

God Shows the Future



SABBATH—JANUARY 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Daniel 2:1–16; Daniel 2:17–23; Daniel 2:24–30; Daniel 2:31–49.

MEMORY VERSE: “Daniel said: ‘Praise God forever and ever. He has wisdom and power’ ” (Daniel 2:20, ICB).



God’s “promises happen right on time.”

IN THE WATERS AROUND GREENLAND, there are icebergs. Icebergs are big pieces of ice. They float in the sea. The icebergs are many different sizes. Sometimes the icebergs float in different directions at the same time. Small icebergs move in one direction. Bigger icebergs flow in another direction. How can that happen? What happens is that winds push the small ice chunks in one direction. The water moves the big ice chunks in another direction. How icebergs move is a word picture for the governments on this earth. It shows us how kingdoms start and end in human history. The winds that move the icebergs along are a word picture too. The winds show us human power and everything that changes. The power of the water also is an example of God’s power. It shows us the way God moves in human history. Ellen G. White says, “The stars travel in special circles in outer space. God’s plans are the same as stars. God does not rush or hurry His plans. He does not delay what He says He will do. His promises happen right on time.”—*The Desire of Ages*, page 32, adapted. Kingdoms rise to power, then fall. Everything in history looks as if it happens because of human power. But Daniel 2 shows us that God controls human history. He moves human history to its final end.

THE POWER AND GLORY OF GOD (Daniel 2:1–16)

Read about the dream that the Lord gives to King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:1–16. What danger are Daniel and his friends in because of this dream?

In Bible times, people believe that dreams are important. Some dreams warn about dark times to come. So, we can see why King Nebuchadnezzar is upset. What is worse, he cannot remember his dream at all. Babylonian wise men believe that the gods can explain dreams to humans. But the wise men need the king to tell them his dream first. Then they can explain the dream. But the king asks the wise men to do something that is too hard for them to do. He wants them to explain a dream that he cannot remember! The wise men answer, “ ‘Only the gods could [can] tell the king his dream and what it means. But the gods don’t [do not] live with people’ ” (Daniel 2:11, ERV).

The king is mad at the wise men. He orders Arioch, his captain, to kill all the wise men in Babylon. Sadly, angry kings often behave this way in Bible times. Darius the First kills all the wise men in Persia when he learns about their plan against him. The Persian King Xerxes kills all his engineers. Why? They build a bridge that breaks. So, Nebuchadnezzar orders the wise men to be killed around the time that Daniel and his friends finish school. The king gives Daniel and his friends jobs as wise men in his palace at this time. So, Daniel and his friends will be killed too. The Bible language shows us something interesting. The killing starts right away. Daniel and his friends will be killed next. But Daniel “spoke with wisdom and skill” (Daniel 2:14, ICB) to Arioch. Arioch helps Daniel. Then Daniel asks the king to give him time to solve the dream. The king gives Daniel time. Do you see that the king does not give the magicians more time? The king does not trust them. But he trusts Daniel. Daniel agrees with the magicians about one thing. No human can solve this mystery. But Daniel knows the God in heaven who can.



Daniel asks the king to give him time to solve the dream.

DANIEL'S TWO PRAYERS (Daniel 2:17–23)

The king gives Daniel time to explain the dream. What is the first thing Daniel does after he talks to the king? He tells his friends what will happen if God does not help them. They will die. So, Daniel and his friends pray. They ask God for help. We should pray whenever we have a big problem. God is strong. He can solve all our problems.

Read about the two prayers in Daniel 2:17–23. What two prayers do Daniel and his friends pray?

Daniel 2 talks about two prayers. In the first prayer, Daniel asks God to show him the dream and to explain it (Daniel 2:17–19). Daniel does not write down this prayer. But the Bible tells us what Daniel asks his friends to pray. “He asked them to pray that the God of heaven would [will] give him mercy. He wanted God to help him understand the mystery of the king’s dream. Then he and his friends wouldn’t [will not] be killed along with Babylon’s other wise men” (Daniel 2:18, NIV). Daniel and his friends pray. God answers their prayers. God shows Daniel the dream and explains it. We can trust that God will answer our prayers too. He will “give [us] mercy” when we ask Him (Daniel 2:18, NIV). The God of Daniel is our God too.

