

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

DANIEL 1-2

Every December groups make their predictions for the New Year. They all claim to see the future. But only one has 100% accuracy: [the Procrastinators Club](#).

At the beginning of each year the Procrastinators make their predictions for the year that's just ended.

And guess what? Every prediction is correct!

A Club Spokesperson explains, "[We just get around to our predictions a little later than everyone else.](#)"

And there are some unbelieving scholars - with anti-supernatural bias - who would like to convince us that Daniel too was a member of *the Procrastinators Club*.

His predictions are so sweeping yet specific, so precise yet panoramic, so obviously supernatural, that he has been a favorite target of the liberal critics.

Some of the skeptics suggest Daniel never existed. His book is fraudulent. It was written by someone else long after the events it predicts had transpired. They date the writing of the book around 165 BC, more than 350 years after the timeframe referenced in the Bible.

Yet, Daniel's critics couldn't be more wrong!

The Septuagint was the first Greek translation of the Hebrew OT - it was written around 285 BC. And the book of Daniel was part of the Septuagint. Obviously, Daniel was written prior to the late date of the critics.

The Dead Sea Scrolls also confirm the biblical date.

And no less an authority than Jesus testified to Daniel's existence and prophetic ministry. In Matthew 24:15 our Lord mentions “Daniel the prophet” by name.

If you believe in Jesus you'll believe in the reliability of the book of Daniel. If you don't believe in Jesus, you've got bigger problems than who wrote Daniel!

Daniel was a statesman, a governmental bureaucrat, a professional politician who served in the courts of Babylon and Persia... yet he remained loyal to God.

Rather than let the world whittle away at his convictions, Daniel stayed strong. He refused to wear down or wimp out. This man was part of an influential minority, that for over 80 years, was a witness for God.

We too are living in an increasingly pagan world that is trying to turn our convictions into compromise. *Let's dare to be a Daniel.* He shines as a sterling example.

Verse 1 gives us the accurate date of the book of Daniel, “In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah...” Secular history records the date, 605 BC.

“Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.”

The book of Daniel starts as a tale of three kings...

The first was King Jehoiakim. He was a wicked man, who's reign marked the apex of idolatry in Jerusalem!

The second king was Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon or Shinar (*Shinar was Babel's ancient name*).

Remember, Genesis 11 tells us the tower of Babel was the birthplace of idolatry. It was as if God was saying to His people, Judah, if you want to worship idols; then I'll send you to a place steeped in idolatry.

Yet, as I said, this is the tale of three kings! The third king mentioned in these first two verses is *“the Lord.”*

It's clear, Nebuchadnezzar didn't act alone when he besieged Jerusalem and looted the Temple. Verse 1 reads, *“The LORD gave Jehoiakim... into his hand.”*

God had warned Judah to turn from idolatry or judgment would come. Here, God fulfills His promise!

And don't miss the point, this is the theme of the Daniel. *God is Sovereign over the affairs of men.* He orchestrates the rise and fall of nations. World politics aren't shaped in Washington or Moscow or Jerusalem or Brussels, but in Heaven - in the counsels of God.

And yet, Nebuchadnezzar didn't just take Temple treasures back to Babylon. We're told in verse 3...

“Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles...”

Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon with both *jewels* and *Jews*. Several of Judah's princes were taken captive and whisked to Babylon. There, they were placed under the care of *“the master of eunuchs.”*

There's a stone taken from the ruins of Babylon that confirms this as an official in the Babylonian court. Today, it's on exhibit in London at the British Museum.

This Ashpenaz took custody of these “young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.” These were Jewish boys (maybe 14-15 years old)... the cream of the crop.

And Nebuchadnezzar had a policy. He would take the finest young men from the people Babylon had conquered and employ them in his royal court.

They were the pick of the litter. Princes of royal lineage - handsome - teachable - a 1600 on the SAT - some social grace - boys fit for the king's service.

Verse 5, “And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.” In the besieged city of Jerusalem life was tenuous. The boys were worried for their very survival.

But Babylon represented *a new world, a new start...*

Imagine, them walking the brick streets of Babel, on the banks of the mighty Euphrates, amidst the towering ziggurats and the hanging gardens. They're on the king's meal plan. They even have government jobs...

But there was a catch. All that glitters isn't gold... Verse 6, "Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah."

Jewish historian, Josephus, says all four of these fellows were of royal lineage, related to King Zedekiah.

