

Sure Signs of Christ's Return – Session 3

What to Expect After Armageddon

FILLING THE EARTH WITH GOD'S GLORY

While popular culture often portrays Armageddon as “the end”, the Bible portrays it as an important step in the beginning of the Kingdom of GOD here on the earth. With Jesus' victory at Armageddon and the liberation of Israel, the entire world will be introduced to the Son of God and his role as king over God's Kingdom.

To understand what is going to unfold on the earth, we have to understand the ultimate future God has been working toward since the very first day of creation. Consider what God says to Isaiah:

Isaiah 45:18

For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, **he formed it to be inhabited**: I am the LORD; and there is none else.

This theme begins all the way back in the first chapters of Genesis where God blesses Adam and Eve and later Noah with the words, “*be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.*” Simply put, God wants to fill the earth with people.

The events of The Flood (Genesis 6-9) make it clear that there's actually a bit more to it. During the lifetime of Noah mankind filled the earth with wickedness and violence. We're told that every imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts was only evil continually (cp. Genesis 6:5, 11). As a result, God sends The Flood to cleanse the earth, killing all but 8 people. Clearly, God doesn't want the earth to be full of wicked, violent people. So what kind of people does God want to fill the earth with?

Numbers 14:21

But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

Habakkuk 2:14

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

In the simplest terms, God wants to fill the earth with people that reflect His glory (see Exodus 34:5-7). That's obviously not the world we live in today. The world we live in looks a lot more like Noah's world: filled with wickedness and violence where every imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts is only evil continually.

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THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL 2

Daniel 2 is one of the most powerful prophecies in the Old Testament. It lays out a series of historical events beginning in Daniel's lifetime and continuing through the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God here on the earth.

Even though these events take place halfway around the world more than 2000 years ago, they couldn't be more relevant to YOU and me today! The most important thing to take away from Daniel 2 is that God predicted how human history would unfold from Daniel's day to the present...and even beyond. So far, that prediction has been stunningly accurate! If God accurately predicted 2000 years of human history, that's pretty compelling evidence for the reliability of His predictions about the future.

Daniel was among the Jewish nobility deported to Babylon during the reign of one of Judah's last kings (Daniel 1:1-6; cp. 2 Chronicles 36:6-7). Because of his faithful obedience to God, he ends up serving in the highest levels of Babylonian government. The events recorded in Daniel 2 are likely the beginning of his rise to prominence.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

As Daniel 2 opens we find Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, in a situation familiar to many of us. He's roused from sleep by a particularly troubling dream.

Daniel 2:1-2

1 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. 2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

This obviously wasn't the garden variety nightmare. The sense of the passage is that the dream was so disturbing that it woke Nebuchadnezzar and he immediately called for his counselors to interpret its meaning. To be certain that they don't just make something up, Nebuchadnezzar demands that his counselors begin by telling him what he dreamt first. This was completely beyond the king's counselors, but it isn't beyond the God of heaven. Through Daniel, God reveals what Nebuchadnezzar dreamt and its interpretation.

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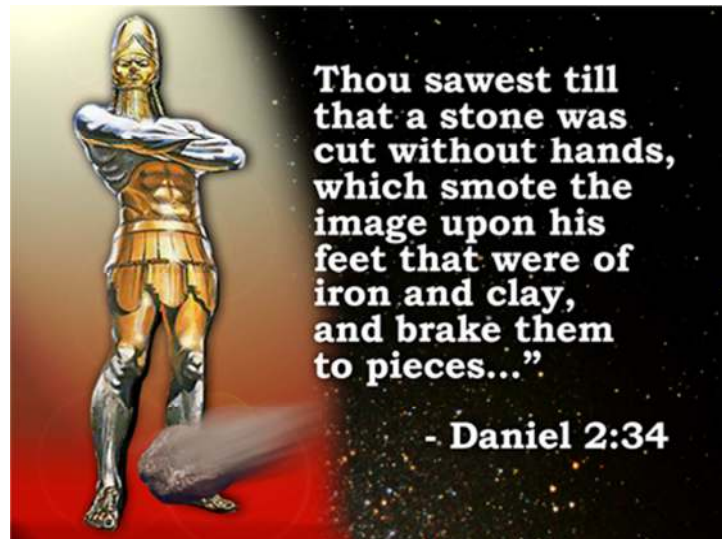
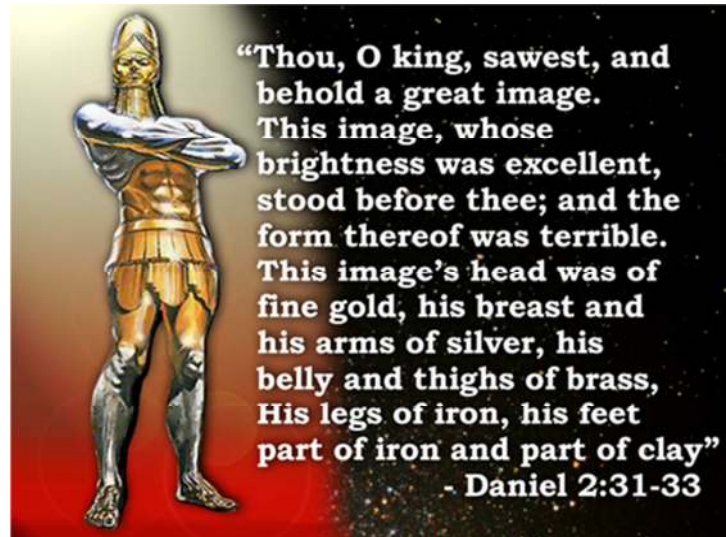
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The Dream

