

A nighttime photograph of a city street with long-exposure light trails from cars. The street is illuminated by streetlights, and modern buildings with lit windows are visible in the background. The overall scene is dominated by blue and white light trails, with red and yellow light trails from cars in the distance.

# DISCOVER

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

# 7

About Your  
Future



## **DOCTORS PATRICIA AND DAVID MRAZEK**

saw a great deal of heartbreak in their work. As pediatric specialists at the National Jewish Center for Immunology and Respiratory Medicine, they dealt with many suffering children. However, they were struck by the fact that some kids bounced back from disaster while others were crushed by it.

We can observe this in a variety of circumstances. Why? Why, for example, does one disadvantaged child later turn to drugs, while another goes to college? Why do some abused children grow up to become abusers themselves, while others become good parents?

The Mrazeks conducted an extensive survey to find answers to these questions. In their study, one overriding trait kept popping up among children who survived trauma and went on to build healthy lives. The secret? A basic life view of optimism and hope.

Hope made the difference. Hope, more than anything else, helps us beat the odds when they're stacked against us. But how do we get hope?

Human beings desperately need hope, but hope is hard to find in our world—*until* we look at it from the perspective of Bible prophecy. This *Discover* Guide examines a remarkable prophecy that has inspired countless individuals with a vibrant hope. The prophecy in Daniel 2 demonstrates—perhaps more clearly than any other—that God really is in control of history and really does hold the future in His hands.

## 1 | An Amazing Bible Prophecy

About 500 years before the birth of Christ, God gave the world a startling glimpse into the future through the prophet Daniel. He presented an outline of world history, from Daniel's time to our own day.

This prophecy appears in the second chapter of Daniel. It actually originated in a dream God gave Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, more than 2,500 years ago. The dream deeply troubled this monarch—but he couldn't remember its main elements when he woke up. After all of Babylon's wise men failed to help the king recall his dream or interpret it, a young Hebrew exile named Daniel arrived on the scene, claiming that the God of heaven could reveal all mysteries.

Standing before the king, Daniel boldly declared:

**"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” (Daniel 2:31-35).

At first glance, this statue may seem to have little to do with finding hope in our day. Babylonian imagery is a long way removed from the natural disasters and terrorists haunting our world. However, as you read this prophecy, you will receive a “fly-over” view of thousands of years of history and see how this ancient dream affects your life today.

## 2 | The Prophecy Interpreted

After telling a very impressed Nebuchadnezzar exactly what he’d seen in his dream, the prophet Daniel explained:

“This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king” (verse 36).

### THE HEAD OF GOLD

What world power did Daniel tell the king the head of gold symbolised?

“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” (verses 37, 38).

Daniel was, in essence, telling the ruler of what was then the world’s greatest empire: “Nebuchadnezzar, your dream is a message from God. The statue’s golden head represents your kingdom.”

The head of gold depicted ancient Babylon quite accurately; historians refer to the empire as “the golden kingdom of a golden age.” Wealthier and mightier than any empire that preceded it, Babylon proudly dominated the world until 539 BC.

### THE CHEST AND ARMS OF SILVER

From a human perspective—and especially before Nebuchadnezzar’s proud gaze—Babylon looked like an empire that would last forever. But what does the prophecy say would happen next?

“After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours” (verse 39).

Just as God predicted, Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom crumbled into ruins when Cyrus, the Persian general, overthrew the Babylonian Empire in 539 BC. So the next part of the statue—the silver chest and arms—represented Medo-Persia, the mighty empire that followed Babylon.

### THE BELLY AND THIGHS OF BRONZE

What does this part of the great metal image represent?

“Then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth” (verse 39).



The belly and thighs of bronze symbolise the kingdom of Greece, which overthrew the Persians at the Battle of Arbela in 331 BC. Alexander the Great conquered the Medes and the Persians, turning Greece into the world's third great empire. Greece ruled from 331 to 168 BC.

## THE LEGS OF IRON

How does the prophecy describe the world power that would follow Greece?

**“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” (verse 40).**

After the death of Alexander, his empire weakened and split into rival factions until finally, in 168 BC, at the battle of Pydna, the “Iron Empire” of Rome crushed Greece. God used the iron legs of the great metal man to symbolise this fourth world empire.

Caesar Augustus ruled the Roman Empire when Jesus was born about 2,000 years ago (Luke 2:1). Christ and His apostles lived during the period represented by the legs of iron. Edward Gibbon, the 18th century historian, no doubt had Daniel's prophecy in mind when he wrote:

“The arms of the [Roman] republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid steps to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the Ocean; and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the iron monarchy of Rome.”  
—The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (John D. Morris and Company), vol. 4, p. 89.

