

THE BOOK OF SIGNS

THE BOOK OF SIGNS

**31 UNDENIABLE PROPHECIES
OF THE APOCALYPSE**

DR. DAVID JEREMIAH



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*To four prophetic scholars who have greatly impacted my life:
Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost and Dr. Tim LaHaye
who are living in heaven, and
Dr. Ed Hindson and Dr. Mark Hitchcock who are living on earth.*

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PROLOGUE

Can you remember back to the last time you drove along an interstate or highway? Perhaps it was only a few hours ago, or perhaps significantly longer. Either way, I'm certain your driving experience included interacting with signs—probably quite a few signs if you live close to a major city, as I do.

Many of the signs posted along our modern roads are informational; they tell us what we need to know. “Interstate 5 San Diego,” for example. Or “Exit 74, 5 Miles.” Other signs are invitational; they seek to capture our attention and pique our interest. Think of signs such as “Welcome to Texas” or “Great Food This Exit!” Some of the most important signs we encounter on our highways are warning signs; they alert us to possible dangers on the road ahead. I pay attention whenever I see a sign marked “Detour,” for example, or “Right Lane Closed.”

Whether offered as information, invitation, or warning, each sign we encounter along the road is designed to help us move from where we are to where we want to be. In a similar way, God in His providence has placed a number of critical signs along the highway we call human history. We often think of these signs as prophecies, and we have been made aware of them through the prophetic vehicle of God’s Word, the Bible.

Some of the signs we encounter in the Scriptures are informational,

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some are invitational, and many offer warnings about the road ahead—warnings that apply to both our present and our future. All of these signs are important, and none should be ignored.

That's why I've written this book.

WHY STUDY THE SIGNS?

Throughout the history of the church, the prophetic portions of Scripture have received an enormous amount of literary attention. Countless books claim to offer insight on the hundreds of topics related to biblical prophecy, all of them written from a wide variety of theological perspectives and positions on how to interpret Scripture. These studies can create a variety of questions, concerns, and even confusion in our minds. Sometimes it is difficult to see how obscure passages, distant places, and unfamiliar symbols can have any significance for our lives. After all, if we can't understand what the Bible is teaching, how in the world can it have any relevance to what we are experiencing today?

This drive to understand has been a major foundation of my ministry for decades—including the drive to understand and apply the truths communicated through biblical prophecy. My interest in that subject as a preacher and a writer has always been anchored in my love for the Bible, which I believe to be the inspired Word of God. I find it fascinating that the Bible dedicates more space to the subject of prophecy than almost any other. There are over eighteen hundred prophecies in God's Word concerning the first and second coming of Jesus Christ alone!

Obviously, prophecy is important to God, and He desires for us to understand His plans. He has given us His signs for a reason.

Not coincidentally, people have always been fascinated with the future. In the uncertain and often anxious times in which we live, all of us yearn to see ahead, to know, and perhaps to avert disaster. Therefore, I count it a privilege to help people find their place in the great pattern of prophetic

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events foretold by God's prophets, written out in Scripture, and confirmed in the headlines of the day.

As you read through *The Book of Signs*, you will find a comprehensive exploration of these prophecies and signs. You will see not only how God's Word offers insights into the future, but also how Scripture builds faith through the events of the past and encouragement in the uncertainty of the present.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

Before we move forward, what do I mean by "signs"? The conventional definition of a biblical sign is somewhat broad. It can be an event, symbol, object, place, or person whose existence or occurrence indicates something important in God's plan for history. There are any number of ways such signs can present themselves, but all express a particular meaning, help us know what to pay attention to, or point to what will be coming.

You will discover in these pages that God has taken great care to communicate in a way we can understand. Jesus Himself talked about signs verifying His first coming, signs portending His second coming back to earth, and signs that outline both general and specific elements of the end of the age. We'll take a close look at those in these pages, as well as other Scripture passages in which signs are a major theme.

Just as importantly, Jesus told us to keep our eyes open so that we are not fooled by the signs indicating that the end times are near. As we get closer to that time, many people are going to claim to be the Messiah and claim to have the answers for a troubled world. As the signs in this book unfold, it will be revealed that we can expect a period of international and cultural chaos with the possibility of ceaseless, unending, terrible war. It appears that we are already preparing for this period as worldwide arms development continues—currently there is at least one military weapon and several thousand pounds of explosives for every man, woman, and child on

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earth. Finally, there will be more and more disease and devastation. Even today, millions of people in the world are being afflicted by insufficient food, the spread of new diseases, antibiotic resistance, and the devastating effects of natural disasters.

