

The Book of Daniel

Chapter 2

Introduction

Nebuchadnezzar's dream reveals what will happen to those kingdoms and empires controlled by man. They are destined to be overthrown.

When Judah was overthrown by Babylon, it marked an important victory. When the Jews were deported to Babylon the fate of Judah as a nation was sealed; they had now lost their identity.

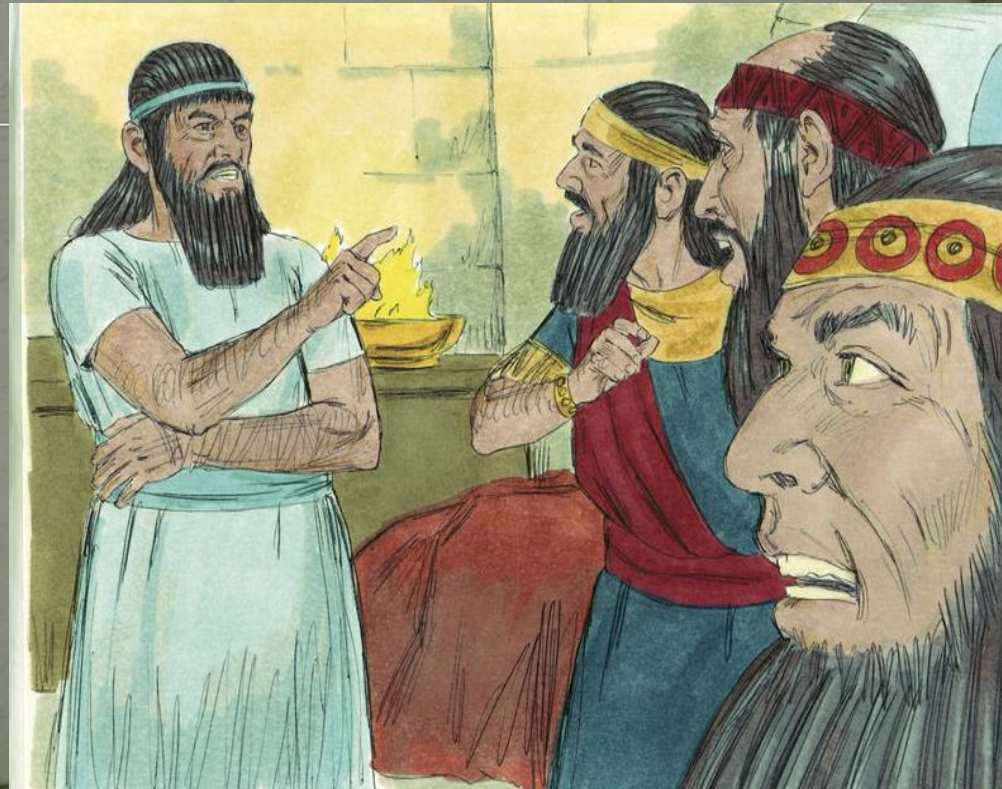
God had reasons for revealing to heathen kings the futility of building kingdoms on the principle of "might makes right." Their exploitation of the people they conquer will not go unpunished.

Verses 2-3

Nebuchadnezzar seeks to have his dream interpreted

To set his mind at ease, Nebuchadnezzar summons four classes of dream interpreters: magicians, astrologers, sorcerers and Chaldeans. The Chaldeans speak for the assembled.

With the group before him Nebuchadnezzar tells them he has dreamt a dream— noteworthy construction— singular. He's anxious to know what the dream means.



Verses 4-6

[v.4] They offer an explanation (Aramaic)

“O King, live forever!” is an oriental courtesy, similar to our “Mr. President, Sir.” They often used elaborate introductions and greetings. They are very confident that they can interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.

[5-6] Nebuchadnezzar’s threat and promise

Nebuchadnezzar demands that the Chaldeans reveal both the dream AND its interpretation. He’s leaving no “wiggle” room for them to concoct an interpretation that would simply please him.

Verses 7-11

[7-9] The Chaldeans Try To Twist Their Way Out

They try to “buy time” since they know they can’t do what the king demands; yet, the king doesn’t buy it. He wants a clear interpretation, not a flattering response, so He replies firmly, “...reveal to me the dream....”

[10-11] The Chaldeans back off

“It’s never been done before!” they reason; they don’t want to irritate Nebuchadnezzar. They confess that only “the gods” know and admit it can’t be done by human intellect.

Verses 12-16

[12-13] Nebuchadnezzar doesn't accept their explanation

He becomes angry and issues an edict to have ALL wise men put to death. Even though Daniel and his friends were novices in the trade, they are included!

