

Dream of the Ages - Lesson 1 of 21 - Landmarks of Prophecy

Well friends, I want to welcome you to the Landmarks of Prophecy. This is, we believe, going to be an epic Bible study spectacular, because we're going to take just the high points of Bible - the Landmarks of Bible Prophecy study and we're going to break them down together. I've been doing this now for thirty years and I never tire of how miraculous the Word of God is - and sharing it with people - because I see that it changes people's lives.

Alright, I'm going to give you a quiz. Do you recognize any of those places? The one on the left there, what's that? Eiffel Tower. Where is the Eiffel Tower? Paris. Paris, France. And the one on the right? Started in France, now in New York City, right? Those are landmarks that are recognized around the world. And then how about the next two. Do you recognize the white building? Taj Mahal. We've got the Taj Mahal and where's that? India. In India. And then next to it you've got? Pyramids. The great pyramids in? Egypt. In Egypt.

These are some landmarks that you have around the world and they help us identify places, locations, times in history when they were created. There are a number of landmarks in the Bible that also give us high points so that we can know where we are in the biblical continuum of history. And that's what our lesson is based upon tonight. There was a dream that was given to an ancient king by the name of Nebuchadnezzar. And the lesson is titled 'The Dream of the Ages.'

Now there's several times in history when God gives leaders and monarchs dreams to help them understand what's happening so that they can share and disseminate that information with their people so that people will not think life is just a series of meaningless accidents. How hopeless life would be if there was no purpose to life. If all that life is, is we're just all biological accidents and there is no God, then life really has no meaning. God gives life meaning and the knowledge that he is in control - that things aren't just spinning wildly out of control - helps us to know that there's a purpose to life. Well, there are other times in history that God has given dreams to monarchs.

Perhaps you remember the story where the pharaoh of Egypt had a dream to help them prepare for what was coming to that country. And Joseph helped prepare because he interpreted the pharaoh's dream. This king of Egypt was given a dream. Another little amazing fact. Sir Isaac Newton, one of the great scientists of history - I mean, he's really the - the father of calculus and his book on mathematics became, sort of, the textbook for many years of mechanical philosophy.

He built the first reflecting telescope. You know, all we think about him is sitting under a tree and an apple falling on his head, but that really simplifies the genius of Newton. He was also an astronomer, mathematician, physicist - a brilliant man - but what many people don't know is he was also an avid student of Bible prophecy and he firmly believed in the dependability of Bible prophecies. He was fascinated with numbers and - just a, like I said, a genius of a mathematician, and he realized that the numbers in the Bible could not line up so perfectly unless there was a greater mind behind them. Now this is the father of calculus who recognized that when he read the Bible.

But he's not alone. Other scientists, like Michael Faraday, and many others - and even Christopher Columbus - were fascinated with the books of prophecy. A favorite book for Isaac Newton was the book of Daniel, because there are many time prophecies in the book of Daniel. We'll get to some of the time prophecies another night. But tonight we're going to talk about a prophecy that's in Daniel chapter 2.

And most of this presentation is going to deal with this dream of the ages that this ancient king had. Nebuchadnezzar - his name is pronounced a few different ways. It's spelled two different ways in the Bible - was the king of Babylon. This empire was really at the zenith of power for the ancient empires. And he had a very broad extensive empire.

One of the first kingdoms you find in the Bible was built by Nimrod when he left the tower of Babel and he formed the kingdom of Babel. And later, the tower, of course, was destroyed, but Nebuchadnezzar, he rebuilt everything. And we'll talk a little bit about the scope and the size and the glory of that kingdom, but if you read in Daniel chapter 2, it tells us that the king went to sleep one night and he was troubled about the future. He had conquered all these other kingdoms around him, he had conquered Egypt and he conquered Jerusalem - carried off captive thousands of prisoners from Jerusalem to Babylon - and the Ammonites and the Moabites, and the Edomites, and the kingdom of Tyre, and many others. And he had become a King of Kings.

But he wondered, 'How long will it last?' Even though he ruled 45 years, halfway through his rule he just - he said, 'You know, human life is temporary. And what's going to happen to this empire when I'm gone. Solomon pondered those same things. You build it all up and it's vanity of vanities. What happens when you're gone? So he went to bed troubled and worried about the future and God gave him a marvelous dream - a very vivid dream.

Now we all have, kind of, strange dreams that are just meaningless. And I used to snow ski. I went to a school where we skied several times a week. And I'd dream and in my sleep I'd be skiing. Well, that's not a supernatural dream.

And as Jëan mentioned, I like to play racquetball. And it's a fast game and you're just - you're always swinging like this. And once or twice in the night I've gone like this - ooh - and Karen says, 'what's the matter?' I said, 'oh, I'm sorry, I was going for a shot.' And just - so even Ecclesiastes said 'a dream comes through the multitude of business' and not every dream means anything. But he had a dream that he was absolutely sure - it was three-dimensional, it was vivid, it was divine, and he knew it had a meaning to it, but he didn't know what the meaning was. And you can read about this - if you go with me in your Bibles and we'll begin with verse 31.

