

Head of Fine Gold — Babylonia (626-539 BC)

Historical and Biblical Background of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

- About 600 years before Jesus was born, Babylonia (Iraq today) was the most powerful and wealthy kingdom in the Middle East.
- King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged Jerusalem and took Daniel and others captive to Babylon to serve in his court. Nebuchadnezzar also took some of the sacred objects and vessels from the Temple of God back to Babylon.
- One night, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. The king threatened to kill his advisors if they could not both tell him the dream and interpret it. (Dan. 2:5-11)
- Daniel asked the king for some time to interpret the dream. After Daniel prayed, God revealed the dream and its meaning to him. (Daniel 2:12-23)
- The dream showed a statue with four sections. The head was gold. The chest was silver. The belly and thighs were bronze. The legs were made of iron and the feet were iron mixed with clay. A large rock struck and destroyed the statue and became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. (Daniel 2:31-35)
- Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar the dream and interpreted it. (Daniel 2:36-45) The King made Daniel ruler over Babylonia.



Head of the Statue (Daniel 2)

- The head of the statue, made from fine gold, represented the kingdom of Babylonia, which the Lord gave King Nebuchadnezzar to rule.
- The gold symbolized the superior power of Babylonia.
- Eventually Babylonia would be destroyed by an inferior kingdom.
- When King Nebuchadnezzar heard Daniel's interpretation, he said, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

Vision of Beasts – Lion (Daniel 7)

- More than 50 years after King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel had a vision about four great beasts (like a lion with eagle's wings, a bear, a leopard, and a terrifying powerful beast).
- The four beasts are four kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonian kingdom is compared to a lion in Jeremiah 4:7; 50:44, and to an eagle in Ezekiel 17:3, 11, 12.
- Images of lions with eagle's wings were popular in Babylonia, and can be found on ancient Babylonian architecture and currency. (Daniel 7:4)

Nineveh, capital of Assyria, falls to the Babylonians and the Medes (612 BC)

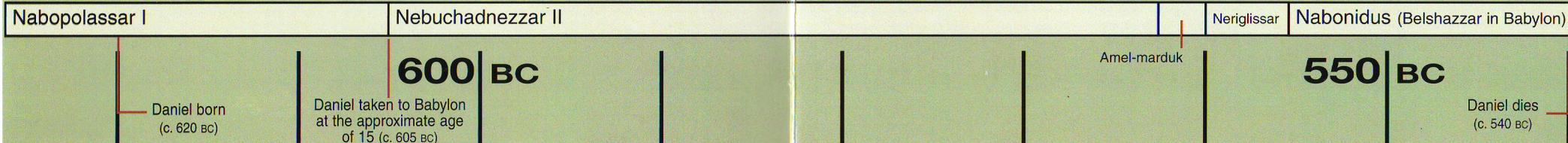
First Exile of Jews to Babylon (605 BC)

Judah, the Southern Kingdom, falls to Babylon. The Temple and Jerusalem destroyed (586 BC)

Gedaliah appointed governor over the Babylonian Province of Judah (586 BC)

Cyrus comes into power in Persia (559 BC)

Belshazzar in charge of Babylon (550 BC)