Seeing these signs played out in the news, on television, over the Internet, and even in our own lives can cause despair, anxiety, and confusion—not just because of the world situation but also over our concern for those who do not know the Lord and could be “left behind” to face the Tribulation. But when Jesus told us to open our eyes, He did so to encourage us to gaze upon Him—not because this will cause all the world’s problems (and ours) to disappear, but because He is the Prince of Peace.

In the pages that follow, I encourage you to study with me as we discover together what Scripture reveals about the signs of the times and the signs of God’s plan for the future—all the way to paradise regained. I am confident you will find, as I have, that understanding the signs presented in the five parts of this book will help you live with confidence, hope, and a renewed sense of purpose.

The end times may be near, but as Christians, our future is secure. Indeed, we live in a chaotic world, but we can be confident and at peace because God is the author of history, and because the return of the Prince of Peace may be closer than we think.

—Awaiting His return,
David Jeremiah

PART 1

INTERNATIONAL SIGNS

The thirty-one undeniable prophecies of the Apocalypse is a story that can be told in five acts. In the first act, five nations in particular emerge—Israel, Europe, Russia, Babylon, and America.

According to the Bible, the regathering of the Jewish people back to their homeland is predicted time and again as a precursor to the end times. We are also told that the consolidation of world power under a supreme leader in Europe is one of the essential preludes to the coming of the Antichrist. The prophet Ezekiel speaks of a day when Russia will lead an alliance of nations that will attack Israel, igniting a pivotal world war like none ever seen or imagined. And during the Tribulation period we can expect the final financial world order to be located in a city called Babylon, which will rise to power again as the rebuilt commercial capital of the world. And while America is not clearly mentioned in Bible prophecy, it will play a role in several ways—key alliances with other countries, a force behind world missions, and a friend to the Jewish people.

Let's look together at the international signs that will precede God's coming judgment.

CHAPTER 1

ISRAEL

May 14, 1948, was a pivotal day in human history. On that afternoon, a car carrying Jewish leader David Ben-Gurion rushed down Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv and stopped at the Tel Aviv Art Museum. Four o'clock was only minutes away, and inside, Jewish leaders and press representatives from all over the world were assembled in an auditorium, awaiting his arrival. Ben-Gurion bounded up the steps. Precisely at four o'clock, local time, he stepped to the podium, called the meeting to order, and read these historic words:¹

This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State.

Accordingly we . . . are here assembled . . . and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel.²

Six thousand miles away, President Truman sat in the Oval Office reading a statement. He signed his approval and noted the time: 6:10 p.m. One

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minute later, the White House press secretary read the release to the world. The United States had officially recognized the birth of the modern nation of Israel.

Isaiah's prophecy, written 740 years before the birth of Jesus, declared, "Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once?" (Isa. 66:8). Secular Israel was born that day.

In the past seven decades, this tiny nation with a population of 8.5 million has become the geopolitical center of the world.³ Why is this so? Why is a fledgling country with a total land space smaller than New Jersey mentioned in the nightly news more than any other nation except the United States?

To answer these questions, we must understand what happened on that day in 1948, what is happening today in Israel, and how these events affect the entire world. For answers we turn not to the evening news or the front page of the newspaper but to the Bible.

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The story of Israel begins in the book of Genesis. The almighty God of heaven and earth made a binding covenant with Abraham, who was to be the father of the Jewish nation. The provisions of that covenant are recorded in Genesis 12:1–3, in which God said:

Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you.
I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.

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I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

God's covenant with Abraham consists of four unconditional promises. First, God promised to bless Abraham. That promise has been lavishly kept; Abraham has been blessed in many ways. For thousands of years, Abraham has been revered by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.

Second, God promised to bring out of Abraham a great nation. Currently, more than 6 million Jews live in Israel alone.⁴ Another five million live in the United States, and a significant Jewish population remains scattered throughout the world.⁵

Third, God promised to make Abraham a blessing to many. Just think what the world would be missing had it not been for the Jews. Without the Jews, we would have no Bible. Without the Jews, there would be no Ten Commandments, the basis of jurisprudence among most of the civilized nations of the world. Without the Jews, there would have been no Jesus. Without the Jewish Jesus, there would be no Christianity.

