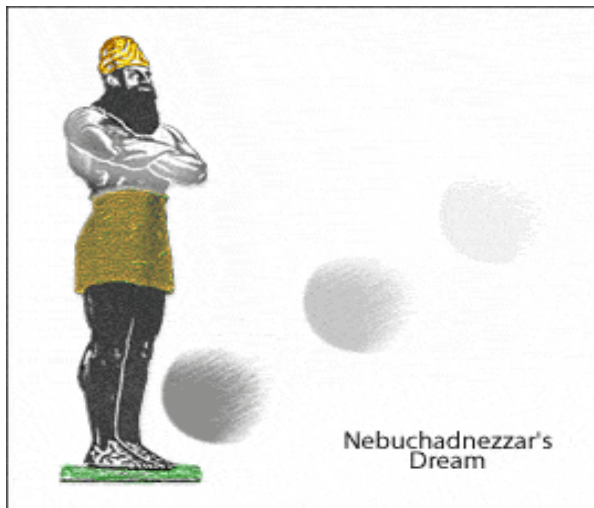


# Nebuchadnezzar's Dream: Rise and Fall of Nations (Daniel 2)

The first apocalyptic vision in the book of Daniel was not given to Daniel. It was given to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, about 601BC. It was given to Nebuchadnezzar for his personal benefit. He would be unlikely to be interested in details which pertained to the captive population of a minor province of his kingdom. So God gave him a grand overview of future world history in a context which would be important to him. Notice how each succeeding mineral depicted in the image is less valuable, yet more enduring than the one before it. It is also important to note that this vision is the framework for all the other visions in the book of Daniel. As we move through them, we will find that each vision expands and interprets the visions before it.



In this chapter, Daniel is called to reveal the interpretation of a dream that has been troubling King Nebuchadnezzar. As the king slept, he saw a great statue (Daniel 2:31-35) with a head of fine gold, a chest and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

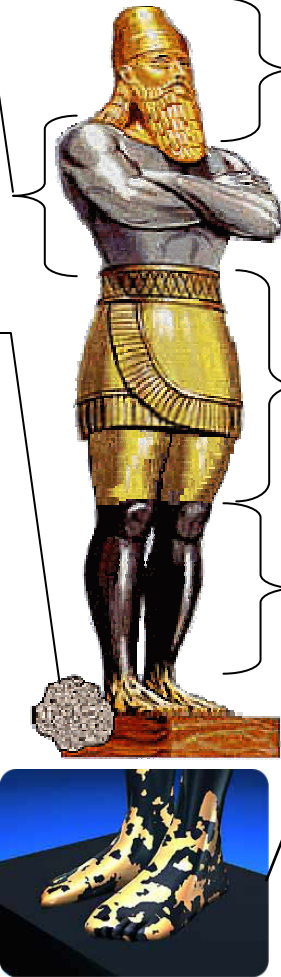
But then, as King Nebuchadnezzar watched, a stone was cut out of a mountain "without hands" and struck the image on its feet, breaking the statue in pieces:

"Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:35).

**Second Kingdom:** "...its chest and arms of silver..." (v.32)  
 After Babylon "shall arise another kingdom, inferior to yours..." (v. 39). We learn from the book of Daniel as well as through history that this second kingdom would be Medo-Persia.

**Medo-Persia: 539-331 B.C.**  
 The Medes and Persians overthrew Babylon in 539 B.C. Cyrus, the general who led the Medo-Persian armies, is predicted not only by name 150 years in advance but also the method by which he'd conquer Babylon in Isaiah 44:28 and Isaiah 45:1-3. Just as silver is inferior to gold, Medo-Persia did not have the splendor of Babylon. During their reign, all taxes had to be paid in silver.

**The Next Great Universal Kingdom: At the end of Time**  
 "You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." (v. 34, 35)  
 The rock that was cut out without hands represents the coming kingdom of God. Christ is the Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4). Soon all wickedness, evil and rebellion will be gone forever. The forces of evil will be crushed, broken into pieces and destroyed. God will establish His everlasting kingdom forever.  
 The Scriptures declare that when Jesus Christ returns to earth, He will completely consume all the kingdoms of earth and establish an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 2:44). What exciting news! Jesus Christ is coming again! All history is moving toward this climactic conclusion, when the Son of God shall return in majesty to bring in the kingdom of everlasting righteousness.



