

# Can We Know The Future?



*The following notes contain some of the material presented in the series "Is God for Real?"*

Many today are anxious about the future and what it has in store for them and the people they care about. What will the future of our world look like, and is it even possible to know? Can anyone predict the future? And if you could know, how would that change the way you view the present? One of the outstanding claims of the Bible is that God can accurately predict the future, centuries in advance (Isaiah 46:9-10). In fact, it has been estimated that 30% of the Bible is predictive prophecy. In chapter two of the Old Testament book of Daniel, we find the true story of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, who has a dream about the future.

However, when he wakes up, he cannot remember the content of the dream, and so he calls in his wise men and astrologers to tell him his dream. This they cannot do and the frustrated king orders them to be executed! Eventually Daniel, a captive from Judah, is brought before the king to see if he can tell the king his dream. Daniel asks for time, and that night he and his friends pray to God that He will reveal to them the king's dream and its interpretation. God answers Daniel's prayer and once again he is brought before the king. Daniel tells the king that, through the dream, God has revealed to the king "what will be in the latter days," (Daniel 2:28). Daniel then proceeds to tell the king his dream. He describes a great statue, an image whose head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay (Daniel 2:31-35).

The image was ultimately shattered by a rock not made by human hands, which destroyed the image and filled the earth. After describing the dream, Daniel then goes on to give the interpretation of the dream. He reveals that the different materials in the image represent different kingdoms that would come and go in history right down to the end of time when God would set up His kingdom. The dream spans a vast period of history from 605 BC right down to our day and beyond, into eternity. Daniel tells the king of Babylon "you are the head of gold," (Daniel 2:38). Gold was indeed a fitting symbol for the empire of Babylon. History tells us that when Babylon was conquered, Cyrus took many treasures of gold from Babylon. Xerxes later took \$150 million worth of gold from there, and Alexander the Great took 500 camels loaded with gold from Babylon. Many have heard of the hanging gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. King Nebuchadnezzar would have liked the empire of Babylon to last forever, but the dream revealed otherwise.

Daniel continued to interpret the dream by saying, "But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours," (Daniel 2:39). The chest and arms of silver in the image represented the kingdom of Medo-Persia. This was a coalition power which overthrew Babylon in 539 BC. We don't hear much about the Medes anymore, but the Persians are still mentioned, as people refer to Persian rugs, Persian cats and the Persian Gulf. Cyrus, who led the forces who overthrew Babylon, is mentioned in the Bible by name over one hundred years before he was born. You will find the reference in Isaiah 45:1. The Medes and the Persians ruled from 539 BC to 331 BC, where they were defeated by the military genius of Alexander the Great.

Daniel next revealed that after the silver would come another kingdom, "a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth." This represented the kingdom of Greece. When Alexander the Great faced Darius of the Medes and the Persians in 331 BC, Alexander had 45,000 men, Darius had

half a million men, but Alexander would be victorious. Greece was represented by the belly and thighs of bronze, and it ruled from 331 BC to 168 BC.

Daniel continues, "And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others." Here Daniel describes the kingdom represented by the legs of iron. This was the kingdom of Rome which ruled from 168 BC to 476 AD. At this point we might expect another empire to appear upon the scene and conquer Rome, but both history and the Bible take a detour here. The Bible reveals that after the iron kingdom of Rome, the kingdom would be divided, and this is in fact just what happened. Germanic tribes rose up against Rome and her empire was divided (Daniel 2:41-43).

Many attempts have been made to re-unite these divided kingdoms, but each attempt has failed, fulfilling the prophecy, "they will not adhere to one another," (Daniel 2:43). Charlemagne tried to unite Europe and failed in the 8th century. Louis XIV of France also tried and failed in the 17th century. Others include Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm and Adolf Hitler. All thought at one point they might succeed, but all ultimately failed. Even today in the form of the European Union, there is an attempt to unite Europe into one super state, but as we have seen recently in the news, countries voting on closer European ties through the new Constitution have thus far rejected it. But the interpretation of the dream doesn't end there.

Daniel goes on to say that, "in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed," (Daniel 2:44). Daniel describes the Rock, which comes and strikes the image at its feet, as a kingdom that God Himself will set up. This kingdom will not last for centuries or even millennia, but will in fact stand forever. God will set up this kingdom in the "days of these kings." Which kings? The kingdoms of divided Europe! Even now God is preparing to set up His kingdom. The symbol of the Rock that strikes the image is representative of Christ and His coming kingdom (Ephesians 2:20; 1Corinthians 10:4). Revelation 11:15 describes what happens when Christ finally returns, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" In this incredible prophecy God has taken us from the time of Babylon 2,600 years ago, down through time past our day and on into eternity.

When the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar heard the dream and its interpretation he exclaimed, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret," (Daniel 2:47). God had revealed something truly incredible to the king, and he knew it. We too have been privileged to be able to peek behind the scenes of history and to see how prophecy has been dramatically fulfilled. We have seen how the various kingdoms have come and gone. But the prophecy doesn't end there; even now God is preparing His kingdom. He invites us to become a part of it. Would you like to accept God's invitation to be part of His eternal kingdom? Why not talk to Him now, and He will give you the peace and assurance you need to face the future with confidence.

*If you would like to know more about this subject, or others in the series, 'Is God for Real?' then please contact one of our staff and they will be happy to help you.*