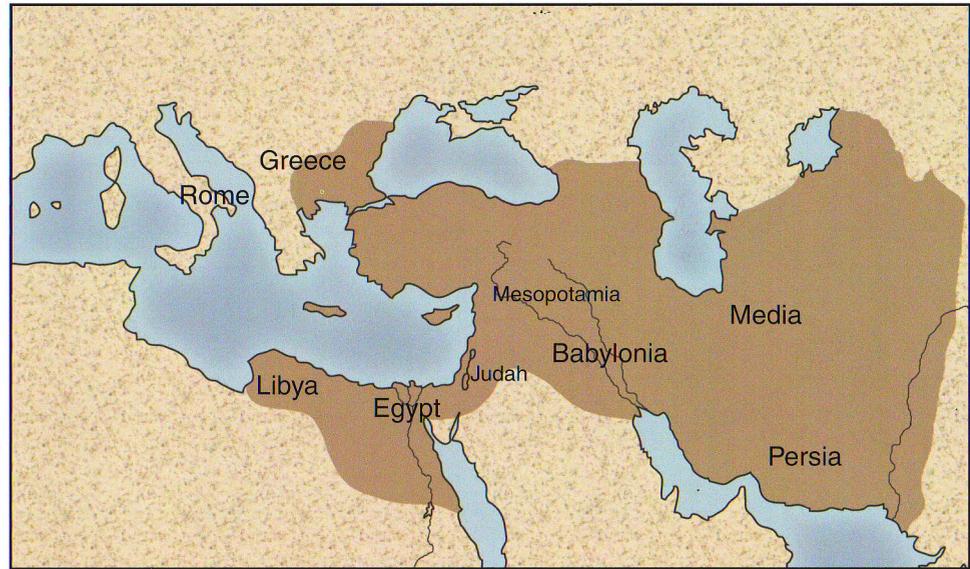


Chest and Arms of Silver— Medo-Persia (539-332 BC)



Historical and Biblical Background

- In 539 BC, Darius the Mede (from Media) took Babylon without a fight.
- By 538 BC, Mesopotamia and Judah were under Persian rule. Later the Persians gained control of Egypt and Libya.
- King Cyrus and the other kings of the Persian empire developed a policy that allowed all people the freedom to worship their own gods, and live their own ways.
- In 538 BC, Cyrus issued a decree ordering the restoration of the Jewish community. Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. (Ezra 1:2-4)
- The Persians paid to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. (Ezra 6:8)
- The vessels taken by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon were returned to their rightful place in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:7-11)
- In 457 BC, King Artaxerxes of Persia sent Ezra to Judah for religious reform and spiritual guidance. (Ezra 7:1-6)
- Nehemiah governed Judah from 444-430 BC. While in Judah, Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.



Chest and Arms of Statue (Daniel 2)

- The chest and arms made of silver represented the kingdom of Medo-Persia, which is the second power that would rise after Babylonia.
- Silver, which is of lesser value than gold, symbolized the inferior status of Medo-Persia to Babylonia.
- Eventually Persia would be conquered by another kingdom.

Vision of Beasts – Bear (Daniel 7)

- Daniel's vision of the beasts had shown a beast that looked like a bear.
- The bear was raised on one side, which may illustrate the dominance of Persia over Media.
- It had three ribs in its mouth, which may have illustrated the three major empires Persia conquered (Babylon, Egypt, and Libya).
- The bear was commanded to devour much flesh, which may have been a reference to Persia's military expansion throughout the ancient world.

Cyrus's edict allows Jews to return to Jerusalem (538 BC)

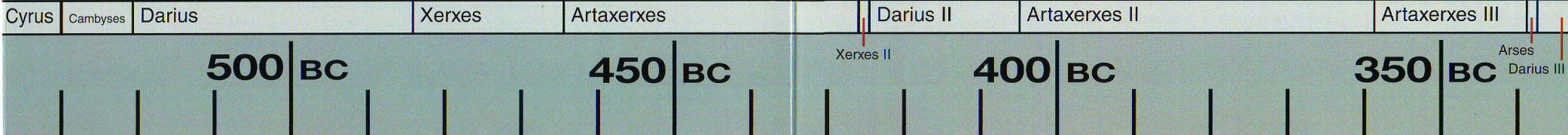
Jewish Temple is rebuilt (536 BC -516 BC)

Roman Republic established (509 BC)

King Xerxes (Ahasuerus) of Persia makes Esther queen (c. 478 BC)

Peloponnesian War between Athens & Sparta (431-404 BC)

Gauls sack Rome (386 BC)