[14-16] Daniel to the rescue

Daniel tells Arioch, the chief executioner to let him have a chance to explain the dream to the king. No doubt the Holy Spirit prompted Daniel to make such a bold and confident statement. Arioch makes the necessary arrangement which enables Daniel to have an audience with Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel asks that he be given time to give the interpretation to Nebuchadnezzar!

Verses 17-18

Daniel Seeks Prayer Support From Shadrach, Meshach & Abed-nego.

Inspired as he was to believe that God had called him and his companions for this emergency, Daniel knows the power of prayer. The term “God of the Heavens” is used in opposition to the Babylonian, and other views, that the influence of the stars, sun, moon, determine man’s destiny. Astrology then, as today, was an intriguing pastime. Today, people spend millions of dollars on books, charts, etc.

The petition of the prayer is that they not perish. This isn’t selfish, but a prayer of necessity to preserve their lives from being snuffed out!

Verses 19-23

[19] The King's dream is revealed to Daniel

God answers their prayer and His reply comes in the form of a night vision rather than a dream. These visions were common among God's prophets.

[20-23] Daniel's Vision

These verses reveal to us how well versed Daniel was in the Scriptures. A study of parallel passages shows how Daniel adapts material to which he has access. The major theme of the Psalms is God's mighty revelation which Daniel has just received. Daniel acknowledges that it is the only true God who gives wisdom; who controls time; who determines who shall rule & who shall be deposed; who reveals hidden things; and who knows what is in darkness.

Verses 24-26

[24] Daniel asks for the audience with Nebuchadnezzar

Arrangements had already been made, yet Daniel checks back with Arioch, the chief executioner, to assure he had not begun the execution of the wise men. Daniel then assures Arioch that he is able to interpret the king's dream. —————

[25-26] The great confrontation

Arioch tries to claim credit for having “found” Daniel, rather than telling Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel had come to him. He wanted to gain favor in Nebuchadnezzar's eyes. The irony is that it's not one of Babylon's seers but an exile from Judah who claims to have the ability to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's troublesome dream.

Verses 27 -30

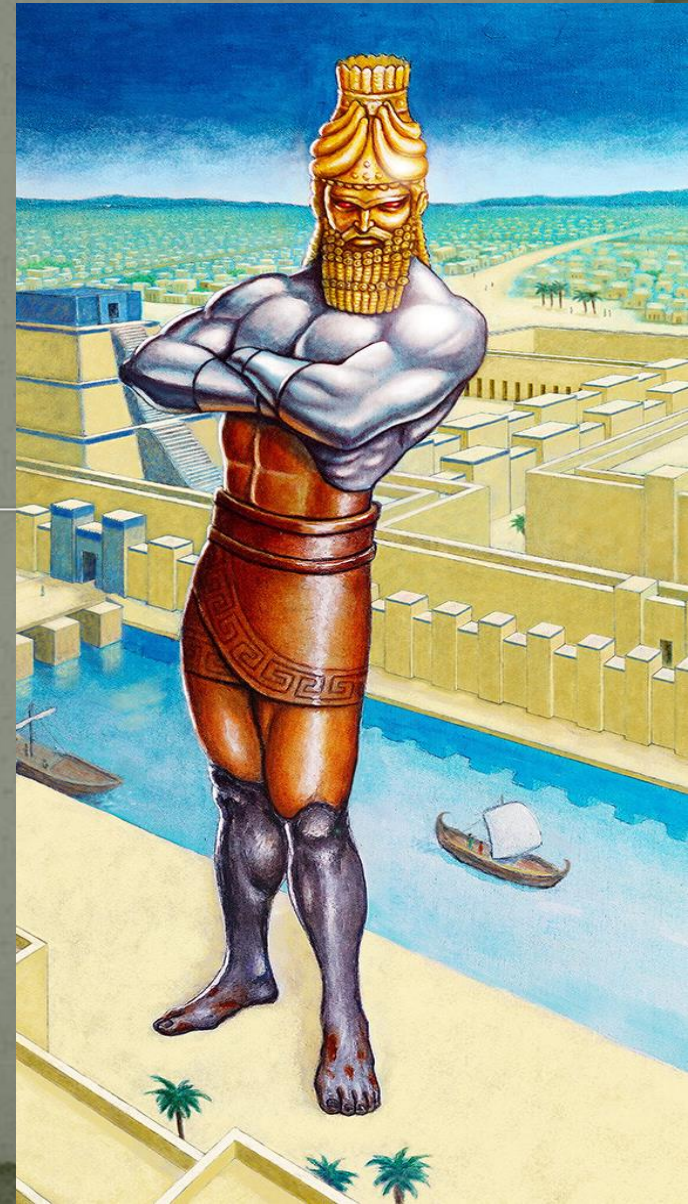
Daniel uses the opportunity to give witness to YHWH. He makes it plain that his God had given him the answer. The parallel of Joseph in Egypt in Genesis 41:16 is worth noting.

