

# Daniel 2



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Daniel 2.*

**Memory Text:** “And 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 2:44*).

A young man, struggling with questions about God, confronted a Christian and said, “I’ll give you an hour to prove to me that God exists!” The Christian, without hesitation, took him through Daniel 2. When he was finished, the young man confessed, “Now I know there is a God in heaven!”

Those who know Daniel 2 can understand what happened. Here was this book, written in the sixth century B.C., laying out the history of the world from Daniel’s time through ours, and even beyond. It’s hard to see how any rational person, after studying Daniel 2, could come away unimpressed by the prophecy and the God who has revealed Himself in it. In fact, so powerful is Daniel 2 (as well as other parts of the book) as a witness for the Christian faith that, in early centuries of the church, opponents already argued that Daniel was written in the middle of the second century B.C., after the events it talked about, a view still held by many today. This theory, though, is not only unsubstantiated but doesn’t explain how the chapter could predict events long centuries beyond the supposed second-century B.C. date of its composition.

This week we’ll look at this fascinating prophecy, which helps form the foundation for our study this quarter on the judgment and the gospel.

*\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 15.*

## The Big Picture

**Read** Daniel 2:1-25 and then answer the following questions:

**1** Why did the king’s servants want him to tell them the dream?

---

**2** What were the only two possible fates all the wise men of Babylon faced with the king’s decree?

---

**3** How did Daniel’s actions reveal the utter helplessness of his situation from a human standpoint alone?

---

**4** Why was Daniel so confident (*vs. 24*) that he could reveal to the king this secret?

---

Daniel’s prayer of thanksgiving in many ways reveals the main message of the whole book: Despite outward appearances, the Lord is Sovereign, even to the point of removing or setting up kings. Though we, with our limited view of things (*1 Cor. 13:12*), may feel overwhelmed by events, we can have the assurance that God is ultimately in control.

Even more important, what this first section of the chapter shows is that not only is God in control of the big picture, He’s close to us as individuals. Look at how He came to Daniel in a “night vision” and revealed to him what he needed to know. Talk about intimate contact! Though Daniel was only a foreign captive in a massive world empire, the Lord of all the earth (*Josh. 3:11*), the Creator of the heavens and the earth (*Gen. 1:1*), the One who holds the stars in their paths (*Job 38:31*), manifested His power and His care to this simple Hebrew lad.

And, lest we forget, this is the same God whom we worship and serve today.

**When was the last time you were in a “hopeless” situation? In what way did the Lord manifest His power and care to you at that time? If willing, share your answer with the class.**

**Key Text:** *Daniel 2:44*

### Teachers Aims:

1. To discuss the relevance and the importance of the prophetic messages in Daniel.
2. To help the class participants review and apply the end-time prophecies in Daniel 2.
3. To emphasize the link between the prophecy of Daniel 2 and our time.

### Lesson Outline:

#### I. God Is in Charge (*Dan. 2:44*)

- A. God is all-powerful and all-knowing.
- B. God loves each of us unfailingly.
- C. God's plans will triumph amidst serious satanic counterfeits.

#### II. History in Panorama: The Statue of Daniel 2 (*Dan. 2:26-45*)

- A. Head of gold: Babylon
- B. Chest of silver: Media-Persia
- C. Thighs of brass: Greece
- D. Legs of iron: Rome
- E. Feet of iron and clay: divided nations of Europe

**Summary:** Daniel 2 expresses much about its author and outlines the plan of redemption that God has for this world. Daniel's God is the same God we serve today. We can be sure that, through the coming of Christ in His indescribable glory, He will set up an everlasting kingdom.

## COMMENTARY

The authenticity of Daniel is beyond question. First, it is part of the inspired Scriptures. Second, Jesus advised His disciples to pay heed to Daniel's prophecy as end-time events drew near (*Matt. 24:15, Mark 13:14*). If Jesus accepted Daniel as an inspired authority, should we do less? This week we begin a series of studies on Daniel as it relates to God's plan of history and His way of concluding that plan. This particular lesson concentrates on Daniel 2 as it speaks of the Lord who is trustworthy, the Lord who controls history, and the Lord of the final judgment.