Fourth, God promised to bless those who blessed Israel and curse those who cursed her. He has kept that promise faithfully. I believe one of the reasons America has been blessed as a nation is that she has become a homeland for the Jewish people. Here Jews can retain their religion. Here they have economic, social, and educational opportunities. Today, the Christian church in America stands firmly between the Jewish people and the repetition of any further anti-Semitism.⁶

God's covenant with Abraham reveals both the mission and future of God's chosen nation. Studying these promises will give us great help in understanding the present unrest in the Middle East, the future of the Israeli nation, and how the destiny of today's nations will be affected by their stance toward God's chosen people.

This historic document includes seven important features. The Abrahamic covenant is . . .

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AN UNCONDITIONAL COVENANT

Seven times in Genesis 12:1–3 God declared in emphatic terms what He would do for Abraham. His covenant with Abraham was unconditional, and He ratified it in a ceremony described in Genesis 15. In *The Jeremiah Study Bible*, I explain the meaning of this ceremony:

To establish and confirm a covenant in Abram’s day, usually the two parties would walk between the pieces of the sacrificial animals, saying, in effect, “May what has happened to these creatures happen to me if I break the covenant.” . . .

Because this was Yahweh’s sovereign covenant with Abram, not an agreement between equals, symbols of God (a smoking oven and a burning torch) passed between those pieces; Abram did not. The LORD made the covenant with no conditions—independent of Abram—and He would fulfill it in His time.⁷

No provision was made for this covenant to be revoked, and it was not subject to amendment or annulment.

A PERSONAL COVENANT

In His covenant with Abraham, God promised extravagant blessings not only to Abraham’s descendants but also to Abraham himself: “I will bless you and make your name great” (Gen. 12:2).

In Genesis 12:1–3, God addressed Abraham using the personal pronouns *you* and *your* eleven times. The promises are ultimately far-reaching and eternal, but they were made first of all to Abraham personally and each has been fulfilled.

God directed Abraham to travel to the land He promised to his descendants, and Abraham found it to be, as Moses later described, a rich land “flowing with milk and honey” (Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3). His flocks and herds increased exponentially, and he became an extremely wealthy man (Gen. 13:2). Yes, this land would be the eternal possession of his

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descendants, but it was also Abraham's personal home throughout his life (25:7–8).

God's promise to make Abraham's name great has also been lavishly fulfilled. Even in his own time, Abraham was known throughout the land as a rich and powerful leader who was highly respected and feared.

A NATIONAL COVENANT

In the second verse of God's covenant with Abraham, He said, "I will make you a great nation." The ultimate greatness of the nation of Israel awaits the Millennium, but by all the common standards of evaluation, Israel is a great nation today. Professor Amnon Rubinstein gives us an impressive summary of Israel's national achievements:

Minute in size, not much bigger than a sliver of Mediterranean coastline, it has withstood continuing Arab onslaughts, wars, boycotts and terrorism; it has turned itself from a poor, rural country to an industrial and post-industrial powerhouse. . . . It has reduced social, educational and health gaps . . . between Arabs and Jews. Some of its achievements are unprecedented.⁸

A TERRITORIAL COVENANT

Of all God's covenant promises to Abraham, I believe the most amazing is His promise concerning the land. God told Abraham to leave his country, his family, and his father's house and go "to a land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). God then led Abraham to the land that would belong to his descendants forever.

The land promised to Abraham and his descendants was described with clear geographical boundaries. It takes in all the land from the Mediterranean Sea as the western boundary to the Euphrates River as the eastern boundary. The prophet Ezekiel fixed the northern boundary at Hamath, one hundred miles north of Damascus (Ezek. 48:1), and the southern boundary at Kadesh, about one hundred miles south of Jerusalem

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(v. 28). If Israelis were currently occupying all the land that God gave to them, they would control all the holdings of present-day Israel, Lebanon, and the West Bank of Jordan, plus substantial portions of Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.

The strange thing is, Israel has never, in its long history, occupied anywhere near this much land—not even at the height of its glory days under David and Solomon. This fact has caused many biblical scholars to spiritualize the meaning of the term *land* and equate it with heaven. Others claim these promises were conditional and were forfeited by Israel's disobedience. In refutation of these interpretations, Dr. John F. Walvoord wrote:

The term *land* . . . used in the Bible, means exactly what it says. It is not talking about heaven. It is talking about a piece of real estate in the Middle East. After all, if all God was promising Abraham was heaven, he could have stayed in Ur of the Chaldees. Why go on the long journey? Why be a pilgrim and a wanderer? No, God meant land.⁹

Any normal reading of Scripture recognizes Canaan as an actual place, a piece of real estate, an expanse of soil that belongs to Abraham's descendants forever.