Daniel and his friends are so happy. They pray another prayer. In this prayer, they thank God for His wisdom. They thank God for being in control of history and governments. There is an important lesson here for us. We ask God for many things. But do we also remember to praise God for answering our prayers? Remember the story about Jesus and the 10 lepers? Lepers are people with skin diseases. Jesus heals 10 lepers. But only one leper comes back “to give glory to God” (Luke 17:18, KJV). Their story shows us something sad about humans. We often do not remember to thank God for the many gifts and blessings He gives us. Daniel’s prayer helps us remember to thank God and praise Him for His gifts. Daniel’s prayer also shows us what he thinks about God. Daniel believes God loves him. God wants the best for Daniel. When we pray to God, we can trust God to do what is best for us too. So, we always should praise and thank God.



We should pray whenever we have a big problem. God is strong. He can solve all our problems.

THE STATUE: PART 1 (Daniel 2:24–30)

What does Daniel say in Daniel 2:24–30? Why are his words important for us to remember? (Read also John 15:5.)

God answers the prayer of Daniel and his friends. God tells them the dream and explains it. Then Daniel tells the king. Do you see that Daniel praises God to the king? Daniel says that God gave him the answers. Daniel also reports something else. He tells the king what is in the king's own heart about the dream. Only God can know our secret thoughts and feelings. So, this information helps the king to trust Daniel's message even more. The king sees that only God in heaven can show someone secret things. But the dream is not very good news for the king. So, Daniel takes a big risk when he tells the king the truth.

Read about the king's dream in Daniel 2:31–49. How does the dream say that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom will end?

The dream is about a statue. Its head is made from "gold. Its chest and the arms were made from silver. The belly and upper part of the legs were made from bronze [brass]. The lower part of the legs was made from iron. Its feet were made partly of [part from] iron and partly of [part from] clay" (Daniel 2:32, 33, ERV). The whole statue is broken to pieces. Then Daniel explains the different metals. He says that each metal is a different kingdom in future history. Each kingdom will replace the kingdom before it. The message is clear: Babylon will end. It will be replaced by another kingdom. That kingdom also will be replaced with another kingdom. God will replace all these kingdoms on earth with His kingdom. God's kingdom alone will last forever.

Look at how nothing on this earth lasts forever. What does this idea teach us about the hope we have in Jesus? (For the answer, read John 6:54 and 2 Corinthians 4:18.)



**God's kingdom alone
will last forever.**

THE STATUE: PART 2 (Daniel 2:31–49)

Read again the dream and how Daniel explains it (Daniel 2:31–49). What do Daniel’s words show us about God? How much does God know about the future?

Daniel 2 helps us understand the information in Daniel 7, 8, and 11. Daniel 2 is an end-time prophecy, or special message. It shows us what will happen in the future.

The gold head is a word picture for Babylon (626 B.C.–539 B.C.). No other metal can better show Babylon’s power and riches. The Bible names Babylon “the golden city” (Isaiah 14:4, KJV). The Bible uses another fancy word picture to show us Babylon: “Babylon was like [the same as] a golden cup in the LORD’s hand” (Jeremiah 51:7, ERV; also read Revelation 18:16). The history writer Herodotus tells us that the city of Babylon was covered in much gold.

The silver chest and arms are a word picture for the kingdom of Media-Persia (539 B.C.–331 B.C.). Silver is not worth as much as gold. In the same way, the kingdom of Media-Persia did not match the glory of Babylon. Silver is a good symbol for Persia. The Persians paid taxes in silver.

The brass belly and upper legs are a word picture for Greece (331 B.C.–168 B.C.). Ezekiel 27:13 says the Greeks traded objects made from bronze. The helmets, shields, and axes of Greek soldiers were made from brass too. Herodotus tells us what Psammetichus the 1st said when he saw Greek sea robbers or pirates. Psammetichus the 1st was a king of Egypt. He said that the Greek pirates were the ones Egypt had been warned about. A special messenger had named these robbers the “brass men coming from the sea.”

The iron legs show us Rome (168 B.C.–A.D. 476). As Daniel explains, the iron shows the power of the kingdom of Rome. This kingdom lasts longer than any kingdom before it. Iron is a perfect metal to show us how Rome acts. It crushes, or destroys, anything that stands against it.