And "To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego." These Jewish young men were stripped of their Hebrew names and assigned a Babylonian name.

Daniel meant "God is my Judge," while *Belteshazzar* is "Bel protects..." *Hananiah* is "Yahweh is gracious," *Shadrach* means "command of Marduk..." *Mishael* is Hebrew for "Who is what God is?..." while *Meshach* is Babylonian, "Who is what Marduk is?..." *Azariah* is "Yahweh has helped," *Abednego* is "servant of Nebo."

Each of these Hebrew teenagers had their God-glorifying name replaced with a name that honored the blasphemous idols of Babel: *Bel*, *Marduk*, and *Nebo*.

The whole process was to deconstruct their faith in their God, and convert them into idolatrous pagans.

This was part of Nebuchadnezzar's three year brainwashing. Give them new identities, a secular education, indoctrinated them into pagan culture...

It sounds like what happens today to kids who grow up in Christian families only to leave home and enroll in a state university. Immediately their faith comes under siege, *and unless they're a Daniel they're not ready.*

Here's a stat - 80% of animals born in captivity, when released in the wild get eaten by other animals. Reared in an insular environment a domesticated animal can't cope with the rigors and harshness of the real world.

And this is the plight of sheltered Christian kids who grow up in a fundamentalist subculture, and are never prepared for what's beyond the four walls of their faith.

In fact, it was even worse for Daniel. As if being *relocated*, and *renamed*, and *reprogrammed* wasn't denigrating enough, our text hints at a more terrible attack on his personhood. Usually, in oriental courts, to prevent the princesses from falling in love with his male servants the king would have the men castrated.

It kept the king's harem *hanky-panky-free*.

Notice, Daniel's supervisor, his overseer "*Ashpenaz*," is twice called, "*chief (or master) of the eunuchs*."

Could it be that Daniel was assigned to the head-of-the-eunuchs because he was one? This would mean in addition to the other humiliations he suffered, Daniel and his pals might've been neutered. Here's a teenage boy who suits up to play baseball, and he no longer has to wear a cup! *How devastating would that be!*

With all the trauma Daniel and his friends had endured we might be tempted to expect, even justify, a little compromise... but Daniel isn't looking for excuses!

Though he answers to *a new name* - he wears *new clothes* - he has *a new address* for his mail - he speaks *a new language* - he even is learning *new curriculum...*

A lot has changed for Daniel, but one thing hasn't changed... **his heart.** Daniel still has **a heart for God.**

Verse 8, “**But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.**” Notice Daniel’s concern, it’s to “*not defile himself...*” “*Defile*” means “**to taint or to pollute.**” The term is the opposite of the word “*purity.*”

Daniel didn't want anyone to question his loyalty to God. He refused to *say anything* or *act in anyway* that would cast an aspersion on his devotion to His Lord!

Daniel couldn't help what had happened to him... *his captivity, his place in the palace, the strange customs and language, his new name, his new occupation...*

But he could control what he put in his mouth! The food he ate, the libations he drank... *were his choice!* He wanted to be sure no one mistook where he stood.

Being a Jew, Daniel was bound by the OT dietary laws. To ignore these laws would be to disobey God.

And certainly, the king's diet was far from kosher.

In addition to being non-kosher the food served to Daniel would've been officially dedicated to the nation's idols. To eat from the king's table could be interpreted as participating in the worship of Babylon's false gods.

It wasn't a matter of how far he could compromise and still please God. Daniel didn't want to run the risk of defiling himself and offending God in any way.

It's true that **we all swim in a sea of culture**. We're all assimilated to some extent into a certain way of life.

Daniel spoke like a Babylonian... dressed like a Babylonian... learned Babylonian protocol... attended a Babylonian university... answered to a Babylonian name... but he never became a Babylonian at heart...

God still governed his values and his appetites!

Daniel knew where to draw the line...

He wouldn't compromise his allegiance to God just to eat at Nebuchadnezzar's table. Daniel respected the king, and his position, *but he bowed only to God*.

He put his fate and faith in God's hands - not in the king's. Here's the question, **Who's your daddy, Daniel?** *Anyone who knew him, realized God was His authority!*

And that's the question we need to be asked, **"Who's your daddy?"** If we really trust God why are we cutting corners, or lowering standards, or cozying up to sin?

