

## Daniel 2 - Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Image

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Because of God's love for Abraham, God chose the descendants of Abraham to be His representatives on Earth. Beginning with the Exodus from Egypt, God did everything possible to get the nation of Israel to love Him and obey His commands. Israel was to be a nation of priests; they were to be representatives of the Most High God throughout the earth. They were to be a light unto the world demonstrating the wisdom of God's laws and reflecting the kindness and generosity of His love. **"I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness."** (Isaiah 42:6,7) For more than 800 years, God gave Israel every blessing and opportunity, and they gave Him rebellion and rejection in return. Finally, God could not endure Israel's insolence any longer. Around 620 B.C., God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah saying, **"O house of Israel . . . I am bringing a distant nation against you – an ancient and enduring nation, a people whose language you do not know, whose speech you do not understand. Their quivers are like an open grave; all of them are mighty warriors. They will devour your harvests and food, devour your sons and daughters; they will devour your flocks and herds, devour your vines and fig trees. With the sword they will destroy the fortified cities in which you trust. Yet even in those days . . . I will not destroy you completely. And when the people ask 'Why has the Lord our God done all this to us?' you will tell them, 'As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your own land, so now you will serve foreigners in a land not your own. . . .'** This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: **'Listen! I am going to bring on this city and the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words. . . . I will hand all Judah over to the king of Babylon, who will carry them away to Babylon or put them to the sword.'** " (Jeremiah 5:15-19, 19:15, 20:4)

These verses reveal three interesting points about God. First, from these and many other Bible texts, it is clear that God's patience with sin and rebellion has a limit. God's comments to Jeremiah and His subsequent actions leave no room for doubt about this. Second, when the time came to punish Israel, God fully warned Israel about His forthcoming actions. Even though they did not believe Him, God told Israel what He was going to do before He did it! He made it clear that He was going to use the sword of King Nebuchadnezzar against His people. Third, God's treatment of Israel is a mirror reflecting how He treats all nations! **". . . God is no respecter of persons."** (Acts 10:34, KJV) In other words, if God destroyed Jerusalem and His chosen people because of sin and degeneracy, we can be sure that He has followed the *same* policy with all nations. Indeed, the Bible confirms this to be the case. (Genesis 6:7, 15:16; Leviticus 24:18-24; Isaiah 16:6-14; Isaiah 19:1-12; Ezekiel 14:12-21)

Like Pharaoh, who would not let Israel leave Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar did not know the God of Israel. Yet, God knew the Babylonian king very well and God empowered Nebuchadnezzar to be a "servant-destroyer." (Jeremiah 25:9) God moved the heart of Nebuchadnezzar to put

Jerusalem to the sword just as surely as He moved the heart of King Cyrus to set His people free seventy years later. Notice these two texts:

**" 'I will summon all the peoples of the north and my *servant* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,' declares the Lord, 'and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin.' "** (Jeremiah 25:9, emphasis mine)

**"In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord *moved* the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: 'This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah." ' "** (Ezra 1:1,2, emphasis mine)

The Bible indicates that God affects the hearts of men to do His bidding. God used Nebuchadnezzar to tear down Jerusalem and God used Cyrus to rebuild it! Since the Bible declares that God is proactive in managing the nations and kings of Earth, let us consider a vision which God gave to King Nebuchadnezzar about 600 B.C.

## **The Foundational Prophecy: Daniel 2**

Daniel 2 contains the first prophecy in the book of Daniel. In this respect, Daniel 2 is a *foundational prophecy* and all subsequent prophecies in Daniel and Revelation are built on it. The prophecy in Daniel 2 reveals three interesting facts. First, God not only knows the future, but He has also predetermined that certain events will occur in the future. Second, God chooses the kings of Earth and He sets them up and takes them down according to His higher purposes. Third, beginning with the kingdom of Babylon, God has predestined the appearing of seven global empires. Think of the number *seven* as God's signature. He has put His signature on many things to remind us that He is our Creator and our Creator has a plan! The number seven suggests fullness or completion. For example, in Daniel and Revelation there are *seven* kingdoms, *seven* heads, *seven* eyes, *seven* horns, *seven* thunders, *seven* seals, *seven* trumpets, *seven* churches, *seven* bowls and *seven* angels who stand before God. Consider our physical world, there are *seven* continents, *seven* colors in the rainbow, *seven* notes in our musical scale, *seven* days in a week, and Jesus spoke *seven* times when He was on the cross. God's signature is everywhere! Even our seven-day week is terminated with God's seventh-day rest. The use of *seven* in Daniel and Revelation is deliberate and important to God. The seven kingdoms presented in Daniel 2 declare a finished plan. The seven kingdoms presented in Daniel 2 consist of six kingdoms governed by men and an eternal kingdom governed by God. The interesting climax in this vision is that God destroys the kingdoms of men *before* He establishes His kingdom on Earth!