### I. The Lord Who Is Trustworthy

Daniel 2 begins with Nebuchadnezzar and his forgotten dream. The king believed the dream had an important message for him, but

## Secret Revealed

**Read** Daniel 2:26-45 and write out a summary of the dream and the interpretation. To the best of your knowledge, what are the four earthly kingdoms represented here?

1

---

2

---

3

---

4

---

Here's Daniel, six centuries before the birth of Christ, laying out the history of the world. The head of gold, of course, is named as Babylon (*vs. 38*). The next kingdom, the one depicted by the breast and arms of silver (*vss. 32, 39*), was the Medo-Persian Empire. The next one, symbolized by the belly and thighs of brass (*vss. 32, 39*), was Greece; and the fourth kingdom, symbolized by the iron in the legs (*vss. 33, 40*), was the Roman Empire, which eventually led into the nations of modern Europe, symbolized by the feet, part of iron and part of clay (*vss. 33, 41-43*).

This is not some Adventist scenario: Jewish and Christian Bible students for many centuries have long interpreted Daniel 2 in this manner.

**How** does the prophecy end? What kingdom is ultimately established? And what does that answer reveal about the whole range and sweep of this chapter?

---

---

Daniel 2 unfolds a sweeping panorama of history, an unbroken succession of world powers beginning more than five centuries before Christ and ending sometime in the future, when God's eternal kingdom will be established after Christ's return. Thus, Daniel 2 takes us to the end of the world as we now know it. Those who limit it and its prophecies to events prior even to the first advent of Christ are severely misinterpreting a foundational teaching of the chapter, not to mention (as we'll see) the entire book. Daniel, without question, is a book that unfolds events right up to the second coming of Christ, and beyond. It truly is, as it says in other places, dealing with the time of "the end" (*Dan. 8:17, 19; 12:4, 9, 13*).

none of Babylon's wise men could assist him. There was, however, Daniel, who knew that in moments of calm or crisis there is only One who is trustworthy. So, he turned to God before he went to the king (*Dan. 2:20-23*). Prayer preceded the revelation and interpretation of the king's forgotten dream. Daniel's remarkable appeal teaches us to remember that because God is in control, all is safe. Four facts stand out in this prayer: (1) Wisdom and power are God's; (2) God controls "times and seasons," as well as the movements of nations and powers; (3) " 'He reveals deep and hidden things,' " (*vs. 22, NIV*) and those who walk with Him need not fear darkness; (4) He is a God who answers prayers.

Our God is trustworthy, indeed!

## II. The Lord of History

"In the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will." —Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 500. The "play and counterplay of human interest and power" is what we see in Daniel 2.

The golden head of Babylon must give way to the silver chest and arms of Media-Persia, which in turn is overcome by the bronze belly and thighs of Greece. Then comes the iron rule of the Roman Empire, only to be broken into disunited Europe. What this image teaches is that no human power provides stability or continuity. Rather, human history is a picture of sin's distortion, its ups and downs, and its inability to solve the human quest for eternal peace. For such peace, we need to look elsewhere. " 'While you were watching,' " kingdom succeeding kingdom, Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, " 'a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them' " (*Dan. 2:34, NIV*).

That rock is God's kingdom. Hence, Christianity takes history seriously and looks for its fulfillment in the establishment of that kingdom. Daniel shows the temporal nature of human powers and directs the king to look beyond. " 'In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever' " (*vs. 44, NIV*).

