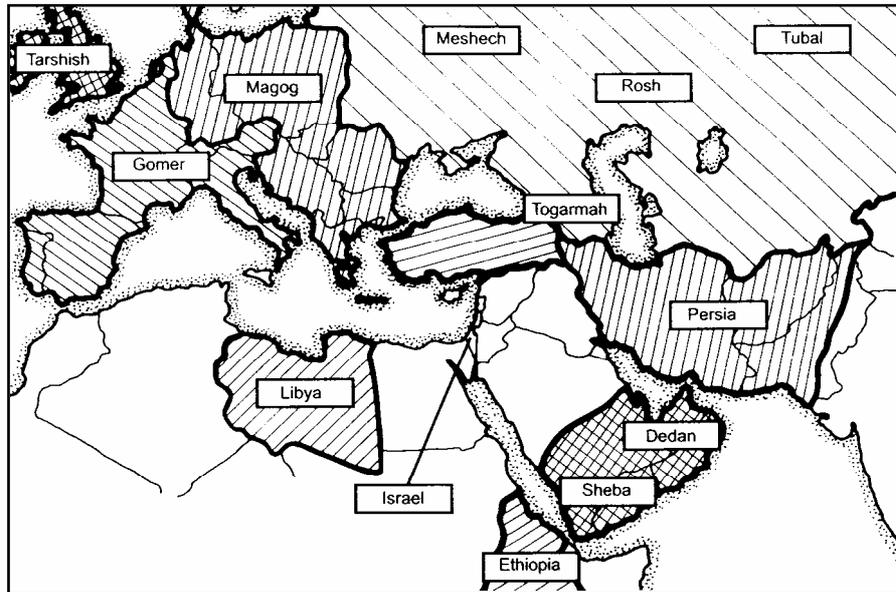
**A Summary of Ezekiel 38**

- The events spoken of will occur in “*the latter years*” or “*days*” (v8,16)
- The centre of the predicted conflict will be the land of Israel (v8,18)
- The Jews will be partly regathered and established in their land (v8, 12). This has only been possible since 1948 when Israel became a nation in their own land, after nearly 1900 years of dispersion in every nation of the world.
- The northern army or “*host*” (v15) will be led by “*Gog, of the land of Magog*”, who is prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal (v3). “Rosh” has long been identified by many scholars with Russia (see note below).
- This aggressive military power will come into Israel from “*the north quarters*” and “*the north parts*” (v 6, 15). This Hebrew expression has been variously translated, “the **uttermost parts** of the north”, “the **remotest parts** of the north” and “**the recesses** of the north”, again causing many to identify this northern aggressor as Russia.
- Confederate with this northern military power will be Europe (*Magog, Gomer*) and Western Asia (*Persia* or Iran, and *Togarmah* or Armenia), *Libya* and *Ethiopia* (v5-6). (see map identifying these powers)
- The northern invasion will be challenged by “*Tarshish*” and “*the young lions thereof*” (v13). Many scholars identify Tarshish with Britain and the Commonwealth countries, and her allied merchant trading partners such as USA.
- Also allied with Tarshish will be “*Sheba*” and “*Dedan*” (that is, Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsular states).
- At the height of the conflict in the Middle East God will reveal His great power (v18-19), when Jesus Christ reveals himself to the world (Zechariah 14:1-5; 12:9-11).
- The result will be that the military might of this northern confederacy will be destroyed (Ezekiel 39:3-5).
- All nations will be made aware that Israel’s God has gained this great victory (Ezekiel 38:23; 39:7).
- Israel will then realise their past blindness and accept the ways of God in truth, acknowledging Jesus Christ as the Son of God and their Messiah and King (Ezekiel 39:7, 27-29; Romans 11:25-26).

**Note:** Scholars for many centuries have rendered the word “*chief*” that occurs in verse 2 of the Authorised Version as a proper noun, so that the phrase becomes “prince of Rosh” (cp Rotherham, and NASB versions). Rosh is identified as the ancient name of Russia, and the names Meshech and Tubal with areas in Russia. Renowned historians, such as Bochart and Rollin support this view, whilst the Hebrew lexicographer Gesenius notes in his lexicon published in 1847 under the word “Rosh”—“A northern nation mentioned with Tubal and Meshech: undoubtedly the Russians who were mentioned by the Byzantine writers of the 10<sup>th</sup> century under the name ‘the Ros’”. For these reasons many believe that the northern power mentioned here is Russia.



**Ezekiel 38 - Nations Identified**



**Summary Points**

1. Daniel interpreted a remarkable dream that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar. In this dream he saw an overview of world history, leading up to the time when the God of Heaven would set up a Kingdom that will never be destroyed (**Daniel 2:44**)
2. Daniel pointed out to Nebuchadnezzar that *“the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will”* (**Daniel 4:17**). This assures us that God is in control of international affairs today and will fulfil His plan.
3. Daniel was again told that *“the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever”* (**Daniel 7:18**)
4. History has completely vindicated the prophecies of Daniel as being the inspired word of God. The apostle Peter wrote: *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* (**2 Peter 1:20-21**)
5. At *“the time of the end”* a northern military power will sweep down into Israel and there be destroyed in that land by the intervention of Jesus Christ (**Daniel 11:40-45**)
6. At that same time *“there shall be a time of trouble”* in the earth *“such as never was since there was a nation”*. It will also be the time of the resurrection of the dead. Some will be given everlasting life and others will be rejected (**Daniel 12:1-3**)

**Lesson 16 – Questions**

1. What was the dream that Nebuchadnezzar had that Daniel interpreted?
2. What kingdoms did the four metals represent?
3. What does Daniel 2:44 foretell?
4. What do we learn from Daniel 4:17?
5. Daniel said *“the saints of the most High God”* would take the kingdom and possess it for ever (Daniel 7:18). Who are they?
6. Daniel reveals events of *“the time of the end”*. What are they?
7. In what ways is the prophecy in Ezekiel 38 similar to the prophecy in Daniel 11:40—12:4?