Parts of the Daniel 2 Image

### **1. Head - Gold**

2. Chest - Silver

3. Thighs - Bronze

4. Legs - Iron

**5. Feet - Iron & Clay**

6. Toes - Iron & Clay

7. Rock - Indestructible & Eternal

**Note:** Even though the toes are made of the same materials as the feet, the "toes" are a *distinct* kingdom separate from the kingdom of the feet. The toes are identified as "a kingdom" in verse 42, just like the "chest" is identified as a kingdom in verse 39. Even though the composition of the feet and toes is identical, they represent two different world orders. Currently, we are living in the kingdom of the feet. During the Great Tribulation, the present order of this world will drastically change and we will enter the final phase of world order represented by the toes. Even though this vision does not explicitly say there are "ten" toes on the metal man, we can safely assume this anatomical feature is implied in Daniel 2 because the book of Revelation predicts that ten kings (ten horns) will rule over the whole world for a very short period of time during the very last moments of Earth's history. (Revelation 17:12-14) Obviously, the kingdom of the toes has not arrived, but it is coming. When it does arrive, Daniel 2:44 says, **"In the time of those kings [represented by the ten toes], 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."** (Insertion mine)

### The Timeline of Daniel 2

605 B.C.	538 B.C.	331 B.C.	168 B.C.	A.D. 476	?	?
Babylon	Medo-Persia	Grecia	Rome	Many Kings	10 Kings	Jesus
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gold	Silver	Bronze	Iron	Iron/Clay	Iron/Clay	Rock
Head	Chest	Thighs	Legs	Feet	Toes	Eternal

Chart 1.1

## The Vision

**". . .Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.**

**"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (Daniel 2:28-35, KJV)**

## **The Meaning of the Vision**

**"This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And 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 whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. 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. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshiped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret." (Daniel 2:36-47, KJV)**

## **Comments**

Two men saw the vision of the image. King Nebuchadnezzar saw the vision first and later, God gave a copy of this vision to Daniel so that he could explain the vision to the king. The vision occurred around 600 B.C., but it spans a time period of more than 2,600 years so far. This vision has not been fulfilled. We are still waiting for the kingdom of the ten toes and the eternal kingdom that is established when Jesus (the Rock) destroys the kingdoms of men. By right of

sovereign authority, God predetermined a chronological progression of seven world empires, and He revealed this information to Nebuchadnezzar *for our benefit*. The real impact of this vision (pun intended) belongs to the final generation. Many people in the final generation on Earth will thoughtfully consider the merits of this vision during the Great Tribulation, and they will discover that God has a predetermined plan that has been unfolding for more than twenty-six centuries. Because this vision and world history are in perfect harmony, the final generation will have a bundle of evidence upon which to base its faith in God's Word. **"Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass. . . ."** (2 Kings 19:25)

If we consider the architecture of this vision (see Chart 1.1), we discover three interesting points. First, this vision has a beginning and an ending point in time. The vision begins with the kingdom of Babylon as the head of gold and the vision ends when Jesus, The Rock of Ages, King of kings and Lord of lords, destroys the ten kings who will be ruling over the world at the time of the Second Coming. (See Revelation 17:12,13; 19:11-21.) Second, there is chronological order within the vision. The elements within the vision occur in the order they are given. For example, the kingdom represented by the thighs of brass fell to the kingdom represented by the legs of iron, etc. The third point concerns the use of language. God used the *symbol of a man* to represent a succession of kingdoms that would occur on Earth. Within the context of this vision, the use and the meaning of the symbol is explained by the Bible. These three points are highlighted so you can observe a distinct pattern that emerges from Daniel, and this pattern will prove to be very important later in this book.