This is what he dreamed and this is Daniel relating the dream. "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." So here's this great, splendid, awesome image. Now, keep in mind, an image in the Bible - they were told not to worship images. They had plenty of idols and images in Babylon. So in the Jewish mind, just recognize idolatry was forbidden. - "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;" - these heavy metals suddenly became like chaff - they became very light - "and the wind carried them away so that no trace of them" - not just one little particle - "no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." Now what does this dream mean? Now this is an overview of the dream. We're going to delve now into the lesson.

We're going to back up a little bit and start with the beginning of chapter 2 and point by point we're going to go through and we're going to study this chapter together because this dream of the ages gives us a panorama of history from the time Nebuchadnezzar had the dream until the end of the world. And you see if you can figure out where we are in the scheme of time as we look at this together. So I'm - with that as an introduction, I'm going to get into the lesson. Oh, by the way, here he is. This is the - a friend of mine who led an evangelistic organization gave me this one time and I thought, well, this is a great figure.

I might refer to Melvin here. You've gotta give him a name. I hope nobody here is named Melvin tonight. We're going to get into our study and start with question #1 in the lesson. I find one of the best ways to teach is the question answer format.

Question #1: why did God give the Babylonian king this dream? We don't have to wonder, the answer is right in the Bible. And all of these references are found in Daniel chapter 2. That one's verse 28, "But there is a God in Heaven that revealeth" - what? - "Secrets, and maketh known to the King Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." So it's talking about the future. Secrets of the future are being revealed in this dream says the prophet Daniel. Okay, well, when the king first had this dream, he didn't know what it meant.

He instinctively called for all of his wise men and counselors and they came along. And he said, 'I've had a dream and I don't know what the dream means. They were on the payroll full time - supposed to be able to, you know, they were astrologers and soothsayers and card readers and everything else. And he said, 'What does this dream mean?' And they said, okay king, tell us the dream, we'll tell you what the dream means.' Well, you know, you ever have a dream and when you first get up it's real vivid and twenty minutes later you're having trouble - it gets fuzzy pretty quick? Because your dreams are really happening in a different part of your brain. And he said, 'You know, the details are already starting to get fuzzy.' - He said, 'You guys are supposed to be wise men that understand mysteries, how do I know you're just not manufacturing - you're going to make up some interpretation? Prove to me that you've got supernatural ability to interpret my dream. You tell me what the dream is and then I'll know you can tell me the interpretation.' Well, that kind of flushed them out and they said, 'Oh, no, that's not how it works. You tell us the dream, we'll make up - I mean tell you an interpretation.' He said, 'No.' And he started getting mad because they were buying time and stalling and he so much wanted to know the answer to what this meant that he became a little irritated.

And this is question #2: when the king's counselors failed to reveal and interpret the dream, what was Nebuchadnezzar's command?" "The king commanded" - and he said - and here you find the answer - in Daniel 2, verse 12, "The king ...commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon." Now at this point I've got to give you a little background. I told you that Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Jerusalem a few years earlier.

And among the people that he took into the kingdom, along with thousands of the Jews, he took some of the children of the royal line - princes. He trained them in the language of the Babylonians so that they could be sitting among the counselors and thus they could represent the thousands of Jews and others in the kingdom. He knew that the Jews were a very bright people. He'd seen the temple of Solomon. He actually destroyed it.

He knew that they were very sophisticated and he said, 'I want to train some of these young men, that are already bright and educated, in our language. And they were part of the wise men. But they weren't invited - they weren't senior wise men - they weren't invited when the King said 'Tell me what my dream means.' So when the decree went out that all the wise men are going to be executed on a certain day, finally, Daniel and his three friends - you've probably heard their names before: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego - they hear about this thing and they were a little concerned. They thought, 'Why is this happening?'

Question #3: when Daniel learned about the decree, what did he ask of the king and what did he tell his friends? And here's your answer. It says, "Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation." Then it goes on to say, "Then Daniel went to his house," - the king granted them time. Because the king, he wanted to know what the dream - he thought, what if I kill all the wise men, I'm still not going to know what the dream means. Here are some young men that he had tested before. He found they were unusually bright, they seemed to have integrity, they were Godly young men, they stood up for their religion when others compromised. He said - they said 'Give me a little time and we can tell the king.'

Well, you know, they didn't want to lose that opportunity. And so he thought, 'Well, I'll find out.' And so, "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his

companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of Heaven concerning this?" Secret. There you've got that word again, secret. So they went home and they had a prayer meeting. What would you do if you knew you had to dream something that I dreamed and tell me what it was or you're going to die? Well, they had a real serious prayer meeting.

Question #4: when the Lord revealed the dream to Daniel, to whom did Daniel give credit? Yeah, he could have said, 'Well, you know, I've got this supernatural ability and I need a raise - I need a promotion.' He didn't say that. He said, "I thank Thee, and praise Thee, o thou God of my fathers." - And then he told Nebuchadnezzar - "...there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets." There's that word again. This is a secret that is being revealed about the future. Alright, now let's get into the dream and, can you imagine, when Daniel comes before the king, he begins to tell the king what the king saw in his dream. You can imagine Nebuchadnezzar sat down on the edge of his throne and he listened with his mouth gaping and he was just so fascinated by that.

