



AN INTELLIGENT FAITH?



Giving Light to Our World

The war was raging on the Russian front. Germany's forces had driven into the heart of Russia with *blitzkrieg* speed. Hitler vowed that the Third Reich, uniting Europe and Russia, would last a thousand years. German corporal Franz Hasel was the clerk of Pioneer Park Unit 699, a bridge-building engineering unit in the southern flank of the Russian front. For several years they fought their way through the Ukraine and over the Caucasus mountains toward the city of Baku and the Caspian Sea containing the Russians' oil reserves.

One day Franz's commanding officer asked him a direct question: "Do you think Germany will win the war?" Expected to patriotically toe the nationalistic line, Franz hesitated. Then he quietly asked, "Is this an official or unofficial question?" The officer removed his hat and told Franz he could answer unofficially. Franz reached into his pocket and pulled out a worn, black book. He reverently opened the Bible to Daniel, chapter 2 and began to read an ancient story.

THE GREAT STATUE IN HISTORY

Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest king of Babylon, had experienced a terrible dream, but when

he awoke, he couldn't remember it. Daniel, a Hebrew captive, told the king, "There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days" (**Daniel 2:28**). This dream would reveal the future.

Daniel then described to Nebuchadnezzar his dream of a man's image made of metals: (1) a head of gold, (2) arms and chest of silver, (3) thighs of bronze, (4) legs of iron, (5) and feet of iron mixed with clay. Daniel declared, "You are this head of gold" (**Daniel 2:38**), identifying Babylon as the first kingdom. "But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze..." (**Daniel 2:39**).

Franz explained that Babylon was conquered by Cyrus the Great in 539 BC, ushering in the Medo-Persian empire. After Xerxes desecrated the temples on the acropolis of Athens, the Greeks dreamed of avenging themselves. In 334 BC Alexander the Great crossed into Asia, conquering the Medo-Persian empire. This established the third kingdom—the Greek or Hellenistic empire. "And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and

like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others" (**Daniel 2:40**). Franz described how ancient Rome overthrew Greece in 168 BC, establishing an empire that encompassed all of Europe.

But Rome would not last. "Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay." The toes represent the broken up Roman empire into the European nations, Franz continued. "As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay" (**Daniel 2:41-43**). "Royal families tried to hold Europe together through inter-marriage. Napoleon tried to reunite it militarily, but each failed. The succeeding empires from Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century BC to the present demonstrate that this prophecy is sure. Europe was not united then; it will not be united now under a Third Reich. Hitler cannot win this war." Franz's commanding officer was silent. Then he ordered Franz to a second meeting the next day and dismissed him.

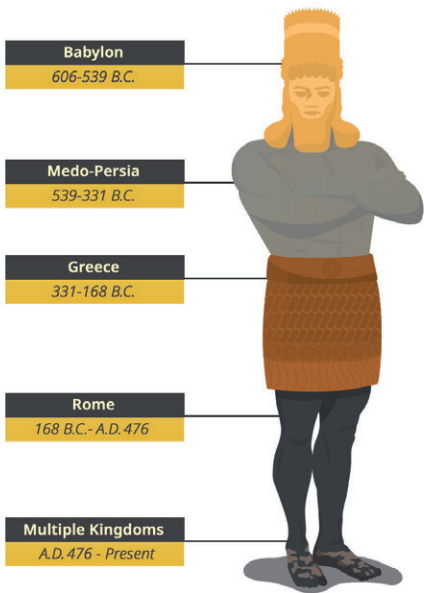
The next day Franz was surprised to see two other high-ranking officers present. He was asked to repeat the entire study. After nearly two hours, he again concluded that Hitler could not win. Now his commanding officer introduced the two men. They were both history professors at leading German universities before being drafted into the Wehrmacht. "They have confirmed the historical sequence of empires and dates provided," he said. After dismissing the professors, he asked Franz to quietly ration gasoline and operate only a third of their motorized vehicles in the days to come. Some months later, Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945. The rationed gasoline provided for Unit 699's retreat back to Austria.

HISTORY, PROPHECY, AND ARCHAEOLOGY

The Bible assumes God is the central actor on the stage of history and prophecy, allowing us to rationally and objectively test its accuracy. The interplay of history and prophecy is not contained in any other sacred text of major world religions. As a historian and archaeologist, I have spent decades investigating the Bible's history and have seen hundreds of ways

that history has been corroborated. There are texts from Nebuchadnezzar himself that verify his existence (and over a hundred other individuals mentioned in the Bible), his specific attacks against Jerusalem, and records documenting the removed Judean captives as they were resettled in Babylonia. When we excavate the massive destructions by Nebuchadnezzar's armies in cities like Jerusalem and Lachish, we see the evidence of fulfilled prophecies that predicted those events (Micah 3:12; Isaiah 22:10-21; **Jeremiah 32:26-35**).

If a dream to an ancient king can predict the outcome of the deadliest war in modern human history, what certainty can the Bible give you of God's existence in this uncertain world? My grandfather Franz believed and trusted the Bible during his years on the Russian front. Today, as a scientist investigating Biblical history through archaeology, I am privileged to witness increasing evidence for an intelligent faith.



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GIVING LIGHT
TO OUR WORLD

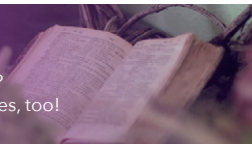


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