In rebuke of the king for his unjust edict, Daniel asserts that no wise man of any sort, including the astrologers can answer the kinds of questions like those Nebuchadnezzar asked.

Verse 31

The dream told and interpreted

Nebuchadnezzar was gazing at a statue--entranced by its sight--unable to take his eyes off what he saw. The size of the statue was immense--it had extraordinary splendor--because it was so huge it was ominous.



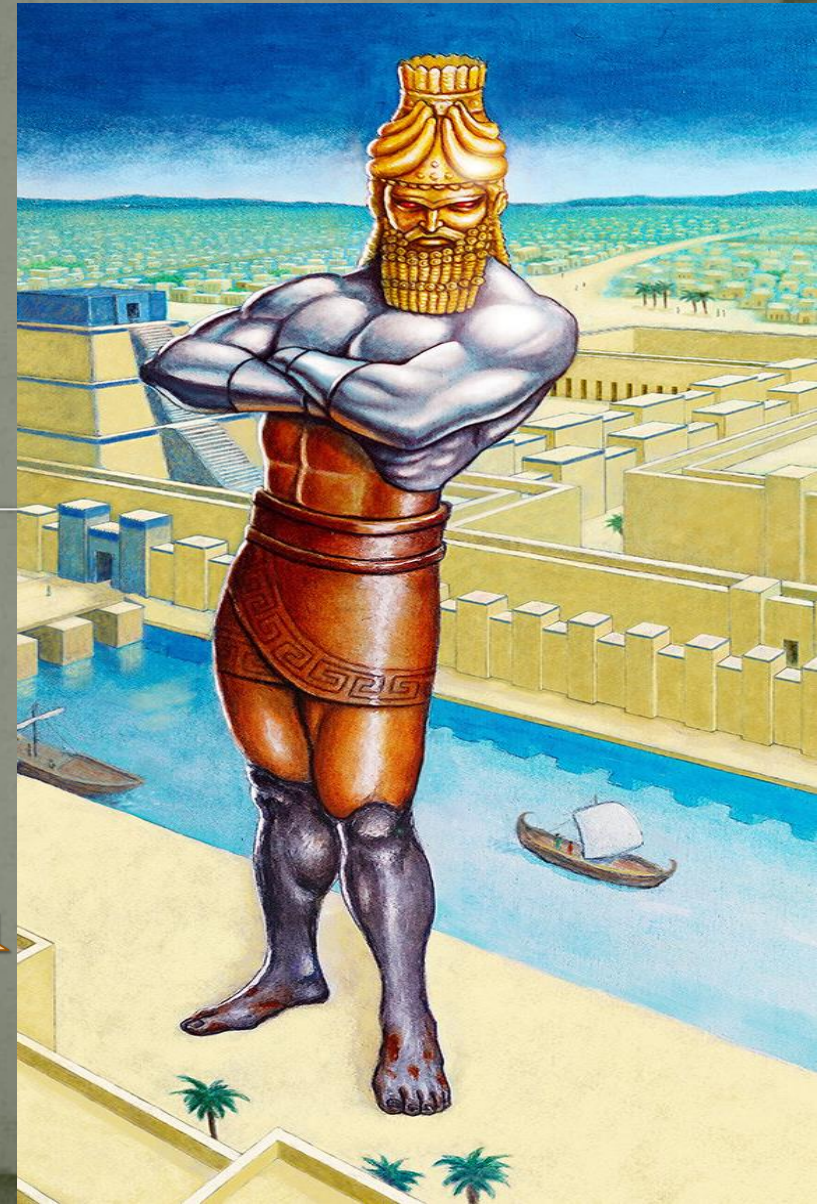
Verses 32-33, 36-38

Head of Gold
Babylonian Empire

CHEST & ARMS OF SILVER
MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE

Belly & Thighs of Bronze
Greek Empire (Alexander)
With Two separate Kingdoms
(Ptolemies/Seleucids)

Legs of Iron
Roman Empire
(w/feet and toes mixed
with Clay)