So what are the two objects that it says that they saw in the dream? He says, "Thou, o king, sawest, and behold, a great image." Now, earlier in Daniel it talks about an image like a lion and one like a leopard and one like a bear and it tells us when these images were like animals. This image, it doesn't connect it with any kind of animal so most scholars agree it was probably an image resembling a man - because it mentions toes, it mentions a chest, it mentions arms. So that's why virtually all the artists you're going to see, they come up with something like this - they take some of the - the looks that they find on the ancient Babylonian carvings and they make an image based on that. So there's actually some artistic and historical accuracy that goes into the depictions that you're seeing there. He describes to the king, "Thou, o king, sawest, and behold, a great image."

And then he said - the second thing was, beside the image, he said, "Thou sawest ...that a stone" - so you've got two principle things that are at odds in this dream. One is a stone, one is a statue. One represents God's kingdom - the idol - the image - represents the kingdoms of man. Now, you know, when the Jews made their altar, God told them, 'Do not even lift up a chisel on it or you've polluted it. Take rough stones, build My altar out of twelve rough stones.

He was concerned about the people getting into idolatry. Ten Commandments - which were the center of God's kingdom - in other words, when you've got the holy mountain, you've got the holy city, you've got the holy temple, you've got the holy place, you've got the holy of holies, you've got the holy ark in the holy of holies, and the only thing in the ark were stone tablets written by the finger of God. So in the Jewish mind, this stone that destroys the image, they knew it represented God's kingdom. So you see these two big opposing elements here in the dream.

So, let's start to decipher this now - Daniel tells him the dream, now Daniel begins to tell him 'What does the dream mean?' After Daniel tells the King about the dream and he says, 'Here's the dream.'

Can you imagine the king going, 'Yes! That's what I saw! Yes! Yes! Yes! That was the dream! How did you know that?' Now the king is really excited. So when Daniel begins to tell the king what the dream means, does the king doubt Daniel's accuracy? No, if I have a dream - vivid dream - and you can tell me exactly what I dreamed the next day and you say, 'Now let me tell you the interpretation.' I'm all ears. So you can imagine this monarch was very connected - tuned in.

Question #6: what does the head of gold in the dream represent? Daniel said to the king, "Thou art this head of gold." The head - the kingdom is going to begin - this vision about the history of the world's empires is going to begin with this prominent world empire of Babylon and it's going to make it's way all the way down to the end of time, which I think you're going to find out is where we are, and it starts with the head of gold. Now that probably made king Nebuchadnezzar feel pretty good, when Daniel said, 'You are the head of gold.'

And a lot of folks, if they wanted to get on well with the king, would have stopped right there and said,

'Don't tell him anything else. Just say, 'You're the head of gold, how do you feel? You're the top.'" Now why did he say that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold? Because this dream is outlining the history of the main world empires that would impact God's people that had Scripture from the time of Daniel to the end. During the time of Daniel, God's people had been conquered and were scattered. And as you go through time, you're going to find that the kingdoms that are being mentioned as we study tonight, are not representing all the kingdoms of the world.

You're not going to find any reference - earlier this year I was in China. I've been there a few times. But we were able to do a full public evangelistic meeting in a city with 6 million people. It was wonderful, because that was just history making - and it was televised. It was recorded for television.

They had a big empire even back in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. And you know from your history there were great empires among the Mayans. We've been with the ruins among the Mayans and down in South America among the Incas and some in far - in Southeast Asia - and there were different empires. The kingdoms that are mentioned in this dream are the ones that had direct impact, in particular, on the Jewish people for the first part of the dream and on the church for the last part of the dream. So you'll see, as we go on, what we're talking about.

So it's outlining the history of the world. Babylon was called the head of gold because it really was a golden empire. I mean, it's just fascinating. I've got a few facts here, just that come from the famous ancient historian Herodotus, where he talks about Babylon. Matter of fact, some archaeologists say it's so phenomenal they can't even believe that it's all true.

But the Greek historian from 450 B.C. - Herodotus - he said the outer walls of Babylon were 56 miles around. Can you imagine that? There's room there in that plain. The walls were 300 feet high, 80 feet thick at the bottom, 25 feet thick at the top, and two four-horse chariots could pass each other on top of the wall. It was like an interstate.

There were - this was, of course, during the 45 years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. It was at the top of its splendor. It was a square city with approximately 15-14 miles on each side, brick walls surfaced with glazed blue and gold bricks. Behind the main wall was another wall 75 feet. The Euphrates river - don't miss this because this comes into Revelation later.

The Euphrates River ran right under the walls, irrigated the entire city - they had more water in the Euphrates back then because now it's all getting sucked up by Turkey and other countries that are north. The Euphrates used to run a lot more massively than it does now. And a moat completely went around the city between the outer wall and the inner wall. The hanging gardens of Babylon - one of the seven wonders of the ancient world - that's the picture that you see on the screen. Nebuchadnezzar married the daughter of the king of the Medes and she was disappointed because the Median empire in the north had mountains but Babylon is in a big, vast plain.