The summation of the dream is found in verses 31-35.

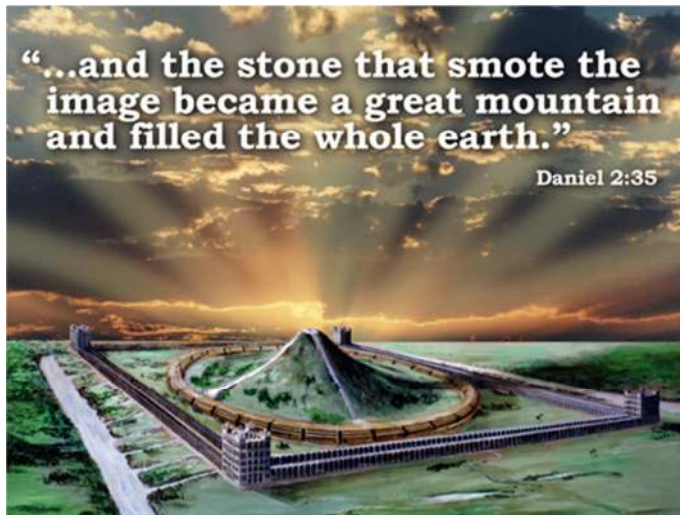
The king sees a great image of a man, with different metals for different sections. At the top was a head of gold, followed by a chest and arms of silver, a belly and thigh of brass, and then legs of iron. At the bottom of the image, the feet were a mixture of iron and clay.

In the dream, Nebuchadnezzar sees a stone “cut without hands” strike the image on the feet and break it to pieces so small that they’re blown away by the wind “like the chaff of the summer threshing floors” (v. 35).



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But the dream didn't stop with the destruction of the image. The stone that struck and destroyed it grows until it becomes a mountain that fills the whole earth*.

It was an amazing dream, and certainly one that left the king perplexed and scared.

The beauty of Daniel 2 is that we're given a clear concise interpretation of this dream beginning in verse 37.

**Compare the description of the stone to the sentiments expressed in Isaiah 45:18, Numbers 14:21 and Habakkuk 2:14.*

The Interpretation

Verses 37-44 of Daniel 2 explain that this image represents the Kingdom of Men. The different metals represent a succession of different empires. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar "Thou art this head of gold." So the head of gold represents Nebuchadnezzar's Kingdom, which was Babylon.



Daniel continues in verse 39, "And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee." Later chapters in Daniel predict that this power would be the Medo-Persian Empire. Both secular history and the Bible confirm that this is exactly what happened. In fact, Daniel 5 records the fall of Babylon at the hands of Darius the Mede.

Verse 39 goes on to say that a third kingdom of brass "shall bear rule over all the earth."

The belly and thighs of brass represent the kingdom what would bring an end to the Medo-Persian Empire. Daniel 8 predicts that this kingdom would be Greece. Secular history confirms that the Greeks, led by Alexander the Great, conquered the Persians.

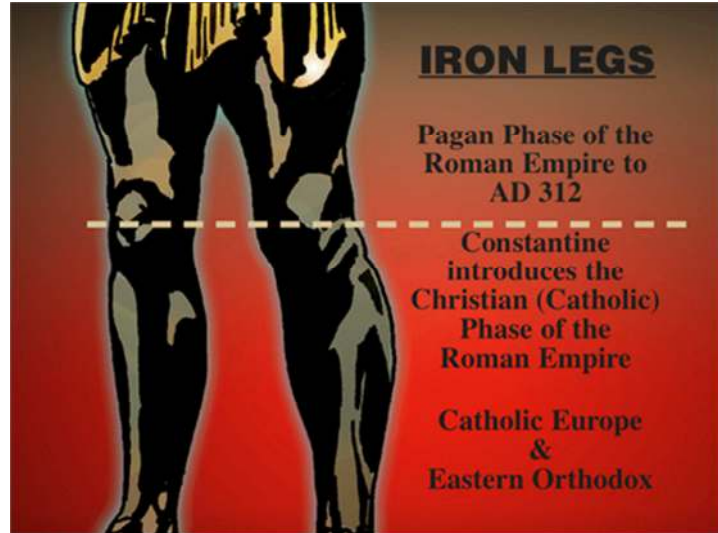
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This brings us to the fourth metal, iron. Verse 40 tells us, “the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.”