## The Succession of World Empires

The kingdoms that follow Babylon are represented by metals of lesser value. This decline suggests that fallen man degenerates with the passage of time. According to Daniel 2, the chest and arms of silver represented a kingdom that would succeed Babylon. It is interesting to note that the silver kingdom had two arms (as in two *armies*). This feature accurately reflected the Medo-Persian empire which overran Babylon in 538 B.C. The Medo-Persian kingdom consisted of two kings and two armies. Eventually, the Persian side of this kingdom became dominant.

The third kingdom, represented by thighs of brass, rose to power with the fall of the Medo-Persians. The Grecian empire was noted for its extensive use of bronze. In fact, the Grecian period is sometimes called "The Bronze Age." The fourth empire was represented by legs of iron and this feature accurately represented the Roman empire. The Romans were noted for their ferocious conquests and their weapons of unbreakable iron. The Roman empire also included a larger geographical territory than any of the previous empires. Perhaps this expansion is reflected in the *two legs of iron*. The Romans dominated a large portion of the East, as well as the West.

The fifth kingdom, represented by the feet of iron and clay, represents the breakup of the Roman empire into many kingdoms; some became strong and others weak. When Rome fell in A.D. 476, a distinctive change occurred. After this date, the empires of the world were no longer universal. Instead, the world was permanently fractured into small empires. Through the ages,

God has predetermined that some kingdoms would be strong as iron and others would be weak or breakable like brittle clay. One-world empires like Babylon, Medo-Persia, Grecia and Rome will not exist again until God permits the Antichrist to rule over Earth during the Great Tribulation. Men such as Napoleon, Charlemagne, Hitler, Kaiser Wilhelm and other conquerors have vainly tried to unite the world under their rule, but their efforts could not succeed because God's Word cannot be defeated.

The sixth and last kingdom of man is represented by the toes. Remember that the toes represent a brief reign of ten kings. About two thirds of the way through the Great Tribulation, the devil himself will physically appear on Earth masquerading as God. After a successful conquest to take control of Earth, the Antichrist (Lucifer) will divide the world into ten sectors, and he will appoint ten kings to rule over these ten sectors. (Revelation 17:12-14) ) During the days of *these* kings, the Rock will come out of Heaven and destroy all of the kingdoms of men. This Rock is Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages. At the appointed time, Jesus will annihilate the wicked on Earth and establish the seventh and final world empire. His kingdom will never end. Remember, seven is God's signature. God's kingdom of righteousness will bear His likeness and He will only establish His kingdom on Earth *after* He has destroyed the kingdoms of men. Notice this text: **"In the time of those kings [the ten 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."** (Daniel 2:44, insertion mine)

## "The Rock of Ages"

Before "The Rock of Ages" sets up His kingdom, He will destroy *all* of the kingdoms of men. Daniel told King 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. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth." (Daniel 2:34,35) Three points within these verses need to be considered. First, the Bible leaves no wiggle room on the fact that the kingdom of God cannot co-exist with the kingdoms of men. Before Jesus sets up His kingdom on Earth, all previous kingdoms have to be destroyed – *swept away without a trace!* Jesus will not reign on or over a sinful Earth. Jesus will reign on Earth only *after* sin and unrepentant sinners have been annihilated. According to the final chapters of Revelation, Jesus does not begin to reign *on Earth* until there is a New Heaven and a New Earth.

Second, the sequence of events described in Daniel 2 terminates at the Second Coming. Through the years, people have asked if the Rock crushing the metal man occurs at the Second Coming or at the end of the 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation 20. The Rock crushes the kingdoms of men at the end of the Great Tribulation (at the Second Coming), when the ten kings are ruling upon Earth. (Daniel 2:44) In other words, after desolating this planet of all life (2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:19-21) and putting the devil back in the abyss for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3), Jesus has total control over Earth. However, when Jesus appears at the

Second Coming, He does not touch Earth. Instead, the saints will be caught up in the sky to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:17) This gathering up of the saints occurs because they will be taken to "the Father's house" in Heaven for 1,000 years before returning to Earth in the Holy City with Jesus. (John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:1-4) During the 1,000 years, the saints will sit in court and determine the punishment that each wicked person must receive. (1 Corinthians 6:1-3; Revelation 20:4) Obviously, Daniel 2 does not address these details, but the final chapters of Revelation collaborate with Daniel 2. Using this relationship, we can determine what will occur during and after the 1,000 years of Revelation 20.