And she felt homesick all the time so he said, 'Don't worry dear, I will build you a mountain and I will forest it.' And so he made this great terraced gardens. They - Strabo and other ancient historians said they had machines they'd invented for taking the water and lifting it up and it would cascade down and irrigate these gardens and - like waterfalls - and they were man-powered somehow, but they had somehow built some machines for pumping water. Even back then. So they had tons of gold, everywhere - great - they had a table of gold that weighed tons - and gold statues. And so, it really was a golden kingdom.

I don't even have time to - you ought to read about some of the things that it tells us about the size of ancient Babylon and some of the wonders that are there. But this was a golden kingdom. Matter of fact, if you read in Daniel chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar actually, he's so proud of the empire, he walks around on the balcony one day and says, 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built for my majesty and my glory?' It was a glorious kingdom. He was the head of gold. Something interesting about what we're

hearing right now - we're studying ancient Babylon.

But you know where that is? Our son was in the Marines a few years ago, during one of the gulf wars and he was based in Iraq. And right now Iraq is in the news with Isis. When you read in the Bible about Jonah, and Esther, and Daniel, and Ezra, and Ezekiel, and Nehemiah, all of them are going in and out of the same territory that is in the headlines today. The Isis warriors - Isil - it depends on what element you're talking about - they're fighting now to build - to restore a caliphate empire because they're inspired by what Nebuchadnezzar once had in that region of ancient Persia. They would like to have their own empire because, you know, the Islamic countries are all divided and broken.

And you look at a map - it's the same territory. Some of you may or may not know that Saddam Hussein - that was his great ambition, that he could restore the ancient glory from the days of Nebuchadnezzar when they were a world empire. Matter of fact, there's picture where Saddam had a poster of himself and he said that he was the reincarnation of Nebuchadnezzar. Now the Nebuchadnezzar we're talking about tonight is technically - they called him Nebuchadnezzar the second. But no one knows about the first so they don't ever use that.

It's just he's the big one. He's Nebuchadnezzar. Here's an example of a coin - Saddam Hussein had a coin imprinted with him with the vision of Nebuchadnezzar in the background. He wanted to - why do you think he invaded Kuwait? He was trying to expand - control the oil - so that he could expand. He wanted to be the leader of the Islamic worlds and restore that ancient glory again.

Matter of fact, there was a Jewish prophecy that says that Babylon would never be rebuilt. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to overrule or confound that prophecy and he spent five - no, not Nebuchadnezzar, sorry, Saddam Hussein. And Saddam Hussein spent 500 million dollars trying to restore ancient Babylon to thwart this Jewish prophecy that said it would never be rebuilt again. And, in the midst of this first attempt to rebuild it - you can see even some of the workers there - the desert storm came along and it was brought to a halt - dried up his resources. Then he had just begun to try to rebuild it again when the second Iraq war broke out and ultimately he was arrested and came to an unhappy ending.

Now, here's the prophecy that you find in the book of Isaiah that talks about what would happen to ancient Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar. It says, "And Babylon" - this is Isaiah 13, verses 19 to 21, "and Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited, nor will it be settled from generation to generation; nor will the Arabian pitch tents there, nor will the shepherds make their sheepfolds there. But wild beasts of the desert will lie there, and their houses will be full of owls; ostriches will dwell there, and wild goats will caper there." And you go there today and it's - there's nothing. He was not able to re- I mean, there's some tourist spots, but he wanted to make it the new capital. God stopped that again. So back to Daniel talking to Nebuchadnezzar - what happens next in the dream. He should have just stopped when he said, 'You're the head of gold.

But question #7: would the Babylonian kingdom last forever? Well, you know, he says, "And after thee" - this is the rest of the dream. "And after thee shall arise" - what? Another. "Another kingdom." You can write that in, "inferior to thee." Now, if I can't have gold, I'm happy with silver. Let's all agree, the ounce of silver is not worth an ounce of gold. These things are decreasing in value as you go down through the metals, but they are increasing in hardness. All the way down through the image. And so, just notice that - and I'll say more about that.

Another prophecy that talked about what would happen to Babylon is found in Jeremiah - that came true. Jeremiah the prophet said in 25:12, "I will punish the king of Babylon," and it wasn't Nebuchadnezzar that was punished - well, Nebuchadnezzar was punished too but, ultimately, it was his grandson that was overthrown. "I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, saith the Lord, for

their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations." And that's what you find in that region today. The Bible even tells, when you get to chapter 5 of Daniel - you're getting kind of an overview of Daniel tonight - in chapter 5 of Daniel, it tells about how that happened. Nebuchadnezzar, as I said, he reigned 45 years.

He, ultimately, converted. If you read the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, ultimately, after a couple of backsliding episodes, at the end of his life he was praising the God of the Jews. He believed in him. And you might even meet him in heaven, if we all get there. But his grandson was different. His name was Belshazzar. Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus was outside the kingdom trying to defend the kingdom from other nations that were making inroads. Belshazzar was left in charge. He was sort of the second in command but he was called the king at that point. And he had a feast.