The legs of iron represent the kingdom that came along after the Greeks to knit together the vast territory Alexander had so quickly conquered and just as quickly lost in his death. This kingdom was, of course, Rome.

The legs of iron illustrate how amazingly accurate Nebuchadnezzar's dream was as a detailed description of how events would unfold. After several hundred years, Rome split into Eastern and Western Empires, reflecting the 2 legs of the image.



There were also two distinct religious phases. The first of these was paganism. Then in AD 312, under Emperor Constantine, the official state religion changed from paganism to Christianity. The legs above the knee corresponds to the pagan religious phase and the legs below the knee correspond to the Christian religious phase.

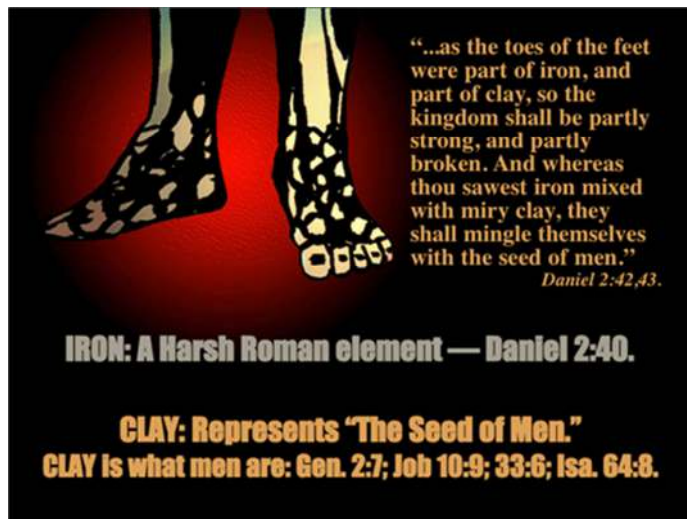
But of course, the image doesn't end with the legs of iron. It goes into the feet. Beginning in verse 41 we read:

Daniel 7:41-43

41 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. 42 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. 43 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.

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The Roman Empire ultimately crumbled giving rise to many smaller kingdoms that evolved into modern day Europe. Modern Europe is a collection of nations, some strong (iron) and some weak (clay).

So, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream represents a succession of kingdoms that would dominate the Middle East, Europe and Northern Africa.

The Stone cut out without hands - Jesus Christ

The significance of the stone that strikes the image and grows into a mountain to fill the whole earth is explained in verse 44.

Daniel 7:44

And in the days of these kings [depicted in the feet] 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.

This passage makes it clear that the stone that strikes the image is sent by God. This stone overcomes the Kingdom of Men and grows into the Kingdom of God which will “stand for ever”. This stone is the Lord Jesus Christ.

What ought to be REALLY interesting to all of us is that the era described by the feet of iron and clay, the era we live in, is the very era when the stone, cut out without hands, strikes the feet of the image and ultimately destroys it.

The stone striking the image on the feet corresponds to the battle of Armageddon. And yet, the destruction of the image is only the first part of the stone’s work. It goes on to grow into the Kingdom of God, which will fill the earth ... filling it with God’s glory from one end to the other.

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The Kingdom of God will be established here in the earth just as surely as Babylon was followed by Medo-Persia and Persia by Greece, and Greece by Rome, and Rome by the present European Union. God **IS** in control. He **IS** directing world events to bring about the day when the Kingdom of Men will be overthrown by the Kingdom of God. At that time it can be said:

Revelation 11:15

The Kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

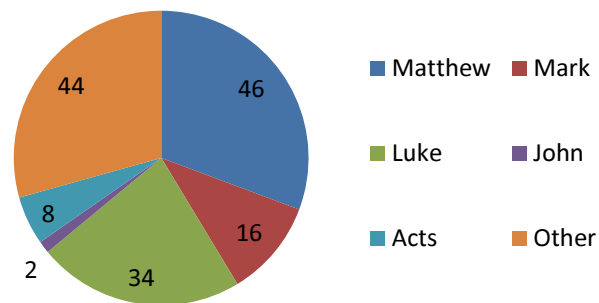
THE KINGDOM IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES

The New Testament is the first and best Old Testament commentary available. If the Kingdom is an important theme in the Old Testament it ought to be prominent in the New Testament as well.