History is dominated with conflict between kingdoms—the kingdom of Christ and human kingdoms dominated by Satan. This conflict provides the vantage point from which we should draw an important lesson. The Christian "should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two

## The Roman Empire

When you read Daniel 2, you'll notice something:

What metal was used for Babylon? \_\_\_\_\_ What metal was used for Media-Persia? \_\_\_\_\_ What metal was used for Greece? \_\_\_\_\_ What metal was used for Rome? \_\_\_\_\_

Babylon is compared to a metal, Media-Persia is compared to a metal, and Greece is compared to a metal. In contrast, in verses 33, 34 the iron that comes up after Greece (representing Rome) stays there until the stone cut out “without hands” (*vs. 34*) destroys everything. The iron that arises after Greece remains until the end, though in the feet it becomes mixed with clay. In the interpretation of that part of the vision, the metal representing the fourth power, iron, remains until the end, as well, though it's depicted as mixed with miry clay (*vs. 40-44*). The point is unmistakable: The fourth power arises after Greece and remains until the end, even though it is manifested in a different form. In Daniel, the fourth power, the power rising after Greece, stays the same power (for it's iron all the way through, unlike the previous powers whose metal disappeared when a whole new empire arose), though at some point it changed form. Thus, it's Rome from the time of Greece until the end of the world. Amazingly enough, Rome still exists today as a worldwide power, though its form is radically different from when it first arose after Greece.

**Many** centuries ago, one of England's greatest political thinkers wrote: “If a man considers the origin of this great ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive that the papacy is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman empire, sitting crowned on the grave thereof.”—Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. How does that quote help us understand what Daniel 2 teaches about the Roman Empire?

---

---

Think for a few moments about how amazing this prophecy is, how so many centuries ago such an accurate prediction could be made. How should this give you more confidence to trust in the Bible and the promises made in it to us?

antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 190.

## II. The Lord of Judgment

Daniel 2 shows that God allows earthly powers to run their course. They will not, cannot, last forever.

# Inductive Bible Study

### Text for Discovery: *Daniel 2*

- 1 For more than one hundred forty years Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic meetings have featured, as their opening night’s lecture, a survey of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2. This often includes a discussion of end-time events, the Second Coming, and God’s control of history. Does this message still impress modern listeners? Which aspect of this amazing prophecy do you find most compelling? Most comforting?
- 2 Daniel 2 is an outstanding example of a Bible prophecy that inspires and enlightens believers. Imagine the impact that this prophecy had on believers of different periods. What lesson would believers during Daniel’s time have taken from it? How about believers during the time of Christ? Believers in the medieval church? Today’s believers? Is the message basically the same in all ages? Or are there different emphases in different ages?
- 3 The tension between religious and political power is one of the great themes of the Bible. Sometimes worldly leaders have opposed God’s people; sometimes worldly leaders are God’s people. Give three examples of each. What does the symbol of iron mixed with miry clay represent? What does it indicate in terms of the religiopolitical setting of the last days?
- 4 According to Daniel 2, the present union of religiopolitical power will continue to be the most significant influence on the world stage until Jesus comes and establishes His eternal kingdom. Is this something that can be resisted, or is it inevitable? What form would resistance take?
- 5 The kingdom established “without hands” (*Dan. 2:34*) is a symbol of God’s sovereignty. What do you see in today’s world—good or bad—that indicates God’s will is being accomplished in all the earth?

## Multiple Fulfillment?

In Daniel 2, five kingdoms are depicted, though the chapter itself specifically identifies only two: the first, Babylon (*vss. 37, 38*), and the last, God's kingdom (*vs. 44*). However, as we'll see in greater detail later, Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 cover much of the same ground, only from different perspectives. Also, in those two chapters, two more of the five kingdoms are named.

**Read** Daniel 8:20, 21. What two kingdoms, already discussed in yesterday's study, are specifically named?

---



---

If we were to chart the kingdoms depicted, *and specifically named*, in Daniel, the outline would look like this:

Babylon (*Dan. 2:37, 38*)  
 Media-Persia (*Dan. 8:20*)  
 Greece (*Dan. 8:21*)  
 Fourth kingdom  
 God's eternal kingdom (*Dan. 2:44*)

**Read** Daniel's own interpretation of the vision (*Dan. 2:37-45*). Do you see anything there indicating that these prophecies can have different meanings in different times? Defend your answer.