Now the reason he had this feast is because all surrounding the kingdom of Babylon, the Medes and the Persians had come to try to conquer the city. But their walls were so massive, the young king wanted to show disdain. He said, 'I'm not afraid of the Medes and the Persians. They can't get in here. And so they had a big feast.

It said they had enough food to withstand a siege of twenty years. You know, in warfare, it's very expensive to run a war. And when you besiege a city, the longer they can hold out - you know, if you can't conquer their capital - you can't feed your army forever. Jerusalem was besieged for two years by Nebuchadnezzar before it fell. Masada in Israel was besieged by the Romans for three years.

They had food. They held it off - matter of fact, as the Romans were trying to take the city, the Jews were throwing food and water over the walls in the desert to show that they had plenty and they weren't afraid. Three years - they had to build a ramp to try and take it. Many armies have failed just because, economically, they couldn't handle a long siege. And so the king said, 'You're going to run out of money and resources before we do. We've got the water coming under the walls, we've got storage galore in the silos of the city.' And so they had a big feast. And the King began to drink during the feast. And then, to show that his god was more powerful than all the other gods - the idols that he worshiped - he said, 'Didn't we capture all those beautiful vessels of gold from the temple in Jerusalem? I want to drink out of those vessels. I'm going to toast my god using Jehovah's vessels. He was mocking the God of the Bible.

So he called for his servants to bring from the treasuries the vessels that had been captured from Solomon's temple - the cups and the bowls - and he began to use them to pour wine in and to drink and to toast his gods, mocking the God of heaven. In the midst of their revelry, at the peak of their party, all of a sudden a bloodless hand appeared - just a hand. This big plaster blank spot, like a billboard on the walls of ancient Babylon - and began to write in these cryptic letters - burning letters in the wall - and you can imagine that everybody froze. They got scared. The Bible actually says the king was so frightened his knees smote together.

You ever been so scared that your knees are knocking? The first time I preached, that's what I looked like. I was so scared, my hands were sweaty. I mean, they were terrified. And he called for the wise men again and they weren't helping. Pharaoh called for his wise men too. They never did seem very wise. And his wise men couldn't tell what it meant. But the queen - now this is many years after Nebuchadnezzar - Daniel's still alive. He's now an old man. He's been in the Kingdom for just about 70 years. He may have been in his 90s, but he's still strong and healthy. And the queen, she says, 'There's a man that was in the empire, no mystery was too hard for him.' Daniel is summoned to the party. He didn't go to that party. He knew better. So they bring him in. The King says, 'I'll make you third ruler in the Kingdom if you tell me what that writing says.' Daniel said, 'I know what the writing says and you can keep your gifts.' So Daniel called in - an old man - and he begins to tell him. The writing said, 'Mene mene tekel upharsin.' - The handwriting on the wall - have you heard that expression before? "Mene: God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Tekel: thou art weighed in the balances," - you're being judged - "and found wanting." - You're coming up short. You are going to fail in the judgment, in other words. - "Peres: thy

kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." - Who are outside the wall. And at the very moment that Daniel was in the banquet hall, Cyrus the Persian general outside the wall had done something brilliant. Without the King of Babylon knowing, upstream - way upstream in the Euphrates river, there was a dry lake bed. They dug a great channel right next to the Euphrates river. At the right moment, they then broke the dam separating it, all the water was diverted from the Euphrates river and began to run off into this dry lake bed.

The water level where it ran under the walls of Babylon dropped - it was at night - his army marched under the walls. The soldiers within the city, in the inner walls, they're not sure what happened. And here's an - actually, an artist's conception of that. Some of the soldiers were either drinking or through treachery, some - maybe they conspired with somebody on the inside, the gates were left open - the inner wall. And the army went in.

They opened the other gates. The Medes and the Persians came pouring into the city. That very night, Belshazzar was slain - or Belshazzar the King - I'm sorry - was slain. Belteshazzar was the Babylonian name of Daniel - it's very close. Here's the prophecy - now catch this - I'm going to read a prophecy to you that was written by Isaiah the prophet.

We know from the dead sea scrolls that Isaiah the prophet wrote these things before they happened - 150 years before they happened, listen to what Isaiah says in chapter 45, "thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus," - names him 150 years before he's born - "...to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held;" - I am helping you - "to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of Kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut." And when it says 'loose the loins of Kings,' that means that the joints of the Kings would be loosed. That's what happens when a king shakes. And this is exactly what happened. Cyrus - a general - he went in, they conquered the Kingdom - and you can go to the British museum and there is what they call 'the Cyrus cylinder' - I've actually seen this - and in that cylinder, in cuneiform, they've translated cuneiform, Cyrus talks about conquering Babylon and, I believe, Jerusalem is even mentioned during that time because he later lets the Jews go back home again to their land. So now the Kingdom, the head of gold, passes from Nebuchadnezzar on to the Medo-Persian kingdom.

