

## **Our Day In The Light Of Prophecy**

The Lord not only spoke the word in warning and entreaty for those to whom it first came but it is written in the scriptures of truth as a testimony to all time, that the Bible is the word of God, and that all His purposes revealed therein and all the promises of the blessed Book are certain and sure. The prophets who bore messages from God to Nineveh, and Babylon, and Tyre, spoke messages also for our day.

Fulfilled prophecy is the testimony of the centuries to the living God. The evidence of prophecy and its fulfillment is God's challenge and appeal to men to acknowledge Him as the true God and the Holy Scriptures as His word from heaven. "I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of My mouth, and I showed them. I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I showed it thee.... Thou has heard, see all this; and will not you declare it?" Isaiah 48:3-6.

Surely no one can look at the evidence in history of the fulfillment of prophecy without seeing that of a truth the One who spoke these words knew the end from the beginning. And finding the living God in the sure word of prophecy, one must be prepared to listen to His voice in all the scriptures, when it speaks of sin and the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Further, the prophetic word also has much to say of yet future, of the course of history in modern times. It behooves us to give heed to what that word speaks concerning our own times and the events that are to take place upon the earth before the end. The apostle Peter exhorts us the study in these words:

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." 2 Peter 1:19.

### **3. PROPHETIC OUTLINE OF THE WORLD'S HISTORY**

#### ***THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL 2***

"There is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and makes known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." In a dream by night the Lord gave to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, a clear historical outline of the course of world empire to the end of time and the coming of the eternal kingdom.

The king was a thoughtful monarch; and having reached the height of his power, he was one night meditating upon "what should come to pass hereafter." Not for his sake alone, but for the enlightenment and instruction of men in all time, the Lord answered the wondering question of the king's meditation by giving him the dream. "He that reveals secrets," said Daniel the prophet, "makes known to thee what shall come to pass."

And that we may know at the beginning that there is nothing fanciful and uncertain about this great historic outline reaching to the end of the world, we note first the assurance with which the prophet closed his interpretation: "The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

The details of the dream had been taken from the king's mind, while conviction as to the wondrous import of it remained. This was in God's providence, to show the folly of the worldly-wise men of Babylon, and to bring before the king the prophet of the Lord with a divine message. The prophet Daniel, under the inspiration of God, brought his dream again to the king's mind:

"Thou, O king, saw, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. "This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

"Thou saw till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors. And the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." The prophet next declared the interpretation. And now follows the history of the world in miniature.

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### **Babylon**

“Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And where so ever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into your hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.”

The parts of the image, then, of various metals, from head to, feet, represented successive empires, beginning with Babylon; and the kingdom of Babylon, represented by Nebuchadnezzar, was the head of gold. History shows how fitly the golden head symbolizes the Babylonian kingdom. Long before, the prophet Isaiah had described it as “the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency.” Isaiah 13:19. And now, in Nebuchadnezzar's day, it was the golden age of the Babylonian kingdom. No such gorgeous city as its capital ever before stood on earth. And Nebuchadnezzar was the great leader of its conquests, and the beautifier and builder of its walls and palaces. “For the astonishment of men I have built this house,” one tablet reads; and hundreds repeat the story.

“Those portals for the astonishment of multitudes of people with beauty I adorned. In order that the battle storm to Imgur-Bel the wall of Babylon might not reach. What no king before me had done.” - East India House Inscription.

Thus Nebuchadnezzar's records of stone today repeat the proud boast faithfully reported in the Scripture, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?” Daniel 4:30. To the king it seemed that such a city could never fall. One inscription reads:

“Thus I completely made strong the defenses of Babylon. May it last forever.”-Rawlinson, “Fourth Monarchy,” Appendix A.

### **Medo-Persia**

But the prophet Daniel, proceeding with the divine interpretation, interrupted all such proud thoughts with the declaration, “After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee.” Now the look was forward into the future. And the word came to pass. Babylon's decline was swift after Nebuchadnezzar's death. Daniel the prophet himself lived to interpret the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast:

“God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. . . . Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting. . . . Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Modes and Persians.” Daniel 5:26-28.

The breast and arms of silver, in the great image, represented the Medo-Persian kingdom, which followed the Babylonian, “inferior” to it in brilliancy and grandeur, as silver is inferior to gold. Medo-Persia, however, enlarged the borders of the world empire; and the names of Cyrus and Darius are written among the mightiest conquerors of history. But the prophet does not stop to dwell upon the grandeur of fleeting earthly kingdoms. The interpretation hastens on to reach the setting up of a kingdom that shall not pass away. Following Medo-Persia, a third power was to rise.

### **Greece**

“And another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.”

The “third kingdom” after Babylon was Greece, which overthrew the empire of the Modes and Persians. And Greece's dominion fulfilled the specifications of the prophecy which indicated a yet wider expansion of empire. Its sway was to be over “all the earth,” said Daniel the prophet, foretelling its history. Arrian, the Greek historian, writing afterward, said that Alexander of Greece seemed truly glory of all the earth; “and he adds:

“I am persuaded there was no nation, city, nor people then in being whither his name did not reach; for which reason, whatever origin he might boast of, or claim to himself, there seems to me to have been some divine hand presiding both over his birth and action.” “History of the Expedition of Alexander the Great,” book 7, chapter 30.

The sides of brass in the great image represented Greece, the brazen metal itself being a fitting symbol of those “brazen-mailed” Greeks, celebrated in ancient poetry and song, “Among the foremost, armed in glittering brass.”