The fact that Israel has been dispossessed of the land in three periods of its history is not an argument against its ultimate possession. Occupation is not the same as ownership. After each dispossession, God brought Israel back to its originally promised land. God has consistently kept His promise to Abraham, and that gives us absolute assurance that He will keep it in the future.

The turmoil over Israel's right to its land will not cease till the end, for the land provision of the Abrahamic covenant is at the core of the hatred of Middle Eastern nations for Israel today.

But ignoring God's care and protection of Israel is extremely dangerous. The land of Israel is so important to God that, according to Deuteronomy

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11:12, it is “a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.”

A RECIPROCAL COVENANT

God also promised protection to the nation that would descend from Abraham: “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you” (Gen. 12:3). Leaders and nations that ally with Israel to preserve, protect, and defend it will likewise be preserved, protected, and defended. On the other hand, those who stand in the way of Israel’s well-being will find themselves standing against God—which means they will not long stand at all.

The prophet Zechariah declared that God would plunder the nations that plunder Israel, “for he who touches [Israel] touches the apple of His eye” (Zech. 2:8). History tells the tragic story of what has happened to nations and leaders who dared to oppress Israel. Egypt, the first nation to enslave Israel, was brought to its knees by ten devastating plagues (Ex. 7–12). The Amorites, who resisted Israel’s march toward their promised land, were soundly defeated (Num. 21:21–30).

One of the most notable examples of God’s vengeance against an enemy of Israel was the annihilation of the Midianites who joined with Moab in trying to stop Israel. After their failure to bribe the prophet Balaam into pronouncing a curse on Israel, they used Midianite women to seduce Israel’s men into immorality and idolatry. Moses prepared Israel for war “to take vengeance for the LORD on Midian” (Num. 31:3). The battle was quick and decisive. All the Midianite cities were burned to the ground, and the Israelites took as plunder massive amounts of gold, silver, bronze, tin, lead, and wood, along with cattle, sheep, and donkeys (Num. 31; Rev. 2:14).

Babylon, the empire that destroyed Jerusalem and deported the Jews from their homeland, was soundly defeated seventy years later by the Persians. And one of history’s worst persecutors of the Jews, the Greek-Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV, died a horrible death shortly after hearing that his army had been defeated in the Jewish Maccabean rebellion.¹⁰

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In modern times, Russia confined Jews to ghettos and harassed them with pogroms under the czars, who were overthrown in the communist rebellion of 1917. Under communism, the Jews were forbidden to practice their religious rites, and many were arrested, deported, or executed. Hitler's Germany, which destroyed some six million Jews, was crushed in World War II.

Israel's Six-Day War of 1967 stands today as the most spectacular modern example of God's punishment on those who curse Israel. Although Israel became an independent nation in 1948, the Palestinians and Islamic states surrounding it didn't recognize its statehood and vowed its extermination. In 1967, the United Arab Republic (UAR) allied with Jordan, Syria, and Palestinian guerrillas to attack Israel from the north, south, and east. Israel was hopelessly outmanned. The Arab armies numbered more than 500,000 men; Israel had only 75,000. The Arabs fielded 5,000 tanks and 900 combat aircraft, whereas the Israeli total was only 1,000 tanks and 175 planes. Yet when the smoke cleared six days later, the UAR had lost almost its entire air force (about 20,000 lives), and Israel had taken over significant Arab-controlled territory, including the Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights, Gaza Strip, and West Bank.¹¹

In a powerful speech to the United Nations General Assembly on October 1, 2015, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu summarized the miraculous preservation of the Jewish people:

In every generation, there were those who rose up to destroy our people. In antiquity, we faced destruction from the ancient empires of Babylon and Rome. In the Middle Ages, we faced inquisition and expulsion. And in modern times, we faced pogroms and the Holocaust. Yet the Jewish people persevered.

And now another regime has arisen, swearing to destroy Israel. That regime would be wise to consider this: I stand here today representing Israel, a country 67 years young, but the nation-state of a people nearly 4,000-years-old. Yet the empires of Babylon and Rome are not represented

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in this hall of nations. Neither is the Thousand Year Reich. Those seemingly invincible empires are long gone. But Israel lives. The people of Israel live.¹²

History records that Israel stands at the graves of all its enemies.

A UNIVERSAL COVENANT

Here we reach the overarching reason for all the promises we have studied in God's covenant with Abraham: "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3).