**First Kingdom:** "This image's head was fine gold..." (v.32)  
 The first kingdom is King Nebuchadnezzar's own kingdom of Babylon for, Daniel is told, "the God of heaven has given [Nebuchadnezzar] a kingdom, power, strength, and glory" (v. 38).

**Babylon: 605-539 B.C.**  
 Located in modern-day Iraq, some sixty miles south of Baghdad, the capital city of Babylon was the center of the most powerful nation in the Middle East at that time. Gold is a fitting symbol for Babylon. Its chief god, Bel-Marduk, was crafted of solid gold. His golden image sat on a golden throne beside a golden candlestick before a golden table in a golden-domed temple. The prophet Isaiah also calls Babylon "the golden city" Isaiah 14:4.

**Third Kingdom:** "...its belly and thighs of bronze," (v.32)  
 Following Medo-Persia, "...another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth" (v. 39). This third kingdom was Greece (Macedonia). Just as Daniel foretold, this third kingdom was known for its extensive use of bronze.

**Greece: 331-168 B.C.**  
 The brass kingdom of Greece came into power when Alexander the Great conquered the Medes and Persians at the battle of Arbela in 331 B.C. Greek soldiers were called "brazen coated" because their armor was all bronze.

**Fourth Kingdom:** "its legs of iron..." (v.33)  
 The fourth kingdom is somewhat different from the previous three: "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." (v.40) The iron monarchy of Rome conquered the Greeks.

**Rome: 168 B.C.- 476 A.D.**  
 Rome conquered the Greeks in 168 B.C. and enjoyed world supremacy until Rome was captured by the Ostrogoths in A.D. 476. Rome is the kingdom that dominated the world when Jesus Christ was born.

**Breakup of Roman Empire & Emergence of Modern Europe:** "...its feet partly of iron and partly of clay." (v.33)  
 No fifth world empire overthrew the Romans. Rome was divided exactly as the prophet predicted. The barbarian tribes from the north invaded the Roman Empire, and it was divided into separate, distinct states.

**The break-up of the empire occurred from 351 to 476 A.D.**  
**Modern Europe:** When the Roman Empire began to crumble in A.D. 476 (the break-up of the empire occurred from 351 to 476 A.D.), it was not overtaken by another world power. Instead, barbarian tribes conquered the Roman Empire and divided it - just as Daniel prophesied. Ten of these tribes evolved into modern Europe. They were the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Alemanni, Sueves, Anglo-Saxons, Heruls, Lombards, and Burgundians. Seven of them still exist today in Europe. For example, the Anglo-Saxons became the English, the Franks became the French, the Alemanni became the Germans, and the Lombards became the Italians. **"As you saw iron mixed with creamic 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."** (v.43) Through marriage, alliances, and treaties, men have vainly attempted to reunite the European continent. Throughout history, political leaders such as Charlemagne, Charles V, Louis XIV, Napoleon, Hitler, and Stalin have attempted to rule the world by uniting Europe. Each has desperately failed. Revelation 13 tells us there will be another attempt to establish a universal religion, but Daniel's prophecy clearly states that the world will remain politically divided for the rest of Earth's history.

**Warren Wiersbe notes the following about the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream:**

This image, then, is a picture of world history. You can see that the materials in it decrease in weight (from gold to clay) so that the statue is top-heavy and easily pushed over. Men and women think that human civilization is so strong and enduring; really it is resting on brittle feet of clay. Note too that the value decreases: from gold to silver to bronze to iron to clay. Is mankind getting "better and better" as time goes on? No! Human civilization is actually getting cheaper and weaker. There is also a decrease in beauty and glory (gold is certainly more beautiful than iron mixed with clay); and there is a decrease in strength (from gold to clay) as we approach the end of human history. Each of the successive kingdoms had its own strengths, of course, and Rome exercised a tremendous military power, but through history civilization will become weaker and weaker. This explains why the Antichrist will be able to organize a worldwide dictatorship: nations will be so weak they will demand a dictator just to be able to survive (*Expository Outlines of the Old Testament*).

Having seen that God has complete control of world events, even Nebuchadnezzar readily acknowledged that the God Daniel served was above all the heathen gods of Babylon. How quickly the picture had changed! Daniel and his friends, because of their faithfulness to God, were elevated from their initial captivity in Babylon to positions of prominent leadership for the kingdom (Daniel 2:48, 49). God always honors those who honor Him (1 Samuel 2:30).

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