The third point concerns this phrase, "**The rock that was cut out, but not by human hands. . .**" The Rock of Ages and His seventh kingdom are divine in origin. The kingdom of God will not be a modification of earthly kingdoms. Consider what this language meant to King Nebuchadnezzar. Ancient peoples built altars to their gods (and there were many) on mountain tops and the "high places" of Earth. They believed the gods dwelt in the lofty grandeur and vast expanses of snow capped mountains. (Jeremiah 3:6; Ezekiel 6:13; Psalm 15:1) Even among the Jews, the Mountain of Sinai was called the Mountain of God. (Exodus 4:27) Today, in the United States, the government buildings where laws are made are exalted with the title "The Capitol Building" or "Capitol Hill," even though the building itself is only slightly elevated above the surrounding area. We use this type of language to identify the place of a nation's highest authority. The same idea was used in a religious sense in ancient times.

When God gave Nebuchadnezzar this vision, He used very simple terms the king could grasp. God told the king that six kingdoms would rise and fall. God also revealed that man would not rule over Earth indefinitely. God has predetermined an end to the rule of men. A day will come when the "Rock," the Son of God, will establish His kingdom on Earth. The idea of a rock being cut out of a mountain without human effort is language that uniquely describes God (the Mountain) and the Son of God (the Rock). The Son will come from Heaven and remove all traces of Earth's previous kingdoms before He establishes His own kingdom. The "Rock" will establish a city whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:10) Almighty God gave Nebuchadnezzar the great honor of beholding His plans. Who can prevent His coming kingdom? Who can stop Him? Who can thwart the fulfillment of this blueprint? God showed Nebuchadnezzar the climax of the ages. He saw "The Rock of Ages" utterly destroy the kingdoms of men and take possession of Earth. Thus, the ancient words of Isaiah will be fulfilled: ". . . **and the government will be on his shoulders.**" (Isaiah 9:6)

Twenty-six hundred years ago, Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar, ". . . **The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy.**" (Daniel 2:45) Even though this vision has not yet been fulfilled, we have enough evidence from completed sequences within the vision to confirm the truthfulness of this vision. Apocalyptic prophecy is history written in advance and the passage of time has confirmed the accuracy of all that God said regarding the future. *Nothing proves the veracity of God's Word like the fulfillment of Bible prophecy.*

## Notes and Comments on Chapter 1

The comments that follow are crucial to the concepts presented in this book, so please give the following paragraphs careful consideration. Bible students come to varied conclusions about Bible prophecy because there are many different methods of interpretation. For this reason, you may want to read and review this section from time to time as you progress through this book. I have placed these notes at the end of Chapter 1 rather than at the beginning of the book so that newcomers to the study of prophecy would not become discouraged or overwhelmed by the depth of Bible prophecy. It is all too easy to lay books aside that require thinking and processing.

*Methods of interpretation* is a catch-all phrase that has a lot of bearing on the interpretation of Bible prophecy. The phrase "methods of interpretation" describes a set of ideas or a particular view in a person's head *before* he starts to study and interpret prophecy. Methods of interpretation include religious views, spiritual presuppositions, scholastic assumptions and concepts about the role and authority of the Bible, the authority of prophets, and church traditions. For example, a Catholic scholar will approach the study of Bible prophecy with Catholic beliefs and traditions in mind, and his prophetic conclusions will reflect the ideas and views that were in his mind *before* he began to study. Similarly, a Baptist scholar will approach the study of Bible prophecy with methods of interpretation that are very different than his Catholic counterpart, and the Baptist scholar will arrive at very different conclusions than the Catholic scholar because their methods of interpretation are different. Obviously, no one approaches the study of prophecy without some kind of intellectual and religious baggage. This baggage is loosely called "methods of interpretation" or hermeneutics.

## Faulty Interpretations until the Time of the End

The book of Daniel contains 533 sentences. While the book is very short, it contains volumes of information. Daniel was written about twenty-six centuries ago, but unlike the other 65 books in the Bible, the book of Daniel was sealed up "until the time of the end." The angel, Gabriel, said to Daniel, ". . . **Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.**" (Daniel 12:9) What does "closed up and sealed until the time of the end" mean? It means that God placed certain information in the book of Daniel that remains "top secret" until the time of the end arrives. Has the time of the end arrived? On the basis of fulfilled prophecy and an understanding of God's timing, I am convinced "the time of the end" has arrived. If this is true, the time has come for the secrets in Daniel to be unveiled.