This is the root of God's promise to Abraham and His purpose in creating a new people for Himself. Abraham's descendants were to become the repository of God's glory, wisdom, love, and redemptive grace. This saving grace was to overflow from the Jews to the rest of the world.

Through Abraham, God gave His written Word to the world. With the possible exceptions of Luke and Acts, every book of the Bible was authored by a Jewish writer.¹³ And through Abraham, God gave His Son to the world, blessing all humanity with the means of escaping the grip of sin and death, "that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14). All the other promises in God's covenant with Abraham are in support of this one universal promise that affects every person who has ever lived.

AN ETERNAL COVENANT

God's promise to Abraham came in three stages. It was initiated in Genesis 12:1–3, formalized in Genesis 15:1–21, and then amplified in Genesis 17:1–18:21. In Genesis 17, Abraham was approaching his one-hundredth birthday, and his faith was frail—it had been nearly twenty-five years since his first encounter with the Lord. Then God appeared, reminding Abraham that His promise was a forever promise, an eternal promise "between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which

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you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (vv. 7–8).

The promise to Abraham is an everlasting promise because it is an unconditional covenant based on the grace and sovereignty of almighty God. There may be delays, postponements, and chastisements, but an eternal covenant cannot be abrogated by a God who cannot deny Himself.

WHY DID GOD CHOOSE ISRAEL?

When I first began studying prophecy, I remember reading an offbeat little rhyme about Israel by British journalist William Norman Ewer: “How odd of God to choose the Jews.” When you think about it, this poetic quip expresses a valid observation. Doesn’t it seem a little odd that of all the people on earth, God selected these particular people to be His chosen nation? Why would God choose the Jews?

The Bible tells us that His choice of Israel had nothing to do with merit. It was not because Israel was more numerous than other people in the world; it was the least (Deut. 7:7). It was not because Israel was more sensitive to God than other nations; Israel did not know Him (Isa. 45:4). It was not because Israel was more righteous than other nations; God called them a rebellious, stiff-necked people (Deut. 9:6–7).

Then why did God choose the Jews? The answer: because it was His sovereign purpose to do so.

THE RETURN TO THE GOD OF ISRAEL

During my years as a pastor, I have been asked many times whether I believe Israel’s return to its land fulfills all the biblical prophecies concerning its future. What people are really asking is this: “Now that Israel is restored to its land, is this the end?”

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Many assume it is, but I have to tell them the answer is no! What is happening in Israel today is primarily the result of a secular Zionist movement, whereas Ezekiel wrote about a spiritual return of God's people to Him:

I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. . . . I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. (Ezek. 36:24, 26–28)

The return of Jews to the re-founded nation of Israel is the first stage of that regathering, but it certainly does not fulfill the requirements of a spiritual return to the Lord. But we can be assured that it will happen, just as God promised:

- “I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced” (Zech. 12:10).
- “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins’” (Rom. 11:26–27).

There are still two pivotal prophecies concerning Israel that have not yet been fulfilled: Israel does not yet occupy all the land originally promised to it, and its people have not yet turned to Christ. The numerous prophecies of Israel's return to its homeland were explicitly fulfilled in 1948 when Israel began to be restored to its land. This gives us assurance that full restoration is on the horizon and the prophecies concerning Israel's return to God will also be fulfilled.

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As we wait for the fulfillment of these prophecies, Israel continues to grow as a nation. Against all odds, the people of Israel lead the Middle East in productivity, wealth, order, freedom, and military power. Yet as these assets increase, the nation becomes more and more isolated, continually terrorized by the murderous hostility of its surrounding neighbors.

The most dramatic events lie ahead of us. Israel today is an island of less than nine million immigrants surrounded by a sea of three hundred million enemies, many of them eager to wipe the tiny nation off the map. From a purely human point of view, it would seem inevitable that, sooner or later, Israel will be destroyed. Indeed, Israel has been attacked over and over since its founding, sometimes in all-out wars and incessantly by terrorists. The Jewish people have survived by remaining vigilant, but they long for peace. According to the Bible, a future leader will fulfill this longing by brokering a peace deal with Israel's enemies. But Scripture also tells us that this peace plan will be broken, and Israel will be attacked once again, this time as never before. Countless armies will amass against the boxed-in nation, leaving it with no human hope of victory. Only Christ's return, His judgment, and His reign will finally bring true peace to Israel.