And so, this happened approximately 539 B.C. And the Persian kingdom was, of course, another powerful kingdom - lasted from 539 to about 331 B.C. Their capital was Persepolis and their medium of exchange was silver. So it's entirely appropriate that they're represented here by the silver arms. We've gone from Babylon to Medo-Persia - and they had a vast kingdom.

But silver is not as valuable as gold. They lasted longer, but they didn't have the same glory that Babylon had. We've got to keep moving. This is a lot to cover and I hope you'll read Daniel chapter when you get home and you can take time to read the whole chapter.

Question #8: what metal would represent the Kingdom that followed Medo-Persia? Answer: it says in Daniel, "another third kingdom of brass" - actually, we say brass - brass has got some tin included in it. It's the ancient word for 'bronze' - would be - but you polish bronze, it looks the same way - "...shall bear rule over all the earth." Now Daniel's saying this is even going to have a vaster territory than the Persian kingdom. What kingdom came next, after the Persian kingdom? It was the kingdom of Greece. How many of you have heard of a young Macedonian ruler by the name of Alexander? Better known as Alexander the Great. And he conquered the Persians and - in 331 - very quickly in his battles with Darius - and he swept, in just 11 years, he swept through that country - not only did he take the territory of Persia, he went off into the elements of the regions of India and up through Afghanistan.

And so Alexander was phenomenal. By the time he was 21 years old he had conquered Egypt. It was just phenomenal what he did and how far he marched his armies. He was a brilliant general, trained by some of the great Greek philosophers. And what do you think their armor was made out of? They were called

'the bronze soldiers' and they had bronze swords and - I'll bring that up later.

I think I even have a picture here of what some of the helmets looked like. They had bronze helmets and Alexander's kingdom lasted a little longer than the Persian kingdom. Each kingdom is lasting longer but the metal is not worth quite as much. And so these were the bronze soldiers. In - there's one quote from a historian - Arian is, I believe, his name - The Historical Library book 17, chapter 12 - and this is what he says about the rule of Alexander the Great: "I am persuaded that there was no nation, city, nor people then being whither his name did not reach...there seems to me to have been some divine hand presiding both over his birth and actions." It seemed like there was a divine hand that was protecting him as he went everywhere. But even though Alexander the Great could conquer much of the world, he could not conquer himself. And he actually died in Babylon and - just shy of 33 years of age. Matter of fact, when he was on his death bed - they're not sure - he died of a fever lasting several days. They don't know if someone poisoned him.

Others have wondered if it was malaria or it may have been a cause he had before the fever came on. He had had a lot of drinking going on. It might have been alcohol poisoning. The historians aren't sure, but he was semi-conscious, drifting in and out and his wife asked him - his son was very young - and she said, 'Who will rule if you die?' He said, 'The strongest.' And that's exactly what happened. His kingdom was divided in four parts by his generals that ended up warring among themselves. But the kingdom of Greece lasted for several hundred years and that was during the time of 331 to 168 B.C.

Now, what do you think happens next here? If you go to question #9 - and I think some of you could guess what comes on the scene next. What metal represents the fourth kingdom? Iron. You got it and I haven't even put it on the screen yet. Daniel chapter 2, verse 40, "The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron." As much as iron subdues and breaks other things. It was one of the strongest metals they had back then. They didn't have the kind of reinforced steel or stainless steel that we have now, but you could take a Roman sword that was made out of iron, and you could actually break a Greek sword made out of bronze. I mean, you remember when David killed Goliath? He had to take Goliath's iron sword. He didn't even have a sword.

And later, when David went into battle he said, 'I need a sword.' They had no swords in the Kingdom, but the philistines knew how to forge iron. It was a very valuable art back then. David went into battle with Goliath's sword. That must have been a doozy, huh? Because it was iron it could break the swords of many of the other enemies. It was during the time of the iron monarchy of Rome that Jesus was born.

It was those Roman soldiers that went with their iron swords into Bethlehem and killed the babies. It was an iron spear that pierced Jesus' side - probably iron nails that pierced his hands and his feet. Rome was this iron empire. And just as the Persians lasted longer than the Babylonians and the Greeks lasted longer than the Persians, the Romans lasted longer than the Greeks. It tells what happens through history.

Many of you know about your Roman history. Question #10: what would happen after the fall of the Roman empire? You can read in Daniel chapter 2, verses 41 and 42, it said, "The kingdom shall be divided. ...as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken." And as Rome expanded it tried to envelope such a big territory that, gradually decadence began to set in and the kingdom began to implode. I mean, we've all heard about Nero fiddling while Rome burned. We've heard about the games in the Colosseum.

And we've all heard about the orgies and - under the time of Augustus Caesar, they were more interested in morals and family. But after he fell off the scene they had a couple of military Caesars and then they got some very immoral governors of Rome and the morals of the country sank. As that happened, the other empires, seeing the opportunity from the north - the barbarians came in. Hannibal came up from Carthage and Rome was under - well, Hannibal came earlier, but Rome was under

constant attack and, gradually, the kingdom divided.

