

Discovering What the Future Holds



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BIBLE STUDIES

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PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



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P R E S S

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Italics in Scripture quotations reflect the author's added emphasis.

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This small-group study is for people who are interested in learning for themselves more about what the Bible says on various subjects, but who have only limited time to meet together. It's ideal, for example, for a lunch group at work, an early morning men's group, a young mother's group meeting in a home, a Sunday-school class, or even family devotions. (It's also ideal for small groups that typically have longer meeting times—such as evening groups or Saturday morning groups—but want to devote only a portion of their time together to actual study, while reserving the rest for prayer, fellowship, or other activities.)

This book is designed so that all the group's participants will complete each lesson's study activities *at the same time*. Discussing your insights drawn from what God says about the subject reveals exciting, life-impacting truths.

Although it's a group study, you'll need a facilitator to lead the study and keep the discussion moving. (This person's function is *not* that of a lecturer or teacher. However, when this book is used in a Sunday-school class or similar setting, the teacher should feel free to lead more directly and to bring in other insights in addition to those provided in each week's lesson.)

If *you* are your group's facilitator, the leader, here are some helpful points for making your job easier:

- Go through the lesson and mark the text before you lead the group. This will give you increased familiarity with the material and will enable you to facilitate the group with greater ease. It may be easier for you to lead the group through the instructions for marking if you as a leader choose a specific color for each symbol you mark.

- As you lead the group, start at the beginning of the text and simply read it aloud in the order it appears in the lesson, including the Insight boxes, which appear throughout. Work through the lesson together, observing and discussing what you learn. As you read the Scripture verses, have the group say aloud the word they are marking in the text.
- The discussion questions are there simply to help you cover the material. As the class moves into the discussion, many times you will find that they will cover the questions on their own. Remember the discussion questions are there to guide the group through the topic, not to squelch discussion.
- Remember how important it is for people to verbalize their answers and discoveries. This greatly strengthens their personal understanding of each week's lesson. Try to ensure that everyone has plenty of opportunity to contribute to each week's discussions.
- Keep the discussion moving. This may mean spending more time on some parts of the study than on others. If necessary, you should feel free to spread out a lesson over more than one session. However, remember that you don't want to slow the pace too much. It's much better to leave everyone "wanting more" than to have people dropping out because of declining interest.
- If the validity or accuracy of some of the answers seems questionable, you can gently and cheerfully remind the group to stay focused on the truth of the Scriptures. Your object is to learn what the Bible says, not to engage in human philosophy. Simply stick with the Scriptures and give God the opportunity to speak. His Word *is* truth (John 17:17)!

DISCOVERING WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

With all that is transpiring in the world, people cannot help but wonder what the future holds. Will there ever be peace on the earth? Will the nations learn how to live in harmony with one another? Will there ever be a peaceful resolution between Israel and the Palestinians? How long will the world live under the threat of terrorism? Is a one-world ruler on the horizon?

What does the future hold for the various nations of the world? Can we know? If so, when will it happen? Where will it happen? And where do we as individuals fit into all this?

The Old Testament prophet Amos wrote, “Surely the Lord GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets” (Amos

3:7). If this is true, then God already has revealed to His people what the future holds. We've no need to worry or wonder, because He's given us a sneak preview.

Together, we're going to explore the prophecies of Daniel, which give us a clearer picture of the future than any other book of the Bible does. And as we learn, as your faith and knowledge increase, you'll find your questions replaced with trust in the One who holds the future in His hands.

WEEK ONE

If you want to construct a building that will stand firm and solid through an earthquake or any other cataclysmic event, you need to work with an experienced architect whose blueprints are followed to the letter.

God, of course, is the Architect of history and of the future, and the book of Daniel the prophet reveals His blueprints. In fact, when you understand the prophecies laid out in Daniel, you discover that every other prophecy in the Bible fits somewhere into His blueprints.

Therefore, if you want to build a solid understanding of the future and know what will happen in the “end of the days,” you need to begin with the prophecies laid out in the book of Daniel.

Many people have a tendency to throw up their hands the moment Daniel is mentioned and say, “But how can a person understand this book? It’s so confusing!” The problem is that many bring their own interpretations to this book, rather than allowing the interpretations given in the book to speak for themselves.

In the light of this, let’s see what we can discover simply by observing the text carefully, without bringing any of our interpretations to it.

OBSERVE

Through the course of this study, we will look at each of the prophetic passages in Daniel that give insight into what will take place in the future.

Our first text is Daniel 2:25-45. Since we are breaking into the middle of the

DANIEL 2:25-30

²⁵ Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king’s presence and spoke to him as follows: “I have found a man among the exiles

from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!”

26 The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?”


27 Daniel answered before the king and said, “As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.

28 “However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar

chapter, let’s first look at the context of this passage: Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, has had a disturbing dream, which none of his wise men can interpret. They say they cannot interpret the dream because they don’t know what the king dreamed—and Nebuchadnezzar won’t tell them. Consequently, the king is threatening to have them all put to death, including four Jewish captives who now serve Nebuchadnezzar.

When Daniel, one of the four Jewish prisoners, hears of this, he asks for time to seek counsel from the God of heaven so that God might reveal to him the dream and its interpretation. Here is where we pick up the story.

Leader: *Read aloud Daniel 2:25-30. As you read, have the group...*


- draw a cloud, like this , around every reference to the **dream, mystery, or vision**.
- put a ? over every occurrence of the word **interpretation**.

As you read the text, it’s helpful to have the group say those key words aloud as they mark

them. This way everyone will be sure they are marking every occurrence of the word, including any synonymous words or phrases.

DISCUSS

***Leader:** Discuss only what the group observes in the text itself. Please refrain from trying to interpret it. If people interject their thoughts, opinions, or speculations, the group will be unable to see for themselves what the pure text of Scripture reveals.*

- Looking at what the group has marked, see what you can find out about the dream. Ask the “five Ws and an H”—who, what, when, where, why, and how—and see what the text tells you about the dream. For example: Who had the dream, what was it about, when did they have it, where, and why?
- If you come across any reference to time—the *when* of something—mark it by drawing a clock  over the phrase.

what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed.

²⁹ “As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place.

³⁰ “But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.”

- When you finish, have someone summarize the dream.

INSIGHT

The phrase “in the latter days” would be literally translated from the Hebrew as “end of the days.” You will see this key phrase repeated as you study Daniel.

DANIEL 2:31-35

31 “You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome.

32 “The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze,

OBSERVE

Leader: Read aloud Daniel 2:31-35. Have the group...

- underline every reference to **the statue**, including the pronoun **its**.
- circle every reference to **the stone**.

DISCUSS

- What did you learn about the statue from verse 31?

- Looking particularly at verses 32 and 33, how are the different parts of the statue distinguished from one another? Mark them on the sketch below.



- What did you learn from marking the references to the statue and the stone in verses 34 and 35? Don't miss a detail.

33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

34 “You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.

35 “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

DANIEL 2:36-39

36 “This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king.


37 “You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory;

38 and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.

39 “After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.”

OBSERVE

Leader: Read Daniel 2:36-39 aloud. Have the group do the following:

- Mark every reference to **the king** with a box:
- Draw a cloud  around each occurrence of **dream**.
- Put a ? over **interpretation**.

DISCUSS

- What did you learn from the words you marked?
- What did you learn from marking the references to the king? Record your insights on the drawing of the statue on page 7.

OBSERVE

Leader: Read Daniel 2:40-43 aloud. Have the group...

- mark every reference to the **fourth kingdom**, including the pronoun **it**, like this:
- draw a box around every reference to the **feet** and **toes**, like this:

DISCUSS

- What did you learn about the kingdom from verses 40-41? How is it referred to and how is it described? What part of the statue is associated with this kingdom?
- What did you learn from marking *feet* and *toes* in verses 41-43?

DANIEL 2:40-43

40 “Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.

41 “In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay.

42 “As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle.

43 “And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.”

DANIEL 2:44-45



44 “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

45 “Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands

- What does this tell you about the fourth kingdom? What will it be like? (Don’t bring in any references outside of the text; simply allow scripture to interpret scripture.) By observing the feet and toes, how many major divisions and minor divisions are given to us in this imagery? What is the relationship of the toes to one another?

OBSERVE

Leader: Read Daniel 2:44-45 aloud. Have the group...

- mark every reference to **time** with a clock, like this: 
- mark every reference to **stone** with a circle: 
- mark each occurrence of **dream** with a cloud and each occurrence of **interpretation** with a question mark, as before.

DISCUSS

- What did you learn from marking the references to time?

- When will God set up a kingdom, and what did you learn about that kingdom from these verses?
 - Who are “those kings” mentioned in verse 44? Read back over verses 40-43 to get the context and flow. Once you discover who “those kings” refers to, mark the phrase accordingly.
 - What did you learn from marking the references to the stone? What will happen to the other kingdoms?
 - According to verses 44-45, what does the stone represent?
 - Read back through the full text of the verses we’ve looked at, beginning with
- and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”

verse 31. According to this dream, how many kingdoms will precede God's kingdom? Draw an arrow to each of them as represented on the statue below, then number them.



- When the stone sets up His kingdom, what will happen to the existing kingdom? How would knowing this help keep people from being deceived about the coming of the Lord and the establishment of His kingdom on earth?
- How accurate is the dream and its interpretation?

WRAP IT UP

Do you realize the significance of what you have just read? By considering only what the text says, what has God told you is to come? At this point, you don't want to speculate about any information not included in this passage. All you want to do is make sure you have a grasp of the facts God has given you in this prophetic dream.

God has laid out His blueprint for history, a blueprint that takes us from the Babylonian Empire of Daniel's time to the rule of God on earth—a kingdom that will never be destroyed. His kingdom will be established “in the days of those kings.” What kings? The kings of the ten toes of iron and clay on two feet.

Although we might not understand it all, Scripture declares that this dream is true and its interpretation is accurate. So we know that God's kingdom cannot come on earth until there is a fourth kingdom of two divisions with ten kings, loosely aligned, some stronger than others.

If you're familiar with history, it will be obvious to you that the event described here still lies ahead, in the future. The question is, could all this take place in your lifetime? If so, would it make a difference in the way you are living—realizing that someday you will stand before the God of heaven? Wouldn't it cause you to align yourself with the Word of God even though it might not be politically correct or even seem reasonable in this day and age? Wouldn't it cause you to examine where you put your trust as circumstances change? And wouldn't it cause you to evaluate the way you spend your time and resources?

Revelation 22:12 says that when Jesus returns as King of kings and Lord of lords, His reward will be with Him to give “to every man according to what he has done” (Revelation 22:12).

What will you receive? What will He say to you?