Verse 34-35

The Statue Destroyed

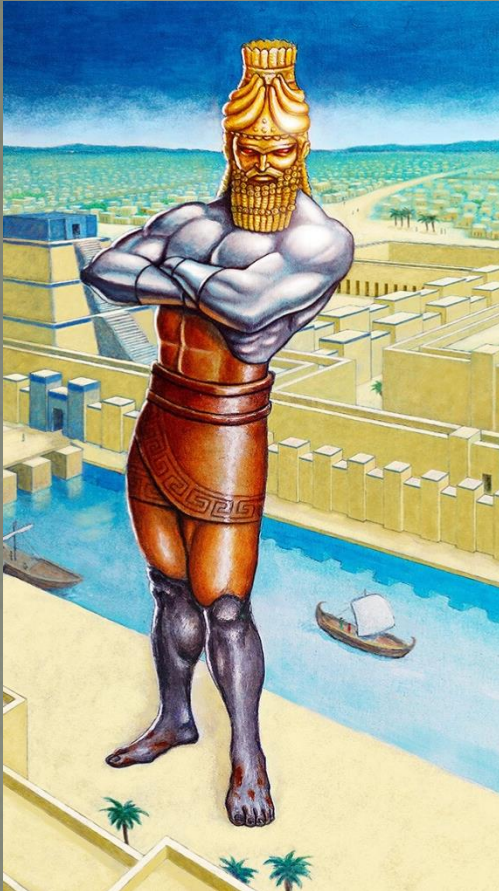
A stone is cut from a mountain. The stone begins to roll down the mountain--the statue is directly in its path. It strikes the statue's feet and they are crushed. The impact of the stone reduces the entire statue to a consistency of *“chaff which the wind comes and carries away.”* The wind continues until the last speck of dust is cleared from the site.



The stone which wrought this damage grows to gigantic size and becomes a huge mountain, filling the whole earth.

Verse 39

The Coming of Three Kings



The kingdoms that would supplant the Babylonians would be “inferior” which doesn’t mean lesser in size, but lesser in unity and organization.

The Medo-Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great was a two part empire (Media/Persia), and the two never fused so as to become one undivided whole.

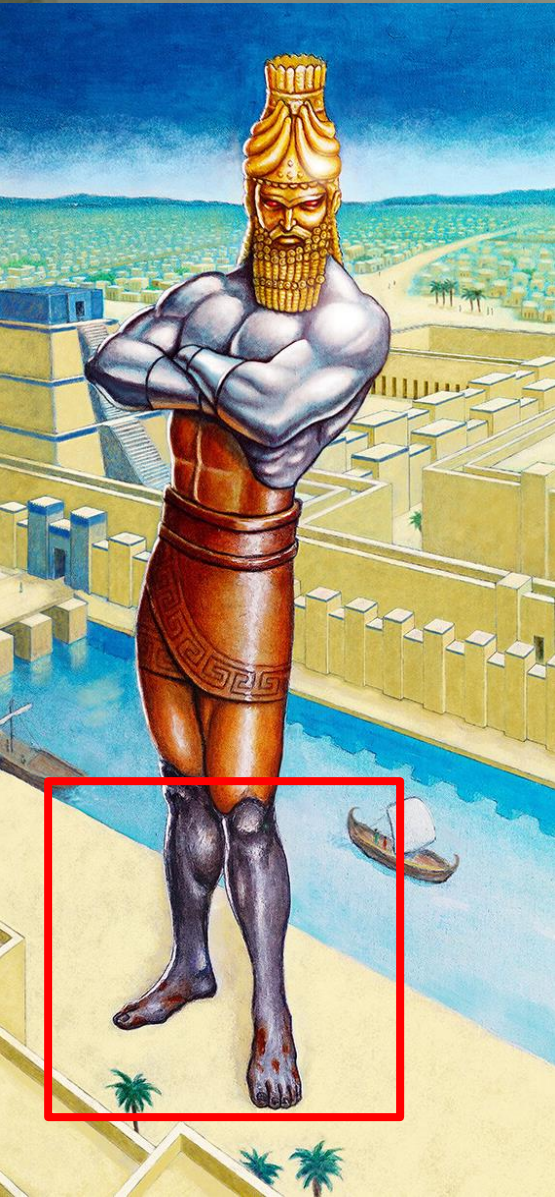
The fourth power (Rome) would be inferior to the third (Greece) as Persia to Babylon. Even though Alexander the

Great ruled a kingdom which ruled over the entire ancient world, when he died, so great was the fight for power that divisions immediately took place.

Verse 40-43

The Fourth Kingdom--Rome

The Fourth Kingdom is given more treatment than the previous three. The reason: the fourth empire is strength – “Strong as Iron.” This is not referred to unity or organization, but rather to the destructive power the kingdom would possess. The destructive power of the Roman empire is far more significant than the contribution of Roman Law, Roman roads, and civilization.