The secret information God coded into Daniel 2,600 years ago is something like the "Rosetta Stone." The Rosetta Stone was accidently unearthed in 1799 near Rosetta, Egypt, by French soldiers. The marvelous thing about this buried rock is that it bears a message written during the second century B.C. in two forms of Egyptian script – demotic and hieroglyphics. When archeologists examined the rock, they were thrilled because they were able to solve a very perplexing mystery. Prior to 1799, archeologists could not read the clay tablets bearing Egyptian hieroglyphics because no one could decipher the language. When the Rosetta Stone was discovered and translated, the demotic inscriptions enabled Thomas Young (1773-1829) and J.F. Champollion (1790-1832) to decipher the hieroglyphics of the ancient Egyptians.

In a similar way, I believe God embedded four secrets in the book of Daniel 2,600 years ago. By

God's grace, I believe I have stumbled into an understanding of the four secrets that were sealed up in the book of Daniel. (Of course, the passage of time will prove or disprove the validity of my claim.) These four secrets shatter centuries of prophetic exposition, because all interpretations of Daniel are necessarily faulty and incomplete until the book of Daniel is *unsealed*. In other words, certain truths in the book of Daniel were deliberately reserved for the generation that would live "at the time of the end."

### Three Levels of Information

As a person might expect, God buried His secrets in the book of Daniel very well. However, when God wants something known, He enables ordinary men and women to discover extraordinary things He has hidden. Through the ages we find this discovery process at work: *On or about the time of fulfillment, elements of prophecy are understood*. For example, when it came time to understand the timing of Christ's birth, the wise men from the East figured it out. (Matthew 2:2) The apostle Paul also noticed this phenomenon. Consider his words: **"Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."** (Ephesians 3:2-6)

What did God hide in the book of Daniel? The answer to this question requires a little explanation. The book of Daniel offers three levels of knowledge. They are:

1. Dramatic stories of faith
  2. Visions revealing God's plans
  3. Apocalyptic architecture
- The first (and easiest) level of knowledge in Daniel contains dramatic stories of faith in God. These stories of faith and loyalty to God were recorded for the benefit of all generations. However, Earth's final generation will benefit the most from these stories of courage since the fiery trials in the first chapters of the book of Daniel are mini-parallels of coming events. For example, in Daniel 3 we read about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego facing the mandatory worship of a golden *image which the king of Babylon constructed*. In Revelation 13:15, we read about the inhabitants of the world facing the mandatory worship of an *image which the king of modern Babylon will construct*. These parallels and their outcomes were put in the book of Daniel for our encouragement. (Note: I hope you will read my book, *Bible Stories With End Time Parallels*, which reveals end-time issues through the lives of certain Bible characters.)

The second (and more difficult) level of knowledge in Daniel concerns the meaning of the visions in the book of Daniel. The visions God gave to King Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel faithfully predict the passage of time and the fulfillment of all that God predestined to occur. Even more, these visions reveal what God planned to do long before He told Nebuchadnezzar or Daniel of His plans. Because students of prophecy have understood something of Daniel's visions for hundreds of years, we cannot say the visions were entirely sealed up until "the time

of the end." However, something in the book of Daniel was sealed up, and that something uniquely applies to the people who *live at the end* of the world. What is it?

## The Book Unsealed

The third (and deepest) level of knowledge found in Daniel is *the architecture of apocalyptic prophecy*. The prophecies in Daniel conform to a structure or pattern that controls their meaning. The exciting thing about this structure is that it is also present in Revelation! In other words, when you understand how the architecture of Daniel behaves, you will understand the architecture in Revelation because it is the same architecture! This architecture produces four rules (methods of interpretation) that govern the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation. These four rules are like combinations to a safe. When these four rules are applied to the interpretation of the prophecies in Daniel as well as Revelation, a marvelous result occurs. The prophecies make perfect sense *just as they read!* This point is extremely important. Portions of Daniel and Revelation have been a mystery for 2,600 years and then suddenly, the words make sense *just as they read!* What causes this change to occur? When the architecture of Daniel is understood, the contents of Daniel can be understood.