By the way, you know, I just thought I really ought to share this tonight. If you read in history, Edward Gibbon, who wrote his book 'Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire,' when he talks about some of the five components that he thought contributed to the fall of Rome, I thought some of them sounded similar to what's happening in the western world today.

This was his analysis: "Five prime reasons for Rome's downfall: 1) the undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home. 2) Increasing taxes and spending of public money for bread and circuses. 3) - Now he wrote this a long time ago - "the mad craze for pleasure with sports becoming more exciting and more brutal." 4) The building of armaments when the real enemy was the decadence of the people. 5) The decay of religion with faith fading into mere form" basic faith that makes a moral society that gives you civilization and protection. Philip Myers, in his book 'Rome: Its Rise and Fall,' he observed "Almost from the beginning the Roman stage was gross and immoral. It was one of the main agencies to which must be attributed to the undermining of the originally sound, moral life of Roman society. So absorbed did the people become in the indecent representations of the stage, that they lost all thought and care for the affairs of real life." That's hard for us to imagine that the Romans had become so absorbed in their media back then. They all lived for what was going to be on the stage from week to week. They had these theaters everywhere. That's all they talked about and they didn't think about the real issues of life.

I'm thinking, 'Wow, if they had a problem then, what's going on now?' I mean, they didn't have 150 channels. I thought - whew - okay, getting back into our study. So, I think we all know that Rome started to gradually disintegrate and what was once a united mighty vast empire broke up into originally ten kingdoms. And those ten kingdoms, some of their ancient names - and I'll give you the modern equivalents - the Alamanni, which were the Germans - I know our friends that are listening to the Spanish translation right now - Alaman - or Alamanni - is - that's Germany. Then you have the Franks, which was the French, the Burgundians, which were the Switzerland, the Suevi, which was Portugal, the Lombards, which is Italy, the Visigoths, which is Spain, the Anglo-Saxons, England. And then when they first divided they also had what we called the Vandals - that's where you get vandalism, because the Vandals went and broke all the - they defaced all the Roman statues. They called them vandals. The Vandals, the Heruli, and the Ostrogoths. So the Roman empire broke into ten distinct parts and it's broken up many times since then.

Well, that would put us down into the end of this image, where you've got this - now you're down to the feet, of not just iron but iron and what? Clay. Clay. What was man made out of in the beginning? Clay. You know, it's very interesting, one of the oldest concrete buildings in the world is in Rome. It's the Pantheon. You know what all modern concrete is built out of? You ever watch them pour concrete? It's miry clay and iron - rebar. You know what the number one building material is in the world today? Concrete.

You should go to China. They've got so many problems with concrete dust everywhere. There's just a forest of building cranes. They call the building crane the national bird in China because they're everywhere. I mean I've never seen construction like that. But we are living in that time of iron and miry clay - the age of concrete.

Question #11: would these 10 kingdoms ever succeed in uniting? Answer: it says here "They shall mingle themselves with the seed of men:" and here you've got it - "but they shall not cleave one to another," - they'll not stick one to another - "even as iron is not mixed with clay." They could not weld together even though they tried. Matter of fact, they were so desperate at one point, Queen Victoria, she had - she had the longest and most prosperous of the English reigns. She had 40 children and grandchildren. And by the end of her reign, she was related to every leader in Europe through marriage.

They tried to re-forge and rebuild that confederacy that Rome once had through marriages, but it didn't

last. Matter of fact, you can just look at history. You've got everybody from Louis XIV to Charlemagne, to Napoleon to Kaiser Wilhelm to Adolph Hitler - they were all trying to re-forged - the word 'kaiser,' you know what that means in German? Caesar. The word 'czar,' you know what that means in Russian? It means Caesar. They were all trying to regain the power of the Caesar once again. But the Bible says they will not cleave one to another. I understand Adolph Hitler had a Christian secretary and when she found out about his plan she said, 'I'm sorry, my Fuehrer, but this won't work.' He said, 'What do you mean?' She said, 'The Bible says it will not work in the book of Daniel.' He said, 'Well, we'll change the Bible.' Didn't work very well for him.

Question #12: who will set up the final kingdom? Now we're down where the stone comes into the picture. Daniel 2:44, what did the prophet tell us? "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven" - not to be confused with Nebuchadnezzar's myriad of other gods - "the God of Heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." Amen. That's the kingdom that will last forever. Jesus is coming soon. That's the next kingdom.

Question #13: what does the stone do to the other world kingdoms? It says - Daniel 2, verses 34 and 35, "A stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and" - did what? Break. Broke them in pieces. So this whole thing that represented counterfeit worship - you know the big issue in the Bible is worship? And - you know, by the way the commandment doesn't say don't make an image or I'm in trouble right now, huh? How many of you, when you came in, you saw the big inflatable? How many of you saw that and came in because you thought this was a Halloween party tonight? Anybody? I looked out my window at the hotel and I saw all these people taking pictures out there with the - our Babylonian model.

The Bible doesn't say just don't make an image - if you've got a photograph, you're in trouble. It says don't make it and bow down to it, right? Well, they worshiped idols. Now the only stone that is cut without man's hands was the Ten Commandments. God hewed those first tables of stone and handed them to Moses. Later Moses broke them and God got another set.