Daniel refused to let the king dictate what he ate. He'd stay loyal, and consume only what pleased God.

But notice again verse 8, **"(Daniel) requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself."**

This is so instructional... Daniel doesn't picket the cafeteria, or go on a hunger strike, or turn over his tray.

He doesn't get mad that the Babylonians don't share his convictions. *What do you expect from pagans?*

Daniel realized that in a secular society folks are more *pragmatic* than *principled*. Though he's taking a stand for God, *and says so* (he doesn't want to be *defiled*), nevertheless he appeals to pragmatism.

Verse 9, "Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king." Ashkenaz is a practical guy.

Though he was fond of Daniel, *why should he be expected to risk his neck over Daniel's convictions?*

"So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.

Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants. So he (Ashpenaz) consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days."

Daniel doesn't just *agitate* the authorities to get their cooperation, rather he *navigates* - even *negotiates*.

Sometimes, we Christians climb up on our self-righteous high-horse to point out what's wrong with our boss or the

authorities that be. We're quick to scream "persecution" when the world doesn't understand our convictions, without first offering a helpful alternative.

Here, Daniel proposes a test. And it's not just about *his convictions*, it's also about *Babylon's objectives*.

The king wants healthy civil servants, so Daniel gives the king what he wants, as well as pleases God.

"*Let's set aside a 10 day trial...*" The Hebrews will eat off *the Value Menu*. They'll get their veggies and drink Evian - while the other court candidates scarf up *Babel burgers* and *Babel brew*. If the Hebrews turn out fitter and fuller, then who's to complain? Everyone's happy.

Daniel has a clear conscience, Nebuchadnezzar has healthy helpers, and God gets glorified through faith.

Here's a more modern day example: the sales manager wants you to lie about the product, he thinks it'll boost sales. What he wants is income... whereas what God wants is honesty... Thus, *propose a test...*

The other guys do it the boss' way, while you do it God's way. *In ten days let's see who sold the most?*

The point is, don't just *mandate*, *navigate*... And trust God. Put the pressure on Him! If He wants you in that job; He'll work it out. Hey, *Who's your daddy?* Dare to be a Daniel; for God always looks out for His children.

It reminds me of 1 Corinthians 10:13, "God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

Verse 15 tells us the results of Daniel's test, "And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables." The plan worked! There is no biological reason a vegetarian diet would make a noticeable difference in ten days...

It was God's blessing that won the victory! A blessing that remained on Daniel's conviction and faith for three years. Daniel 1 teaches us a lesson for negotiating secular surroundings - *capitulation no, navigation yes!*

The story ends, "As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king.

And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm." Obviously, it wasn't just their diet that brought them such blessing, it was their God.

1 Samuel 2:30 tells us, “The LORD God of Israel says... those who honor Me I will honor.” That was certainly the case with Daniel and his friends.

Verse 21, “Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.” This is amazing - *the exclamation point on Chapter 1.* Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom, will eventually fall to the Persian King Cyrus. And guess who Cyrus employs in his government? *Daniel!*

Because he refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s rules, and stayed true to God, Daniel outlived Babylon.

God blessed Daniel over Babel. It proves the truth of 1 John 2:17, “The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

Which brings us to Chapter 2, “Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign...” The date, 602 BC.

“Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him.” He was so startled - his dream so vivid - he couldn’t go back to sleep!

And when the king can’t sleep, *nobody sleeps*, “Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said to them, “I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream.”

At the time, Nebuchadnezzar was a young general fresh off military conquest. His father, Nabopolassar, died while

Nebuchadnezzar was in battle. He'd ceased his fighting and returned home to take the crown.

Nebuchadnezzar had long wondered about his father's counselors. They claimed psychic powers.

Naboplasser was an superstitious idolator. He kept his wizards around to consult the stars and give him advice. But the young Nebuchadnezzar was skeptical and decided to use this dream to test their creditability.

“Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic...”

One side note: From 2:4 through the end of Chapter 7 the original text is written in Aramaic not Hebrew.

Aramaic was the language of the Babylonian court in Daniel's day. Since the content of this section deals mostly with Gentile kingdoms, it's written in Aramaic.

In Chapter 8 the focus returns to the Jews, so the language of the text reverts back to Hebrew.

Nebuchadnezzar's wizards greet him, **“O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation.”** The sorcerers had occult manuals and secret symbolism they used to decode dreams.