It is then that God's covenant with Abraham will reach its ultimate fulfillment. The Jews will return to the Lord, and they will be His people, and He will be their God. The borders of the land will expand to the dimensions described in Genesis 15 and Ezekiel 48. Christ's return will also fulfill the prophecy that God would gather the Jews. "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them . . . I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. They shall be My people, and I will be their God" (Jer. 32:37-38).

Ezekiel makes it clear that this gathering means He will return every single living Jew back to the land. For he wrote that the Lord said He would gather them again to their own land "and . . . none of them [will be] captive any longer" (Ezek. 39:28).

Today we see this prophecy being fulfilled right before our eyes. In 2006, Israel became home to the largest Jewish community in the world.

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From the 650,000 who returned when the Jewish state was founded in 1948, the population of Israel is expected to exceed 20 million by 2065.¹⁴

Israel's reemergence in her ancient homeland sets the stage for the final fulfillment of biblical prophecies. The return of the Jews to their homeland is also significant in another way: it pinpoints where we are on history's timeline. As Milton B. Lindberg pointed out, "Without the existence of the nation of Israel, we would not be able to say with certainty that we are in the last days. That single event, more than any other, is the most prominent sign that we are living in the final moments before the coming of Jesus!"¹⁵

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN TO ME?

The fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham greatly affects every one of us. We have shown why it's important for our nation to continue to support and protect Israel. Nations that befriend Israel will be blessed; those that do not will be cursed.

The playing out of prophetic events concerning Israel also places us in the last days of history's timeline. The miraculous survival of God's covenant people, the Jews, demonstrates God's ability to accomplish His purpose in the face of what seem to be impossible odds. The existence of Israel today is exhibit A that the Bible's prophecies concerning the future will be fulfilled. This means the future not only of Israel but also of our world and our nation, as well as your future and mine. The astounding history of the Jews reveals the reality of God—His overwhelming power, the authenticity of His promises, the certainty of His existence, the urgency of His call to us, and His claim on our very being.

That historic day in 1948, when Israel was re-established as a nation, has been described as "the most spectacular event in nearly two millennia of Jewish history."¹⁶ When President Truman read that statement and the United States officially became the first nation to recognize the birth of

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the modern state of Israel, the 2,500-year-old prophecy of the Bible was at last fulfilled!

But here's the rest of the story. Later, when the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Isaac Halevi Herzog, called the White House, he told Truman, "God put you in your mother's womb so that you would be the instrument to bring about the rebirth of Israel after two thousand years." One of Truman's men reported that when he looked at Truman after the rabbi's statement, tears were running down his cheeks.¹⁷

I was seven years old when the nation of Israel was established in 1948. I now believe the restoration of the Jewish people to their land is the most important prophetic sign to have occurred in my lifetime. More than any other sign described in this book, the prophetic future of the nation of Israel answers the question, "Is this the end?" But an even greater prophetic fulfillment awaits an unknown future day: the return of the Jewish Messiah to the Jewish people!

CHAPTER 2

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When he was a teenager, Albert Einstein had a dream that likely changed the course of scientific history.

In the dream, Einstein was walking through a field when he noticed a group of cows far away in the distance, all leaning against an electric fence. The cows were enjoying the grass that had previously been out of their reach because of the fence. Beyond the cows, Einstein saw a farmer working near the opposite end of the fence—presumably fixing whatever had caused the loss of electricity.

All of a sudden, Einstein saw the entire group of cows jump back from the fence at the same time. Rightly assuming that the fence had been repaired, Einstein walked on. When he reached the farmer, Einstein commented how humorous it had been to see all the cows jump back at the same time. But the farmer was confused. He told Einstein that's not what happened at all. From his perspective, the cows had jumped back one at a time, starting with the cow closest to him.

Upon waking, the dream stayed in Einstein's mind. In fact, he continued to ruminate about the dream for decades. Eventually, his continued meditations on that subject became one of the factors that contributed to his Theory of General Relativity.¹

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Can you imagine anyone having a more significant dream than that? Actually, I can.

More than two thousand years ago, God gave Daniel a vision that we recognize as the most comprehensive prophetic insight ever received. God also sent a similar dream to the most powerful man in the world at that time. Looking back, we can see the effects of those dreams rippling throughout history—and even into the future.

Specifically, Daniel’s vision operates as a sign of what we can expect to happen in Europe before and during the end times.

DANIEL’S INTERPRETATION FOR THE KING

While it was not uncommon for God to communicate to His people through dreams and visions, it is astounding that He gave the greatest vision of all time not only to Daniel but also to one of history’s most wicked Gentile rulers: King Nebuchadnezzar.