So, it says, "broke it to pieces." And what happened to the stone? It says, "and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain," - the Kingdom of God is often referred to as 'The mountain of the Lord will be glorious.' - "And filled the whole earth." Babylon is in a plain, God's kingdom is in a mountain. Jerusalem was on a mountain. "And it filled the whole earth." The Bible says that the knowledge of the Lord would cover the earth as the waters do the sea. It's talking about Christ's kingdom when - 'Blessed are the meek' - what will they inherit? The earth. The earth.

And so this is not talking about something that happened and passed. Now it's talking about we're living in that age of iron and clay down in the toes of this image. The next thing that happens is the coming of Christ. Can you imagine the look on Nebuchadnezzar's face after he saw this? After hearing Daniel's clear interpretation of the dream, what did Nebuchadnezzar say about the Lord? You can read in Daniel chapter 2, verse 47, "The King answered unto Daniel, and said, 'Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods,'" - He's not just another God, he is the God - is what Nebuchadnezzar is saying - "and a Lord of Kings, and a revealer of" - there's that word again - "secrets."

You know, later, Nebuchadnezzar wanted to worship Daniel and give him all these gifts. He actually promoted him and made him leader of all the wise men, which was probably a smart move. And Daniel told the king, "The dream is certain and the interpretation thereof is sure." God has given us a map of history. That's why this book is so popular, is because we can look back on history - we know that Daniel wrote these things before they happened. Everything has happened with these world empires.

What does the head of gold represent? Babylon - came and went. More valuable - didn't last as long as the next one. Medo-Persia's the silver, right? They fell to the Greeks. All of these occupied Israel. Did you know that? Babylon occupied Israel. Persia occupied Israel. The Greeks occupied Israel, and Rome

occupied Israel. But then it divided. And after - during the time of Jesus, the kingdom began to go everywhere because Jerusalem was destroyed. Christianity - became spiritual Jews as well. And then you had the Roman empire and it spread through the Roman empire. Paul was killed in Rome.

The Gospel has then been going around the world. Now the whole world is what this last kingdom is talking about. That stone that is going to come, it's called 'The Rock of Ages.' It's Jesus. The next thing that is supposed to happen in this vision is Christ coming.

Now these are interesting prophecies, but I have to be honest with you right up front. We don't do these seminars just to be fantastic or sensational and wow people with the power of prophecy. All prophecy is redemptive. And if you know these things but you don't know Jesus, it won't save you. The Bible says even the devils believe and tremble. The reason the Lord gives us these prophecies is so you'll know that God is not surprised by history.

There's a plan. And He has a plan for your life. He will not activate and mobilize that plan until you give Him your heart. And that's something you need to do. He wants you to find that peace. He wants you to find that rest. Have you found that rest? Have you found that peace? Are you part of God's kingdom? If He reigns in your hearts now, you don't need to worry about the next phase of this vision. Amen, friends? I'd like you to pray about that and think as John comes out and he's going to sing for us now and then we're going to close off our program with prayer.

My faith has found a resting place not in a man-made creed, I trust the Ever-living One, that He for me did bleed. I need no other argument, I need no other plea, it is enough that Jesus died and that He died for me. My faith is resting on the word, the precious Word of God, salvation in my Savior's name, salvation through His blood. I need no other argument, I need no other plea, it is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me. It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me.

Amen. Thank you so much, John and Kelly - beautiful. I appreciate that. Friends, this is just the beginning. There is so much more that you're going to learn that's going to transform your lives. It is amazing to me that people do not find more interest in studying the book and the prophecies that God has given to show us that there is a plan. God has a plan for you.

The Bible says that He's everywhere - He's all-powerful - and yet, He loves us so much He wants to have a personal relationship with each one of us. You know, most prophecy is understood best looking backwards. Jesus said, 'When these things come to pass, then you will believe.' He wants us to look back and say, 'Wow, God really does know what's going on.' And this is just one little prophecy of many we're going to share with you. As we continue to study, we're going to be looking ahead. We hope that you'll plan now on coming.

I'm absolutely sincere - I'm saying this from my heart when I tell you, of all the things that you could be doing in this next few weeks while we're here, this is the one that may make an eternal difference in your life as well as improve your life here and now. Because if what I am saying is true, nothing is more important. If this world is not lasting much longer and Jesus is coming, as I believe He is, then you tell me. Being ready for His coming and doing what He wants us to do in the interval, what in the world could be more important than that? So God has a plan for us. We believe you're either watching on television or the internet or you're here tonight because of a divine appointment.

I'd like to pray with you as we close. Father in Heaven, thank You so much for Your presence here tonight, for bringing us safely here together to study Your word. We ask for You to protect and bless each person. And as we come together as Your children, to seek first Your kingdom, I pray, Lord, that You'll reveal Yourself to us. Help the Word to come alive. Just set angels about this entire event - each person that's watching or attending - and transform us. You've promised, Lord, that if we draw near to You, You will draw near to us. If we seek, we will find. Now honor that promise, Lord. We thank You and we pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.