When the four rules found in Daniel are applied to each line of prophecy in Daniel and Revelation, a comprehensive story unfolds that is completely harmonious with everything the Bible has to say about the ways of God. Furthermore, all of the details God gave in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are in perfect harmony and synchrony with each other. The four rules force all of the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation into a chronological matrix of layers that are orderly in nature. To visualize this matrix, think of the seventeen\* prophecies in Daniel and Revelation as a wedding cake of seventeen layers! The larger pieces are at the bottom of the stack and the smaller pieces are on top. The "toothpicks" that hold the seventeen layers together are events that unite and align the seventeen layers in Daniel and Revelation into one grand story. The toothpicks are necessary because two or more layers can describe the same prophetic event! Because the same event is described in two different ways – in two different layers – a precise alignment of the prophecies is not only possible, but essential to understanding the big picture. This feature will be examined in Chapter 3.

## The Value and Importance of Rules

A beginning student of Bible prophecy may not appreciate the necessity of a valid set of rules of interpretation (or hermeneutics) at first, so hopefully the following parallel will help you understand why rules of interpretation are essential to prophetic study: Scientists achieve advances in the study of genetics at the cellular level. By studying various cells within the human body, they have been able to determine how certain cells operate. In more and more cases, they have been able to predict the behavior of cells under controlled circumstances, because they now know some of the *secrets* of proteins and the DNA structure. Scientists are constantly testing for "consistent behavior" within their studies of cells. Once the behavior of a specific cell is understood, cell behavior can be changed or influenced through drugs compounded to produce the desired results. Pharmaceutical companies spend billions of dollars on this type of painstaking research because they know that a genuine cure for most diseases

must occur at the cellular level.

## Consistent Behavior

In a similar way, the architecture in Daniel is distilled through a careful study of Daniel's prophecies. Because the visions within Daniel behave in a predictable way, this behavior allows us to decipher things about the meaning of prophecy that we could not otherwise know. For example, here is a consistent behavior that occurs throughout the book of Daniel. Each of Daniel's prophecies have a beginning point and an ending point in time, and the events in each prophecy occur in the order in which they are given. This behavior may sound simple, but it has profound ramifications. Consider the results of violating this *self-evident* rule. If the events given within each prophecy of Daniel do not occur in their given order, *how*, then, is the order of events determined? This question brings up an even greater question. Does the Bible speak for itself or must it have an interpreter? After many years of study on this question, I find the Bible has to speak for itself and the Bible has to be its own interpreter. The constant and predictable architecture within Daniel's prophecies is the basis for Rule One. This rule is: *Each apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning point and an ending point in time and the events within each prophecy must occur in the order they are given.* Keep in mind, I am not inventing this rule. Instead, I am expressing a consistent behavior that recurs without exception throughout the book of Daniel (as well as Revelation).

When the fulfilled elements of each prophecy in Daniel are aligned with widely published historical records, the validity of Rule One proves true *every time!* The prophecies in the book of Daniel cover more than 2,600 years so far. This great span of time contains everything necessary to validate the four rules that spring from the architecture of Daniel. As a bonus, the book of Daniel provides a historical foundation for certain prophecies in Revelation. Because some of the prophecies in Revelation run parallel to the prophecies in Daniel, we can link them together and establish the timing of events mentioned in both books. So, the discovery of Daniel's architecture, like the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, enables the Bible student to resolve many prophetic mysteries that would otherwise be impossible to solve.

## How Can the Bible Tell Us Things We Don't Want to Believe?

Knowingly or unknowingly, every student of prophecy implements a *method of interpretation* to support his prophetic conclusions. The problem, of course, is that invalid rules will not produce valid conclusions. For example, some people believe, "A day in Bible prophecy *always* equals a year." A rule cannot have an exception, for if it does, who has the authority to determine when the rule should be applied or ignored? So, if we accept the idea that a day for a year rule is *always* true, then the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 would have to be 365,242 years in length. (365.242 days in a year x 1,000 years = 365,242 years) For many reasons, I believe the all-inclusive day-for-a-year rule is invalid. There are places in Daniel and Revelation where God measures time according to the Jubilee Calendar where a day represents a year (like the seventy weeks of Daniel 9), but there are also places in Scripture where God measures time in literal units (like the 42 months in Revelation 13:5). In fact, Rule Four tells us when God is using a day for a year and when He is using literal time. The point is that rules force the conclusions. If

our rules are flawed or inadequate, our prophetic conclusions will be flawed.