It was the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s rule over Babylon. Although all the king’s enemies were subdued or in captivity, he nevertheless was anxious about the future. His anxiety stemmed from a dream sent to him by God—a nightmare he could not understand, though he sensed its ominous implications. So the king called in his counselors. Since he had forgotten important details of the dream, he demanded that his counselors not only interpret the nightmare but also give him a vivid description of it.

The king’s demand was unprecedented, and his counselors thought it unfair. When they could not meet his demand, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon (Dan. 2:12–13).

When the Jewish captive Daniel heard of the king’s edict, he and his friends asked God for a vision of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and its interpretation. Then Daniel went to the executioner and said, “Do not destroy the

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wise men of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation” (v. 24).

Daniel was soon standing before Nebuchadnezzar, who asked him if he could reveal the meaning of his dream. Daniel explained that he could not, but he had connections with Someone who could: “The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these” (vv. 27–28).

As Daniel explained, just as God had sent the dream to Nebuchadnezzar, God had also revealed the dream and its interpretation to Daniel (v. 19). Then the Jewish prophet stood before the king and unfolded the future of his nation.

Daniel described the king’s vision: “You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay” (vv. 31–33).

This vision gives us the history of human civilization, written by God Himself.

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that his dream was about the kingdoms of this world. He explained that the metallic image represented four successive Gentile world powers that would rule over Israel in the days ahead.

DANIEL’S INSIGHT INTO THE FUTURE

Through Daniel, God gave King Nebuchadnezzar a history of the remaining days of the world. We know this because he spoke specifically of “days to come” (v. 28 NIV). He revealed the meaning of the statue in five sections:

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the head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of copper and brass, the legs of iron, and the feet of part iron and part clay.

The first world empire, represented by the statue's head of gold, was Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom of Babylon. Daniel's words to the king are clear: "You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold" (vv. 37–38).

Nebuchadnezzar would have understood that the head of gold referred to his kingdom, since the chief deity of Babylon was Marduk, known as "the god of gold." The historian Herodotus described the image of Marduk as a dazzling sight—a golden statue seated on a golden throne before a golden table and a golden altar. Pliny tells us that the robes of Marduk's priests were interlaced with gold.²

The second world empire revealed in the king's dream was represented by the image's chest of silver, from which two silver arms emerged (v. 32). This was the Medo-Persian Empire, which conquered Babylon in 539 BC and remained in power for approximately two hundred years. Later, Daniel stated clearly that the dual monarchy of the Medes and the Persians would take control of Nebuchadnezzar's empire (5:28). The two nations are again confirmed as Babylon's successor in Daniel 8:20.

The third world empire was represented by the image's belly and thighs of bronze. Daniel told the king it would be a "kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth" (2:39). This is the Greek Empire, the kingdom of Philip of Macedon and his son, Alexander the Great. Not only does history confirm Greece as the empire that succeeded the Medo-Persians, but Daniel named Greece specifically in Daniel 8:21. Under Alexander, the Greek Empire encompassed more territory than either of the previous empires. It is appropriate that this third kingdom was characterized by the image's bronze midsection. Alexander's soldiers armored themselves in bronze helmets and breastplates, and they carried bronze shields and swords.

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The fourth empire in the image is symbolized by its legs of iron. Daniel describes this empire 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” (2:40). Historians tell us that Rome was not only the successor to the Greek Empire, but they often use iron to describe the strength of the Roman Empire: *Rome’s iron rule. Rome’s iron fist. Rome’s iron legions.*

History confirms Daniel’s explanation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The Babylonians were overthrown by the Medo-Persians, the Medo-Persians were conquered by the Greeks, and then the previous kingdoms were assimilated into one kingdom known as the Roman Empire. This empire came into existence fifty years before Jesus was born, and it continued in power throughout His earthly ministry. It was Roman rule that put Jesus on the cross. It was the Romans who ruled ruthlessly during the early days of the church.

The fact that Rome is represented in the statue by its two iron legs is also significant:

By A.D. 395 the Roman Empire had split into two political areas of rule: the [Latin-speaking] West with its capital in Rome, and the [Greek-speaking] East with its capital in Constantinople (modern Istanbul, Turkey), which included the land of Israel. This division of the empire is depicted in the statue’s two legs.³

This splitting of the mighty Roman Empire into two political units was not the last division that kingdom would suffer. Daniel noted that in the king’s dream, the feet and toes were composed of a mixture of iron and clay. Though positioned at the bottom of the image, these extremities were apparently important, for Daniel said as much about the feet and toes as he said about all the other parts of the image combined.