They're planning to just look up the interpretation.

But they're surprised in verse 5, **The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, “My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap.”** Wow! He's not messing around. They're given an incentive program.

Verse 6, “However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation.” They answered again and said, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation.” They’re saying, *“We must not have heard you correctly, O King! Tell us the dream first...”*

“The king answered and said, “I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation.”

The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, “There is not a man on earth who can tell the king’s matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.” In essence, they admit their whole profession is a charade. *“You’d need a hotline to God to discern both a dream and its interpretation.”*

Yet that was exactly what they’d claimed to have.

Verse 12, “For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave the command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill

them.” Apparently, Daniel wasn’t in the palace at the time. Perhaps he was on vacation, or dispatched on business, *but he’s in trouble too.*

“Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon; he answered and said to Arioch the king’s captain, “Why is the decree from the king so urgent?” Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel. So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation.” Daniel must’ve had Nebuchadnezzar’s respect. He gets an immediate audience, and he’s able buy the time, the king wasn’t willing to give the others.

But Daniel is now on the clock. *It’s time to pray!*

“Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.” Was he *a man of great faith*, or just *a man with nothing to lose...* probably both!

He relays the scenario and they all start to pray.

“Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.” But notice, before Daniel got the answer, he fell asleep!

Can you imagine facing the same scenario and being able to go to sleep? I would’ve held an all-night prayer vigil - praying and pacing, praying and pacing.

And I would’ve missed God’s answer... *why?* It wasn’t just his prayer, it was his faith God answered.

God responded to his confident, faith-filled sleep.

Verse 20, Daniel answered and said: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him. “I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to us the king’s demand.” He offers a beautiful praise. God is sovereign and He speaks!

He reveals secrets and gives wisdom. It reminds me of James 1:5, “If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” Daniel asks and God gave.

“Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon.

He went and said thus to him: “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation.” Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, “I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation.” This Arioch is the typical government bureaucrat. He tries to squeeze out of the situation a little credit for himself...

He introduces Daniel, *“I have found a man...”*

Verse 26, “The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?” Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, “The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. 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. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these...”

Ironically, Arioch tried to take the credit, but Daniel is quick to give the credit... *“There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets...”* Daniel doesn’t have any prognosticating powers. What He knows God revealed.

And too, he says the king’s dream and vision are for *“the latter days.”* This is technical term in the Bible that speaks of the time just prior to Jesus’ second coming.

He begins in verse 29, *“As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.*

“You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. 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 found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.” Verse 36, “This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king.”

The king saw a tall image. *How high?* We don’t know, but when Nebuchadnezzar tries to build a replica of what he’s seen in chapter 3, he builds it 90 feet high.

Daniel sees a metallic man. He has a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay. It’s like a robo-image. Something out of a sci-fi movie.

And notice the medals are progressive. From top to bottom they get heavier. This image is top heavy! Which makes it fragile at the bottom. You’ve heard the expression, “[clay feet](#)” - this is where the get the idiom.

And notice the stone, it’s “*cut out without hands.*” That’s another way of saying, “[of supernatural origin.](#)”

The stone strikes the image in the feet, and the whole enchilada crumbles. The gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay are crushed into dust and blown away.

But in its place the stone that struck the image becomes a great mountain, perhaps Nebuchadnezzar saw Stone Mountain rising in the place of the image!

This is what Nebuchadnezzar saw, but what in the world does it mean?... Daniel also has the answer!

Verse 37 begins the interpretation, “You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all - you are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.

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.

Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile.

As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron,

the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold - the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”

Nebuchadnezzar has been shown a picture of Gentile world domination. In Luke 21 Jesus also spoke of a period, He called, “the times of the Gentiles.”

Prior to 586 BC and the fall of Jerusalem, God’s kingdom on the earth was the nation Israel. God hoped she would obey His laws and be a witness to the world.

God would make His people great! Israel would rule the world... But Israel failed. She fell into idolatry. God destroyed Jerusalem, and gave the world over into to Gentile control. That’s been our status ever since...

And it was all predicted beforehand...

The head of gold, or Babylon, got first crack at world dominion. Their empire lasted from 605-536 BC.

Next came the Medeo-Persian Empire, the arms & chest of silver. They reigned from 536-333 BC.

The Greeks were next up. They were the bronze belly and thighs. They governed from 333-168 BC.