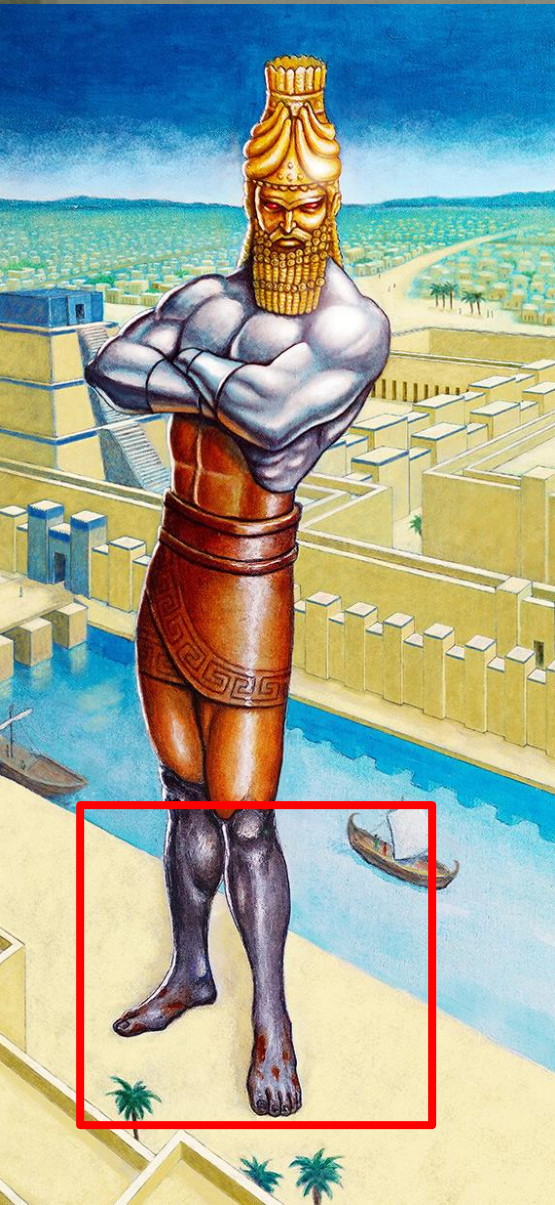


Verse 40-43

The Fourth Kingdom--Rome

It would be “fragile” because it would lack inner unity. This is symbolized by the mixture of potter’s clay and iron; iron and clay will not fuse. The combining of these two materials represents that the weakness would come about by the intermarriage of Romans with their conquered peoples.

The stone that smites the most vulnerable part of the statue symbolizes the decline of the Roman empire.



Verse 40-43

The Fourth Kingdom--Rome

Although sovereignty passed down from the Babylonians, to the Persians, to the Greeks, to the Romans; when Rome fell, human conquest ceased to be the dominating force in the world. When Rome is crushed, all are crushed.

The reference to the toes, according to many sources, may well refer to the independent kingdoms into which the Roman empire broke as their fall was happening. Since ten is the number of totality, the ten toes represent the sum total of these kingdoms.



Verses 44-45

The Interpretation Concluded

*The kingdom that shall endure eternally is the
Kingdom of God.*

1. IT SHALL NEVER BE DESTROYED.
2. IT SHALL BE RULED BY THE PEOPLE OF GOD.
3. IT SHALL OVERCOME THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD.
4. IT SHALL STAND FOREVER.

Daniel concludes the interpretation by explaining that the stone that was loosened from the mountainside would have an everlasting effect on the kingdoms of the world. Daniel never spoke with uncertainty or hesitancy. This gives us certainty that every word that Daniel spoke came from God!

Verses 46-49

The Results of the Interpreting of the Dream

Nebuchadnezzar now reacts to Daniel's interpretation. One marvels at the honors bestowed on Daniel here, since it was very unusual for a king to bestow such honors. The honors are two-fold:

1. Nebuchadnezzar does what amounts to an act of worship to Daniel. Liberal theologians have much fun with this! Their hang-up is how Daniel could have accepted such worship? The answer is simple: Daniel accepted Nebuchadnezzar's worship as worship to YWHW.



Verses 46-49

The Results of the Interpreting of the Dream

2. The elevation of Daniel to prefect of the province of Babylon, essentially, the governor who was solely responsible to Nebuchadnezzar. This was an honor that would never be bestowed upon a foreigner. Daniel was also placed in charge of all the wise men; essentially, he was made the President of the guild! The whole idea is that of faithfulness and its reward.

Verses 46-49

Daniel also makes a request that his three friends also receive honored positions. The king is happy to grant this and makes them chief officials in the province of Babylon. They, too, reaped the rewards of faithfulness.