Though the fourth kingdom is not named, only one power can possibly fit (more on this later). However, of the five kingdoms depicted, four are named. The prophecy says absolutely nothing about their having multiple fulfillment; that is, the kingdoms symbolizing one thing in one era, another thing in another. Considering what's named—massive empires immovably and immutably rooted in world history itself—the idea that we can somehow give these specific prophecies here in Daniel different fulfillment in different eras certainly doesn't arise from anything in the texts themselves. In short, there is absolutely no justification for the idea that this prophecy is open to different fulfillment in different times in history.

**We live in a world in which things are, inherently, unstable. The ground, in an instant, can crumble beneath our feet. The past, though, is unchangeable, immovable. Look at how solid a foundation God has given us with this prophecy. How can you use what's been depicted here to strengthen your own faith?**



God, in His own time and purpose, will wrap up history and bring to this planet His eternal judgment. From creation to re-creation, biblical history testifies that God is in control, and in His own time, He will crush “all those kingdoms and bring them to an end” (vs. 44, *NIV*).

As the book of Revelation pictures, the goal of human history is to reestablish God’s kingdom on earth. Then, God’s will and sovereignty, justice and love, will be universally acknowledged, and the cosmic conflict will be brought to a decisive end with the destruction of sin and Satan (*Rev. 20:7-10*).

## Witnessing

Today, books generally arrive in stores fully formed, but when Charles Dickens was writing in the mid-1800s, those tales appeared in magazine installments.

*The Old Curiosity Shop* was a tale by Charles Dickens published in serial form. Ships from London carried magazines with the chapters to New York. As the story’s popularity grew, it is reported that dockworkers greeted arriving ships with cries of “Is Nell well?” or “What news of Nell?”

The second chapter of *Daniel* tells a story that’s actually more gripping than most novels, even one by Dickens. Written 600 years before Jesus’ day, it dared to suggest what would yet happen. Even more, its predictions have largely come to pass, with an accuracy that would make a carnival psychic green with envy.

Yet, like the Dickens novels, the action of *Daniel 2* unfolds in installments, in sequence. The timeline of this story lasts far longer than we might normally have patience for in any other book. Some could lose faith that we’ll ever see the conclusion.

But even that is predicted: In the end times, some will believe that “my Lord delayeth his coming” (*Matt. 24:48*) and miss out on His return.

For those sensitive to the leading of God the Holy Spirit, however, we can know that our Father keeps His promises. Jesus will return, the earth will become new, and heaven a reality. Someone who wants to know how Dickens’s stories turned out might well be truly thrilled to learn how the history of this world will finally, happily, wrap up.

## Antiquity to Eternity

One point should, by now, be very clear regarding our study of Daniel 2, and that is—it is, in many ways, a historical study. Though some of the prophecy leads into our time and beyond, its foundation is based *in history*.

**Read** again Daniel 2:37-45. Summarize, on just two lines, the basic message of this text.

---



---

This prophecy begins in antiquity and follows a continuous sweep of world history that extends unto “the time of the end” (*Dan. 12:9*); that is, beyond us and into the future world of God’s eternal kingdom.

More than anything else, these verses reveal, too, the method for how we should interpret the prophecies in Daniel. Daniel 2:37-44, by interpreting the dream, contains the key to understanding the prophecies, because *the texts themselves interpret the prophecies*. This proves that the historicist approach to interpretation (of which Adventists remain almost alone in still adhering to) is what the text demands. The historicist approach teaches what Daniel 2 teaches, that these prophecies follow the sweep of human history from antiquity to eternity and that they are not focused solely on events in the far past or solely on events in the future but cover the scope of world history from the past into the future. Thus, in the first prophetic section of Daniel, we are given the key to understanding its prophecies.