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### ***A Power Rising in the West***

While Greece's supremacy under Alexander was disputed by none, there was a power rising in the West that was soon to enter the lists for the prize of world dominion.

Some of the ancient writers say that at the time of his death Alexander had in mind to push westward to strike down the growing power of the city of Rome, of which he had heard. Plutarch says that this man Alexander, "who shot like a star, with incredible swiftness, from the rising to the setting sun, was meditating to bring the luster of his arms into Italy. He had heard of the Roman power in Italy." – "Morals," chapter on Fortune of the Romans," paragraph 13.

Lucan, the ancient Roman poet, repeats the thought:

"Driven headlong on by Fate's resistless force,  
Through Asia's realms he took his dreadful course:  
His ruthless sword laid human nature waste  
And desolation followed where he passed....  
Even to the utmost west he would have gone,  
Where Tethys' lap receives the setting sun."  
"Pharsalia."

But in the prime of his years, Alexander was cut down, and Rome had yet more time in which to develop its strength preparatory to the deciding contest for the mastery of all the world. Sure it is that after Greece, there followed the Roman Empire, the strongest and mightiest and most crushing of them all. This fourth universal empire the prophet proceeded to describe, as represented by the legs of iron in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image.

### ***Rome***

"The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things: and as iron that breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise." How appropriately the iron of the image fits the character of the fourth great empire! Gibbon, the historian, calls it "the iron monarchy of Rome." It broke in pieces the kingdoms, subduing all, just as prophecy had declared so long before. As iron is strongest of the common metals, so according to the prophecy – "as iron that breaks all these this fourth kingdom was to be more powerful than any before it. Strabo, the geographer, who lived in the days of Tiberius Caesar, said, "The Romans have surpassed (in power) all former rulers of whom we have any record." – "Geography," book 17, chap. 3.

Hippolytus, bishop and martyr, who lived in Rome in the third century, under the "iron monarchy," wrote thus of this prophecy: "Already the iron rules; already it subdues and breaks all in pieces. Already it brings all the unwilling into subjection, already we see these things ourselves." – "Treatise on Christ and Antichrist," section 33. Hippolytus also saw clearly from the prophecy that the empire of his day would be divided, and he wrote of the kingdoms that were yet to rise out of it. For Daniel's interpretation explained clearly the meaning of the mingling of clay with the iron in the feet and toes of the great image.

### ***The Kingdoms of Modern Europe***

"Whereas thou saws the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou saws the iron mixed with miry clay. "And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

"And whereas thou saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." "The kingdom shall be divided." So declared the prophet of God. In the height of its power, Rome scouted the thought that so mighty a fabric could ever be broken up. Horace sang in his "Odes,"

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“How, added to a conquered world, Euphrates 'bates his tide, And Huns, beyond our frontiers hurled, O'er straitened deserts ride. “The Goths beyond the sea may plot, The warlike Basques may plan. Friend, never heed them! Vex thee not. For this our mortal span of little wants.” -Book 2, Marris's Translation.

But the words were written on the ancient parchment in the days of Babylon, “The kingdom shall be divided;” and true to the word of the prophet, the Roman Empire fell apart with the mixture of nations and peoples that swept into it. The elements did not hold together, even as the mixture of iron and clay in the image did not cleave together. Broken tip by the invasions of fresh nations from the north, the Western Empire was divided into lesser kingdoms, out of which have grown the modern nations of western Europe.

Not one word in the outline of the prophecy thus far has failed of fulfillment. These modern kingdoms growing out of divided Rome have never been reunited. “They shall mingle themselves with the seed of men,” said the prophecy. Nearly all the reigning houses of Europe today are related by intermarriage; the prophecy said it would be so; but “they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.” So we see it. No statesman, no master of legions, has been able to join these nations together again in one great empire. Charles V had the thought in mind, some think. Napoleon dreamed of doing it. But it was not to be. Never more was there to be one universal monarchy.

We may know that as surely as the course of world empire has followed the exact outline of the prophecy put on the inspired record in the days of Babylon of old, just so surely the specifications Of the closing portion of the outline will be fulfilled. The fourth great kingdom was to be divided. Rome was the fourth empire: it was divided. The kingdoms of the divided empire are acting their part before our eyes today.

### ***The Next Great Event***

And what next? That is the question for us. Now the prophetic outline that began with ancient Babylon touches the things of our own day. The word spoken before Nebuchadnezzar so long ago is now spoken especially to us:

“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 forever.”

“Forasmuch as thou saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold. The great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.”

“In the days of these kings,”-these kingdoms of our Own time, the next great world-changing event is to be the coming of Christ to begin the setting up of his everlasting kingdom. That is the grand climax toward which all the course of history has been tending. At last the end is to come. Down in the feet of iron and of clay, Weak and divided, soon to pass away. What will the next great, glorious drama be? Christ and His coming, and eternity.”

As the stone, cut out of the mountain “without hands,” smote the image, so that all its parts, representative of earthly dominion, were ground to dust and blown away, so Christ's coming kingdom, set up “without hands,” by no human power, but by the power of the eternal God, will end all earthly dominion and bring the utter destruction of sin and sinners out of the earth. “The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” Then may all eyes well be turned toward the next great step foretold in the prophetic outline - the coming of Christ's glorious everlasting kingdom, which shall not pass away.

“Look for the way marks as you journey on,  
Look for the way marks, passing one by one,  
Down through the ages, past the kingdoms four,  
Where are we standing? Look the way marks over.”

## **4. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST**

“UNTO them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”