Think for a moment about this prediction from a human point of view. How could Daniel, a Hebrew living in the time of Babylon, have any idea of the rise and fall of world empires hundreds of years in the future? We have a hard time figuring out what the weather is going to be like next week! And yet Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome followed each other exactly as predicted by the prophecy.



Is God in control of the future? Can we have hope in His grand plan? Daniel 2 answers with a resounding Yes! But there's even more.

## THE FEET AND TOES OF IRON MIXED WITH CLAY

Would a fifth world power follow Rome?

**“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” (verses 41, 42).**

The prophet predicted not a fifth world empire, but a *division* of the iron monarchy of Rome. Rome would fracture into 10 kingdoms, as symbolised by the feet and toes of the image.

Did this actually happen? It certainly did. During the 4th and 5th centuries of the Christian era, invaders from the north delivered blow after blow against the decaying Roman Empire.



## 10 TOES—

10 MAJOR TRIBES  
IN THE WESTERN  
ROMAN EMPIRE\*

**Anglo-Saxons**  
ENGLAND

**Franks**  
FRANCE

**Alamanni**  
GERMANY

**Lombards**  
ITALY

**Ostrogoths**  
*Later destroyed*

**Visigoths**  
SPAIN

**Burgundians**  
SWITZERLAND

**Vandals**  
NORTH AFRICA,  
*later destroyed*

**Suevi**  
PORTUGAL

**Heruli**  
*Disappeared after  
a few centuries*

Finally, 10 of these warring tribes took over most of the territory of Western Rome, and 10 independent nations established themselves within the boundaries of Western Europe. Thus the statue's toes symbolise the modern nations of Europe today. The prophecy was literally fulfilled, and history again harmonises with what God foretold. Seven of the 10 nations of divided Western Rome remain on the map of Europe today, even though for some, their original territory has changed.\*

## 3 | Our Day in Bible Prophecy

Does Daniel's prophecy predict that efforts would be made to unite the post-Roman Empire nations of Europe under one ruler?



**“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” (verse 43).**

Over and over, powerful men have tried to unite Europe, but they have fallen short of the goal every time. “They will not adhere to one another” is the verdict of prophecy. It declares that France, England, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Switzerland will never reshape themselves into one great power and remain united.

Living as we do so many centuries later, it’s hard to grasp how dramatically Daniel’s prophecy identified a major break in history. Up until the collapse of Rome, the world had been dominated by empires, starting all the way back with Egypt and Assyria. However, after Rome, the world carved itself up into nation-states, and that pattern has persisted. Only the mind of God could have foreseen the grand sweep of history so accurately.

Truly, as Jesus said, “The Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). He also declared:

**“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35).**

Fourteen hundred years of history show that no human power, or combination of powers, has been able to break the force of these words of Bible prophecy: “They will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another.”

It’s not for a lack of trying, however. Several men of great military genius have done their best to unite Europe. Napoleon Bonaparte came nearer than any other man to reaching this goal. At the beginning of his military career he boasted, “In five years I shall be master of the world.” He stated his aims very clearly: “The conquest of Russia, Europe, the world.”



Napoleon's troops appeared invincible for some time and swallowed up a great deal of real estate, but while marching to Moscow, the French forces became bogged down in an early winter and Russian troops decimated Napoleon's men. Why did he fall short of his goal? Because God had said: "They will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another." Napoleon had by far the best army in Europe, but it was no match for the Word of God. As he fled from the battlefield of Waterloo, he is said to have cried out, "God Almighty is too much for me!"

Kaiser Wilhelm II (WWI) and Adolf Hitler (WWII) created the most powerful armed forces of their day, but each failed to unite Europe. Why? Because God's Word was at stake: "They will not adhere to one other."

Since the last World War, dictators who have succeeded in arming an entire people with fanatical zeal haven't been able to revise Daniel's prophecy. World history since the Roman Empire confirms this fact: God holds the future in His hands, and God is ultimately in control. That's certainly enough to give us hope, peace of mind, and confidence in His plan for our lives.

## 4 | A Look Into the Future

Only one part of Daniel’s prophecy remains unfulfilled. The dream ends with a stone striking the statue on its feet and smashing the statue into pieces. That stone then fills the whole earth (Daniel 2:34, 35). What does this represent?

**“In the days of these kings [the modern nations of Western Europe] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and . . . it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. . . . The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure” (Daniel 2:44, 45).**

“In the days of these kings” refers to the present day—to the modern nations of Western Europe. Today, our world stands on the threshold of the greatest event of all time!

Soon Jesus will descend from heaven to “set up a kingdom”—His everlasting kingdom of peace and righteousness. The stone that smashes the statue and fills the whole earth “shall stand forever.” Christ, the Rock of Ages and the King of Kings, will rule the world forever!

