

Bible Study Notes

Daniel 2: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel 2:31-45

Study of the dream given to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon around 600 BC. None of the kings other 'wise men' could tell him what his dream was, and then deduce its meaning. Only the Lord God was able to do it through Daniel. The vision was about a large statue, and the interpretation starts at the head and works its way down. In Hebrew, the word "head" often means "beginning," so we start at the head, or the current regime, and work our way down and forward through time.

v38 – **The Golden Head** is identified as Nebuchadnezzar and his **Babylonian Empire**. (Notice that Daniel emphasizes to the king that it is only through the forbearance of God that the king is able to rule.) Babylon is the first of the four world empires, but did not last more than twenty-one years after Nebuchadnezzar's death when the Babylonians fell to the Persians in 539 BC.

v39 – Daniel moves on to the second empire; little is said about that kingdom except it is inferior to the Babylonian one. This **Silver Chest and Arms Empire** was to be **Medo-Persia**, which began with Cyrus the Great, who conquered Babylon in 539 BC and died ten years later. The Medo-Persian Empire includes kings Cyrus, Xerxes, and Darius, and lasted until around 331 BC.

The third empire, the **Middle and Thighs of Bronze**, was the **Greco-Macedonian Empire** established by Alexander the Great, who began his invasion of Persia in 334 BC, crushed its last resistance in 331 BC, and established a realm extending from Yugoslavia to India – the largest empire of ancient times. The bronze kingdom lasted for almost 300 years before it was supplanted by the fourth kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream-image.

v40 – The fourth kingdom, the **Legs of Iron** (likely representing its ruthlessness rather than its true worth) is the **Roman Empire**.

v41 – This verse begins "future" rather than "historical" events. The **feet and 10 toes, made up of a mixture of iron and clay**, represent some sort of a federation that somehow incorporates, or is part of, the **Roman Empire**. Out of this mixture of iron and clay come weakness and confusion, pointing to the approaching day of doom. Because it consists of part of the Roman Empire, it is not considered to be a fifth empire, but a failed attempt at some sort of world order.

v44-45 – This is the **final Empire** and is one belonging solely to God. Daniel states that God himself will set up this kingdom that will never be destroyed. It is symbolized by the rock that crushes everything in its path, completely annihilating the previous empires. This is the **Kingdom of God**, ruled by **Jesus Christ**.

Recap:

- Golden Head: Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian Empire
- Chest and Arms of Silver: the Medo-Persian Empire
- Middle and Thighs of Bronze: the Greco-Macedonian Empire established by Alexander the Great
- Legs of Iron: the Roman Empire
- Feet partly of Iron and partly of Clay: a divided kingdom
- Rock that struck the Statue: a final kingdom established by God