The feet, part iron and part clay, show us the many countries of Europe after the kingdom of Rome broke apart (A.D. 476–Second Coming of Jesus). Many kings have tried to unite Europe under one power. But nothing has ever worked. Daniel shows us that Europe will stay separate countries until God sets up His everlasting kingdom.



The feet are part iron and part clay. They show us a divided Europe after the kingdom of Rome breaks apart. Europe will stay this way until God sets up His kingdom.

THE STONE (Daniel 2:34, 35, 44, 45)

Read Daniel 2:34, 35, 44, 45. What do these verses teach us about this earth? How will human history end?

The dream tells us the things that will happen in the end times (Daniel 2:28). The metal (and clay) kingdoms are powerful and rich. But they are nothing compared to the stone kingdom. The metals and the clay are word pictures for human kingdoms. But the stone in the dream is not made by human hands. The dream shows us that the stone kingdom will continue forever. The stone is a word picture for God (read Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 18:31). The stone also is a word picture for Jesus (Psalm 118:22; 1 Peter 2:4, 7). So, the stone is the best word picture for God's everlasting kingdom.

Some Bible teachers argue that Jesus starts His stone kingdom during His work on earth. Later, Jesus' followers share the Good News about Jesus everywhere. So, some Bible experts think that the worldwide stone kingdom starts when Jesus' followers first share the Good News. But the stone kingdom starts only after the end of the four metal kingdoms and the separate kingdoms in Europe. So, the stone kingdom cannot start during Jesus' time because the kingdom of Rome is in power.

In the dream the stone, or rock, hits the statue. " 'Then the rock that hit the statue became a very large mountain and filled up the whole earth' " (Daniel 2:35, ERV). What does this mountain show us? It is a word picture for Mount Zion. Mount Zion is the place where God's temple stood in Old Testament times. Mount Zion is a symbol of God's kingdom on earth during Old Testament times too. Do you see that the stone is cut from the mountain first? Then the stone becomes a mountain! This mountain is a real place in heaven. We believe it is a word picture for God's sanctuary. God's sanctuary is the place where Jesus works right now to save us from sin. Another name for God's sanctuary in heaven is Zion. Jesus will leave the sanctuary in heaven soon. Then He will come to this earth. He will start His kingdom that continues forever. First, He will take His people to live with Him in heaven. Then after 1,000 years, Jesus will bring the holy city, the New Jerusalem, down to earth from heaven (Revelation 21:1–22:5).

Daniel 2 has been true so far. So, why should we trust what it says about the final kingdom too?



Jesus will leave the sanctuary in heaven soon. Then He will come to this earth.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: As we saw, the statue in Daniel 2 is made from gold and silver. These metals show us the riches of Babylon and Media-Persia. The statue also is made from brass and iron. The Greeks used brass and the Romans used iron. They used these metals to make tools, weapons, and pots. The Greeks and Romans made very beautiful pots. They used the pots in their everyday life. But the artists who made the pots had a lot of skill. They often drew pictures on the pots that were lovely. The pictures showed their beliefs and their ideas about life. So, the statue in Daniel 2 is a wonderful example of all the art, beauty, and power of the kingdoms in Bible times. The different parts of the statue also show us the different kingdoms that will control the earth until Jesus comes. The feet of the statue show us a picture of Europe in the end times. Then we see the stone. It is not made by “human hands” (Daniel 2:45, NIV). The stone is a powerful word picture. It helps us understand something important. God will end this earth’s history, with all its human glory.

“To human eyes, history may look as if it is one big mess. . . . But Daniel shows us that God stands behind everything we see. God looks down from heaven on all that happens on this earth. He moves in the hearts and minds of leaders. He causes things to happen. He does what is best.”—William H. Shea, *Daniel: A Reader’s Guide* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 2005), page 98, adapted.



The different metals of the statue show us the different kingdoms that will control the earth at different times in history until Jesus comes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① It is good to know that God is in control of everything that happens on earth. There is so much suffering in life. But God will end it all! Until that happens, what can we do to help stop the suffering we see around us?
- ② King Nebuchadnezzar caused so much pain to God’s people. So, why do you think Daniel worked so closely with this king and was loyal to him?
- ③ The stone in Daniel 2 shows that Jesus’ kingdom will fill the whole earth. That can happen only after the Second Coming. Why, then, is the Second Coming the only way to understand what the stone does in the end times?