This grand prophecy predicts with unflinching accuracy the course of world history and fills us with a sure hope in the Second Coming of Jesus. Everything in this prophecy has been fulfilled except the final act. According to God’s timetable, we are now approaching the grand climax—the final events. Jesus Christ is about to end the long, bloody struggle of human history and establish His eternal kingdom of love and grace.






## 5 | God Is Guiding the Nations

When God revealed this prophecy to Daniel, the Hebrew prophet immediately saw the guiding hand of God in the rise and fall of nations (Daniel 2:20-22). God knows the past, and this Bible prophecy clearly shows that He knows the future as well.

Sometimes we may imagine that God is so occupied with His vast universe that our little planet doesn't receive much attention—much less one individual life on it. But God has gone to great lengths to assure us that He is very much concerned with human history and each individual's history. He's given us a beacon light, just like those used by a ship coming into port:

**“We have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star [Jesus] rises in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19).**

God uses Bible prophecy in the darkness of our world just like we use headlights on a car when we're driving at night. The Bible shows us where we're going. It shows us what lies ahead. Bible prophecy shows us that history is heading toward a face-to-face encounter with Christ. You can prepare right now for history's great climax. The same hand of God that guided Daniel



God has gone to great lengths  
to assure us that He is very much  
concerned with human history—  
**and each individual on our little planet**

as he condensed millennia of future history into a few paragraphs  
can guide you as you try to make sense out of your life today.

## 6 | The King's Dream and You

Yes, the world can be a pretty turbulent place. Terrorists can strike at random. Peace treaties can disintegrate in a moment and affect innocent lives. Governments still plot for domination. Nevertheless, listen to what God wants to do for you!

**“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand” (Psalm 37:23, 24).**

If God directs the movements of nations with such precision, surely He can guide each individual's life.

**“Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:29-31).**

God's gift of faith can become the cure to all your worries. The hope He inspires can serve as an anchor for overcoming your fears.

**“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. . . . The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Psalm 46:1, 2, 7).**

Erasmus, a 16th century scholar, related an incident during a sea voyage that stayed with him the rest of his life. His sailing vessel ran aground in a storm. As violent waves smashed against the ship and it began to splinter, even the sailors panicked. The passengers were near hysteria. Most shouted for help to their patron saint, sang hymns, or pleaded loudly in prayer.

Erasmus noted one passenger, however, whose demeanor was decidedly different. “Of all of us,” Erasmus wrote, “the one who remained most composed was a young woman who was holding a baby whom she was nursing. She was the only one who did not shout, weep, or bargain with heaven. She did nothing but pray quietly to herself while clasping the baby tightly on her lap.”

This prayer, Erasmus realised, was just a continuation of her regular prayer life. She did not ask for any exceptional favours. She just entrusted herself to God.

As the ship began to sink, this young mother was placed on a plank, given a spar to use as an oar, and sent out into the waves. She had to hold her baby with one hand and attempt to row with the other. Few thought she would survive the pounding surf.

However, her faith and composure stabilised her in the midst of this tumult. The woman and her child were the first to reach shore.

Hope in a trustworthy God can make all the difference—even when the world seems to be disintegrating around us. We're not

*Continued on page 16*

# WordSearch

If you want to go deeper into this study topic, complete this section.

1. God controls world events, but is He really concerned about you and your life? How important are you to God? (Matthew 10:29-31)

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2. When life's problems seem more than we can bear, what does God promise to do for us, just as He promised Old Testament Israel? (Isaiah 41:8-10)

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3. God spoke to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream. What is one way God guides us today as we make decisions about how to live? (2 Timothy 3:16, 17)

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4. How should we be living, day by day, as we wait for the soon coming of Jesus? (Romans 13:11-14)

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5. As conditions in the world become more and more frightening and insecure, how will most people react? How will the followers of Jesus react? Why? (Luke 21:25-28)

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out there on our own. A greater hand is guiding us and holding us up.

If you will come to Christ in full surrender, He will give you a faith that will see you through every storm. Discover the supernatural peace that Jesus promises:

**“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).**

**“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).**

## My Decision

- I want to be a part of God's eternal kingdom and live with Him forever.
- I want to say thank you to God for revealing to me His guiding hand in world history and in my life.

## My Prayer

*Dear Father in heaven, I thank You today for Your loving interest in me personally. I thank You for telling me in advance about the future of the world, and for guiding our world and my life. Thank You for the certainty of Bible prophecy. Help me to accept it as Your true Word and believe it always. And above all, help me to open my heart right now to Jesus, the Prince of Peace. I ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.*



## The Incredible Journey

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