Daniel explained to the king the meaning of the material composing the image’s feet: “As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of

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clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. . . . They will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay” (2:42–43).

According to Daniel, there is to be yet another division in the Roman Empire, symbolized by its ten toes. Daniel foretells a time when the Roman Empire will consist of ten kingdoms or leaders. Since the downward movement from one section of the statue to the next represents the passage of time, the “feet and toes” stage must follow the “legs” stage. But we find nothing in history that corresponds to a tenfold Roman coalition. That shows us that this fifth and final feet-and-toes-stage kingdom is yet to perform its prescribed role in human history.

Daniel gives us another piece of information that enables us to understand the timing of the events in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. He tells us that this final form of the Roman Empire will exist when God sets up His earthly kingdom. “In the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (v. 44).

DANIEL’S INTENSE DREAM

Years after Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the image, Daniel had a vision of his own that expands our understanding of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. In Daniel’s vision, a powerful wind stirred the ocean, and “four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other” (7:3). These beasts represented the same Gentile kingdoms as those depicted in the king’s dream, but this time the character of those kingdoms was revealed. The first vision (Dan. 2) portrayed the kingdoms of the world as man assessed them—majestic, massive, and impressive in their accomplishments. In the second vision (Dan. 7), the kingdoms were shown as savage beasts, attacking one another and fighting to the death. This second vision gives us

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God's appraisal of these kingdoms—destructive, divisive, and cruel. While the two visions were different in their presentation, both were given for the same purpose: to show Daniel and his people what in the world was going on!

Why did God choose that particular time to reveal so great a prophecy? His people were in a desperate moment of their history. Assyria had taken the Northern Kingdom of Israel captive in 722 BC, and two hundred years later, the Southern Kingdom of Judah was in captivity in Babylon. If you had been a Jew during that time, you might have wondered, *Is God finished with us?* Through these two visions, God assured His people, *This isn't the end. There will be a time when I will once again be involved with you as a nation. But I want you to know what will happen between now and then.*

Much of what was revealed to Daniel in these dreams has already happened. But not all of it. Three of the prophesied kingdoms have come and gone, and the fourth kingdom has also made its appearance in history. But Daniel's later vision included additional information about events that are yet in the future. Let's look at how Daniel described it: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns" (7:7). Daniel explained that the ten horns are ten kings who will arise from this kingdom (v. 24).

We know this ten-kingdom prophecy of Daniel's remains in the future because not only has the ten-leader form of the Roman Empire not existed, but such a kingdom has not been suddenly crushed as Daniel 2 indicates it will be. The Roman Empire of Jesus' day did not end suddenly. It gradually declined over many centuries until the western part, the Holy Roman Empire, fell in AD 476, and the eastern part, the Byzantine Empire, fell in AD 1453. We must conclude, then, that some form of the Roman Empire must emerge in the end times, for, according to Daniel, it will be in place prior to the coming of Christ to reign over the earth.

REBIRTH OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The future manifestation of the Roman Empire that Daniel prophesied will be a confederation of ten world leaders and will encompass the same territory as the historic Roman Empire. Today, we see that coalition taking shape before our eyes! It began as early as 1930, when French statesman Aristide Briand attempted to enlist twenty-six nations in what he first called “the United States of Europe” and modified to “the European Union.” In his proposal, he said, “The nations of Europe today must unite in order to live and prosper.” The European press gave Briand’s idea little attention, and nothing came of it.⁴

But Briand’s call for European unity was merely one world war ahead of the curve. Fewer than twenty years later, one of the world’s most respected leaders issued the same call:

In 1946, following the devastation of Europe during the Second World War, Winston Churchill forcefully asserted that “the tragedy of Europe” could only be solved if the issues of ancient nationalism and sovereignty could give way to a sense of European “national grouping.” He said that the path to European peace and prosperity on the world stage was clear: “We must build a United States of Europe.”⁵

Churchill’s call initiated a series of steps toward unification. The Benelux Conference of 1948, held in Brussels, Belgium, laid the foundation for a new organization “to unite European countries economically and politically in order to secure a lasting peace.”⁶ Only three nations attended the meeting—the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Belgium. These nations saw unity as their only hope of survival in the postwar world.

Another step was taken in April 1951, when these three nations signed the Treaty of Paris with three additional nations, West Germany, France, and Italy, forming a common market for coal and steel in an environment of peace.

March 25, 1957, saw a major step toward European unification when