As it turns out, the coming Kingdom of GOD is central to the message preached by Jesus and His apostles. Jesus touches on this very point in Luke 4:42-44 when he says "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: **for therefore am I sent.**" Clearly, preaching about the Kingdom of God was central to Jesus' mission.

The theme of the Kingdom occurs ~150 times throughout the New Testament. More than 100 of those occurrences can be found in the first 5 books, which record the ministry of Jesus Christ and His apostles.

The Kingdom in the New Testament



The following list is a select sample of references to the Kingdom in the teaching of Jesus and His apostles.

	Reference(s)
Jesus	Matthew 4:23; 6:9-15, 33; 9:35; 24:14; 25:1-46;
	Mark 1:14-15, 4:11-12, 26-32
	Luke 4:42-44, 8:1, 10
	Acts 1:1-8
The Apostles	Luke 9:1-2, 6; Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 30-31;

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THE KINGDOM AND THE GOSPEL

The Gospel: More than John 3:16

The word “gospel” means “good news”. Many in Christianity today understand the Gospel to be conveniently summarized in John 3:16.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

There's no doubt that John 3:16 has a bearing on The Gospel but it very clearly is NOT an adequate summary. The focal point of the gospel message is the Kingdom of God which is conspicuously absent from John 3:16. The following passages illustrate the strong connection between The Gospel and the Kingdom of God.

- Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 24:14
- Mark 1:14-15
- Acts 20:24-25

Comparing the commission that Jesus gives the apostles in Matthew 24:14 with that same commission in Acts 1 illustrates that the Kingdom is at the heart of The Gospel message.

Matthew 24:14

And this **gospel of the kingdom** shall be preached in all the world for **a witness unto all nations**; and then shall the end come.

Acts 1:1-8

3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and **speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God**:

...

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, **wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?**

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and **ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**

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There's no question that Jesus is an integral part of The Gospel but its focus is the Kingdom of God. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are important to The Gospel message precisely because Jesus makes it possible for you and me to be a part of the Kingdom of God.

Under Attack

This modern confusion about the substance of The Gospel message brings up an important point. Almost since the moment Jesus and the apostles began to preach The Gospel it has been under attack. Jesus offers the following warning in Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:24-25

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25 Behold, I have told you before.

We find a similar warning offered by Paul in Acts 20:17-31. In Paul's letter to the Galatians (1:6-9) we find evidence that the danger was very real. The churches in the Roman province of Galatia had been drawn away from The Gospel taught by Jesus and His apostles and Paul offers this sobering warning.

Galatians 1:6-9

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

If this could happen less than a generation after it was first preached then how much vigilant do disciples of Jesus Christ need to be 2000 years later?

Paul touches on what's at stake in his letter to the Christians living in Rome. What's at stake is salvation. There's no salvation in a counterfeit gospel. Only faith in the true Gospel taught by Jesus and His apostles leads to salvation.

Romans 1:16-17

16 For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**: for **it is the power of God unto salvation** to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND US

So, the Kingdom is at the heart of The Gospel and The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to those that believe it. In other words, salvation is the outworking of faith in The Gospel. This is why Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God.

So what is faith and where does it come from? Faith is conviction based on the evidence of God's word. Romans 10:17 tells us that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 4:13-15 tells us that faith is believing that GOD keeps his promises. That requires us to know what God has promised and the Bible is the best and only authority on the promises of God.

Prophecy is an incredible resource for the development of faith. In effect, it's a promise about how the future will unfold. When those promises are fulfilled it gives us a reason to believe the rest of the promises God has made.

As we saw in Daniel 2, God has promised to setup a Kingdom here on the earth that will stand forever. We stand on the threshold of the fulfillment of that promise. And, unlike modern marketing, the reality of the Kingdom of God will surpass our expectations rather than fall short of them (cp. 1 Corinthians 2:9).

What's truly remarkable is that God genuinely wants us to be there. In Luke 12 (32) Jesus says "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." It is God's good pleasure to give the Kingdom to those that please him through faith in the true Gospel (cp. Hebrews 11:6). If we decide to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness then there's nothing that can prevent us from finding them (Matthew 7:7-11 cp. Romans 8:38-39).

We hope to be with you in the crowd of faithful to whom Jesus says:

Matthew 25:34

Come, ye blessed of my Father, **inherit the kingdom prepared for you** from the foundation of the world: