

remnants eventually became the various nations of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East that we know today. The stone's destruction of the image represents the destruction of these nations at the end of the world, after which God will establish His own eternal kingdom.

What's so amazing

Now, here's what's so astonishing about this prophecy. Daniel wrote it sometime around the year 600 B.C. He was acquainted with Babylon since he lived there, and he may have known of Medo-Persia at the time he wrote this prophecy—although that power didn't overthrow Babylon until years later. But humanly speaking, there's no way Daniel could have predicted the rise and fall of Greece and Rome or the breakup of the Roman Empire. Yet every high school textbook on world history testifies that Nebuchadnezzar's dream was fulfilled exactly as Daniel gave it to the king!

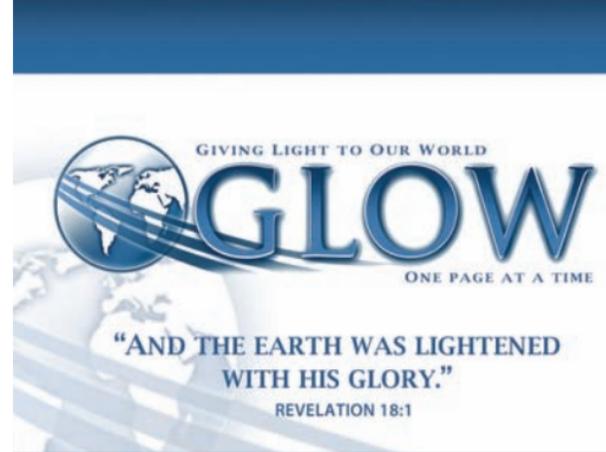
Some Bible commentators claim that Daniel wrote only about one hundred fifty

years before Christ rather than in about 600 B.C., as he claimed. So, they say, there was nothing supernatural about his outline of history. But even if Daniel had written his prophecies in 150 B.C., there is no way he could have known about the breakup of the Roman Empire into many divisions, which occurred some four hundred years later.

So, an amazing fact confronts us: A prophet who lived more than twenty-five hundred years ago peered down the stream of time and gave a presciently accurate outline of the future.

We can draw no other conclusion from this than that Daniel received this outline of the future from God Himself. And because everything else in Daniel's portrayal of world history has been fulfilled, we can be sure that the last event—the end of the world as we know it and the establishment of God's own kingdom—will also happen.

*Daniel 2 records this prophecy. Daniel 1 sets the scene.



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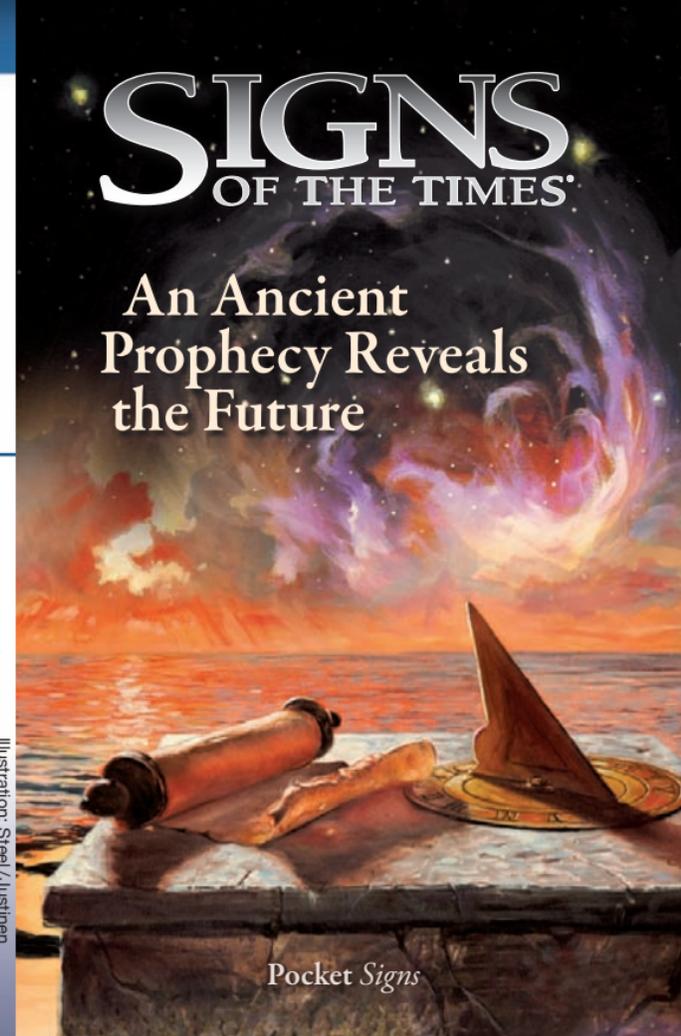
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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

An Ancient Prophecy Reveals the Future



An Ancient Prophecy Reveals the Future

One of the world's most ancient prophecies declares that our planet is about to experience the most dramatic event in human history: the end of civilization as we know it. This prophecy does not specify a date—neither a year nor a decade nor even a century. Nevertheless, its outline of human history has been so accurate that the final step—the only one left to be fulfilled—is absolutely certain.

The story begins with the tragic deportation of thousands of Jews from their homeland in Palestine.* Among the captives whom King Nebuchadnezzar took to Babylon were four young princes: Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In a move that seems strange to us but that was common in those days, Nebuchadnezzar enrolled these four young men in the “University of Babylon” to be trained as royal advisors.

Nebuchadnezzar's nightmare

Sometime after this, the king had a dream. Actually, it was a nightmare that

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haunted him but that he couldn't remember the next morning. Convinced of the dream's importance, Nebuchadnezzar called in his royal advisors and asked them to tell him both what he had dreamed and what his dream meant.

These “wise men” protested the preposterous demand. But the king said, “Either tell me the dream or I'll have you executed!” Despite the death threat, however, the royal advisors couldn't come up with a credible answer.

Now, Daniel and his three friends hadn't been called to the palace with the rest of the king's council. However, perhaps because they were wise-men-in-training, the decree included them. When the officers came to arrest them, Daniel asked for a bit more time. The request was granted, and that night God gave Daniel the very same dream Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed. (God had been the One who had given it to the king in the first place.) The next morning the arresting officer brought Daniel before the king.

2

Daniel explains the dream

After the formalities of greeting were over, Daniel told the king what he had dreamed: “ ‘You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue.’ ” The head of the statue was made of gold, its arms and chest were of silver, its waist of brass, its legs of iron, and the image's feet were made of iron and clay mixed. As the dream proceeded, a huge stone came out of nowhere, knocked the image down, and ground it to powder. The stone then became a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

Naturally, the king was anxious to know what the dream meant. The beginning of Daniel's explanation must have filled him with pride: “ ‘You, O king, . . . are that head of gold.’ ” But his next words weren't so flattering: “ ‘After you another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours.’ ” Daniel explained that altogether, three kingdoms would follow Babylon. Most Bible interpreters agree that they represent Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

But Rome was the last in the succession of powerful empires. When it broke up, its

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