**Read** Daniel 2:34, 35 and its interpretation in verses 44, 45. What do they tell us about the nature of this last kingdom in contrast to the fate of all the kingdoms before it? What do we find in these texts that proves this kingdom has not yet been established?

---



---

As we can see, Daniel was correct about all the kingdoms he predicted would rise and fall. His predictions about Europe have come true with painful accuracy. How much reason, then, do you have to trust him on the promise of the establishment of God’s final kingdom?

## Life-Application Approach

**Icebreaker:** “Newscaster Paul Harvey told a remarkable story of God’s providential care over thousands of allied prisoners during World War II, many of whom were Christians. One of America’s mighty bombers took off from the island of Guam headed for Kokura, Japan, with a deadly cargo. Because clouds covered the target area, the sleek B-29 circled for nearly an hour until its fuel supply reached the danger point. The captain and his crew, frustrated because they were right over the primary target yet not able to fulfill their mission, finally decided they had better go for the secondary target. Changing course, they found that the sky was clear. The command was given, ‘Bombs away!’ and the B-29 headed for its home base. Some time later an officer received some startling information from military intelligence. Just one week before that bombing mission, the Japanese had transferred one of their largest concentrations of captured Americans to the city of Kokura. Upon reading this, the officer exclaimed, ‘Thank God for that protecting cloud! If the city hadn’t been hidden from the bomber, it would have been destroyed and thousands of American boys would have died.’ God’s ways are behind the scenes; but He moves all the scenes which He is behind. We have to learn this, and let Him work.”—John Nelson Darby, “God, sovereignty of,” eSermons, [http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/g/god\\_sovereignty.htm](http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/g/god_sovereignty.htm) (accessed February 22, 2005).

### Thought Question:

Sunday’s lesson says “Daniel’s prayer of thanksgiving in many ways reveals the main message of the whole book: Despite outward appearances, the Lord is Sovereign, even to the point of removing or setting up kings. Though we, with our limited view of things (*1 Cor. 13:12*), may feel overwhelmed by events, we can have the assurance that God is ultimately in control.” Using examples both from the church and the secular world, explain how this promise can be applied in our own lives.

### Application Question:

Gideon wasn’t the most trusting person. When God called him to His service, Gideon balked. He asked God to prove His identity. He questioned God. That was a bold move on his part. How do you think God perceives your questions and doubts? Are you comfortable having a healthy discussion with your God? Why, or why not?

**Further Study:** “Some will take the truth applicable to their time, and place it in the future. Events in the train of prophecy that had their fulfillment away in the past are made future, and thus by these theories the faith of some is undermined.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 102.

As we’ve seen this week, Daniel 2 presents a powerful case for our trust in the inspiration of the Word. How someone six centuries before Christ could have outlined world history as accurately as he did is something that defies a purely natural explanation. That point is so obvious, in fact, that some people have claimed that the prophecy is *vaticinium ex eventu* (prophecy after the event), that the book of Daniel was written in the second century before Christ and that it was about only past events, events prior to it being written.

This view falls apart on a number of counts.

First of all, Christ’s words in Matthew 24:15 prove that Jesus believed that some of Daniel’s prophecies were yet future.

Second, even if one were to reject Daniel’s own words about when he lived (*Dan. 1:1, 2:1, 7:1, 9:1*) and date the book in the second century before Christ, how does this explain the amazing accuracy with which he predicted not only the world dominion of the Roman Empire (which hadn’t happened yet) but its breakup into what became the nations of modern Europe, which—in its present state—is exactly as Daniel had written? Not bad for a man writing centuries before some of these events unfolded. In short, there is no reason whatsoever that we should accept the second century B.C. date for Daniel, especially when the idea was originated by people who wanted to discredit Christianity to begin with. As Christians, we must take the Word for what it says, as opposed to what humans say instead.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ As a class, talk about your answers to Sunday’s final question.
- ❷ In what ways can the prophecy of Daniel 2 be a powerful witnessing tool, especially for those who are skeptical even about the existence of God?