Popular eschatology today is "a nose of wax" which expositors manipulate for political, religious or personal reasons. Millions of people believe things that have no truth in them. If an idea is reasonable, then it is believable. However, we cannot ignore the other side of the coin – that reasonableness does not ensure validity. For thousands of years, people believed Earth stood still and the Sun traveled in its orbit around Earth, until Copernicus came along and ruined a very reasonable idea. Rules of interpretation are vitally important to this study of prophecy because students of Bible prophecy need a method whereby the Bible can tell us things that we do not want to believe. We want a valid process whereby the Bible can tell us things that run contrary to everything we believe so that our understanding of God's truth can increase. Therefore, we need rules to test our conclusions and beliefs. In short, valid rules of interpretation allow Bible prophecy to say all that it has to say, and they help us listen to God's truth so that we might learn of His plans.

## Private Interpretation

Any interpretation of prophecy which does not conform to a stated set of valid rules is classified as a "private interpretation." The word "private" in this context does not mean obscure. Millions of people can believe and endorse a private interpretation (and they do). A private interpretation is an interpretation which does not have an external means of validation. In other words, a private interpretation cannot be tested and validated by an impartial jury given a set of stated rules. This emphasizes our need to understand the apocalyptic architecture in Daniel. *There is one architecture in Daniel and Revelation and there is one truth.* Looking for that truth is the joy of every Bible student. Even if we have the right rules of interpretation, the likelihood of reaching the intended meaning is not guaranteed, but it is greatly improved! (It is one thing to have the right formula, but it is another to correctly solve the problem.)

## The Four Rules

When the rules of interpretation are valid, the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation will make sense *just as they read*, because the Bible is its own interpreter. On the other hand, a private interpretation requires an interpreter. An interpreter stands between the Bible and its meaning; whereas, valid rules explain the meaning without a go-between. Consider the difference. A private interpretation prevents people from independently arriving at the same conclusion without the coaxing of an interpreter, but a valid set of rules enables people to arrive at similar conclusions *without* knowing one another. Many Christians believe whatever their leaders say about prophecy without actually studying the conclusions for themselves. Lay people usually "go along" because their church endorses a particular view. Because the subject of Bible prophecy is complex and complicated, and the average Christian does not study prophecy, it is easier to follow the leader. Of course, the mysteries of Bible prophecy will vanish during the Great Tribulation because everyone will see the evidence of what is predicted in Bible prophecy. However, until the Great Tribulation begins, we need a set of valid rules to guide our prophetic faith. If our rules of interpretation are valid, the books of Daniel and Revelation will form a unified story. A comprehensive explanation of God's ways will unfold in a drama that is in perfect

harmony with all Scripture!

Since the following four rules will be used frequently throughout this book, you may want to bookmark this page. After several years of study and discovery, I am excited to share with you the *combination* that unlocks the books of Daniel and Revelation. The four rules are:

1. Each apocalyptic prophecy has a beginning and ending point in time and the events within each prophecy must occur in the order they are given.
2. A fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy occurs when all of the specifications within that prophecy are met. This includes the order of events outlined in the prophecy.
3. Apocalyptic language can be literal, symbolic or analogous. To reach the intended meaning of a prophecy, the student must consider: (a) the context, (b) the use of parallel language in the Bible, and (c) relevant statements in the Bible that define that symbol if an element is thought to be symbolic.
4. God reckons apocalyptic time in two ways: (a) a day for a year, and (b) as literal time. The presence or absence of the Jubilee calendar determines how God reckons time.

By the time you finish this book, I hope you will find my conclusions to be consistent with these four rules. Test the rules to see if they are valid and test my conclusions to see if they align with the rules. Do not forget – God sealed up the book of Daniel until the time of the end because the message in Daniel and Revelation uniquely belongs to the last generation. Ours is *the* generation that will experience the Great Tribulation, and when it begins, the whole world will be caught up in a drama of unimaginable consequences. Because God's forthcoming behavior will be shocking and outrageous during the Great Tribulation, God has unsealed the book of Daniel so that the last generation might understand His ways and some of His purposes before the Great Tribulation begins. **"The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, 'though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.'** " (Luke 8:10)

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