Afterwards came the Romans, the legs of iron. They ruled the world from 168 BC until the 4th century AD.

The Roman empire eventually split into east and west, thus the two legs of iron. The empire in the west was ruled in Rome - the eastern in Constantinople.

And each of these successive kingdoms were inferior to its predecessor. Nebuchadnezzar was the world's most absolute despot, his whims became laws.

Cyrus the Persia, had a more limited power. Once he spoke a word it became law, but he couldn't change it if he wanted. The Law became superior to the King.

Greeks and Romans toyed with a representative form of government - and introduced democratic ideas.

There are scholars who see the clay in this vision as modern democracy - a government by the people and for the people - clay being a symbol of humanity.

And as with the rest of the vision, democracy coming last is the weakest and riskiest form of government.

During Colonial days, Alexander Tyler wrote these words about the fall of the ancient Athenian republic.

"A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves money from the public treasure. From that moment on the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most money from the public treasury, with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy followed by a dictatorship. The average age of the world's great civilizations has been two hundred years.

These nations have progressed through the following sequence: from bondage to spiritual faith, from spiritual faith to great courage, from courage to liberty, from liberty to abundance, from abundance to selfishness, from selfishness to complacency, from complacency to apathy, from apathy to

dependency, from dependency back to bondage.” You can see where we are in this progression. It could be that the “*clay mixed with iron*” is a time when democracy ceases and dictatorships emerge. This is how Gentile government concludes.

Now what happens to the legs of iron, or the Roman Empire? Who conquered Rome? The answer, *No one!*

Rome wasn't conquered from without, it crumbled from within. Yet this is the empire that's pictured last.

The feet of this image are iron mixed with clay - the iron of Rome mixed with the clay or rest of humanity.

Historically, as in this vision, Rome crumbled into many pieces. For 1000 years Europe was a quagmire of warring city-states. Eventually, each of Rome's fragmented parts had its crack at world dominance...

The Spanish armada ruled from the sea.

British imperialism once dominated the globe.

Napoleon in France, Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy all have tried to unify Europe, or ancient Rome, under one flag. But what military force has been unable to achieve, economic factors will one day accomplish.

Today, the two legs of old Rome, east and west are reuniting. After the fall of communism, a superstate has emerged. The European Community now corresponds with the borders of ancient Rome. Legs of iron have mixed with the clay of humanity in a Roman revival.

Today Europe, bound by the Maastricht Treaty, is one community. There's a single currency, open borders, an integrated foreign policy, even a president.

Of course, unification is not without its problems. The British exit from the EC is proof. As Nebuchadnezzar's vision foresees, clay and iron don't naturally adhere.

Yet since 1957 and the Treaty Of Rome unstoppable forces have overcome ancient hostilities to create a unified Europe. Ancient Rome is being reassembled.

And why is it happening? It's because God is at the helm. He's moving pieces on the board - manipulating nations until they're aligned as His prophets predicted.

Jesus told us in Luke 21:24, "Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." In June 1967 Israelis paratroopers took control of the Old City of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was back in Jewish hands for the first time since 586 BC.

It was a sign - the times of the Gentiles, the period of Gentile world domination - is now drawing to a close.

Nebuchadnezzar's image is about to crumble.

The reunification of Europe is also setting the stage.

Europe will eventually take the form of a ten nation confederacy. The image that Nebuchadnezzar sees in Chapter 2 has two feet - *thus ten toes*. We'll see in Daniel 7 the ten toes represent ten European nations.

And it's during the days of this ten-state, revived Roman empire, that the Stone, (cut out without hands, of supernatural

origin) will strike the image and replace it with a mighty mountain, that is the Kingdom of God.

Throughout Scripture the Messiah is represented as a stone! Here Jesus is the stone *of supernatural origin*. No man was responsible *for His birth* or *for His rise*.

And in the days of this revived Roman empire, Jesus will return to Earth, strike the Gentile kingdoms, and replace them *finally* with His reign and God's kingdom.

This is why we get excited over what's going on with the European Community, and the talk of a New Rome, it's a sign that Jesus' coming is right around the corner.

Chapter 2 closes, "Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret."

Imagine, Nebuchadnezzar, the world's most powerful despot bowing down before an Israeli prisoner of war.

"Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. Also Daniel petitioned the king and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (his three Hebrew pals) over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king."

And that's where we'll pick it up next week.