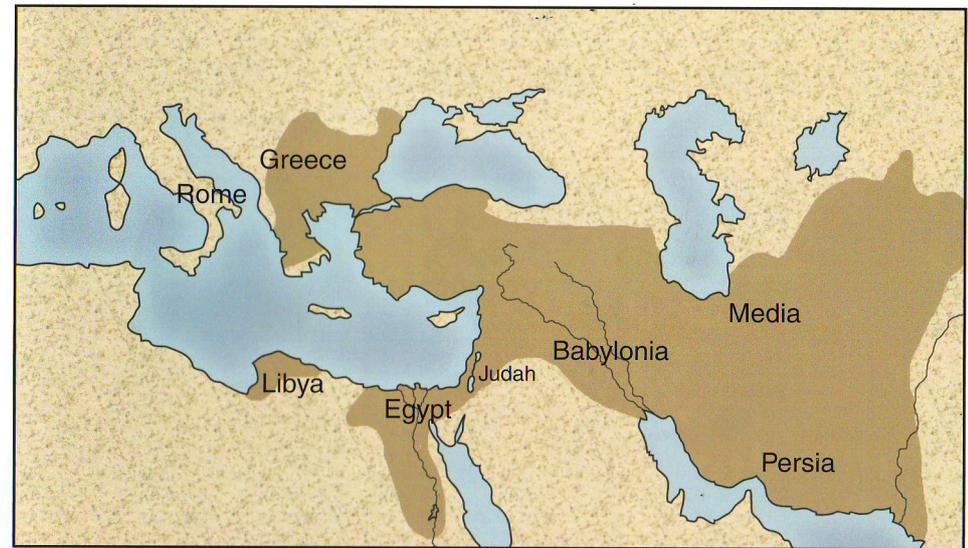


Belly and Thighs of Bronze — Greece (332-63 BC)



Historical and Biblical Background

- In 332 BC, Alexander the Great of Greece conquered the kingdom of Persia, and expanded his kingdom as far east as the Indus river.
- Alexander the Great brought with him rapid Hellenization, the spread of Greek culture, language, and religion into the entire civilized world.
- After Alexander's death in 323 BC, his generals fought over the conquered land.
- After more than 40 years of struggles and warfare (323-280 BC), four major divisions emerged: Egypt (Ptolemies), Syria (Seleucids), Macedonia (Antigonids), and Pergamum (Attalids).
- For over 150 years, the Jews were either under the control of the Ptolemies or the Seleucids.
- From 175-163 BC, the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes tried to force the Jews to abandon their law and adopt Greek culture. In 167 BC, he desecrated the Jewish Temple by sacrificing a pig on an altar to the Greek god Zeus.
- In response to the desecration of the Temple, a Jewish priest named Judas Maccabeus led a revolt.
- Maccabeus won, and in 164 BC, the Temple was cleansed and rededicated. This rededication is celebrated every year as Hanukkah.



Belly and Thighs of Statue (Daniel 2)

- The belly and thighs made of bronze represent the kingdom of Greece. This third kingdom would rule over the whole earth.
- Bronze, which is of lesser value than silver, symbolized the inferior status of Greece to that of Persia.
- Eventually Greece would be conquered by another kingdom.

Vision of Beasts – Leopard (Daniel 7)

- Daniel's vision of the leopard with four heads and four wings may represent the kingdom of Greece.
- The four wings may illustrate the speed of Alexander the Great's conquest.
- The four heads may represent the division of Alexander's kingdom into four provinces after Alexander's death: Egypt under the Ptolemies, Syria under the Seleucids, Macedonia under the Antigonids, and Pergamum under the Attalids.

Alexander the Great conquers Egypt and Palestine, Hellenization begins (332 BC)

Alexandrian Empire divided; Ptolemy rules Egypt, Seleucus rules Persia and Syria, Antigonus rules Macedonia and Greece (323 BC). The Attalids rule Pergamum.

Septuagint (Scriptures translated into Greek in Alexandria) (255 BC)

Judas Maccabeus leads Jewish revolt against the Seleucids (167 BC)

The Temple in Jerusalem is defiled (167 BC)

Temple in Jerusalem rededicated (164 BC)

Ptolemies of Egypt

Seleucids of Syria

Hasmonean Dynasty

Alexander the Great

300 BC

250 BC

200 BC

150 BC

100 BC

The Statue in the Book of Daniel

The Kingdoms and King Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM (Daniel 2)	DANIEL'S VISION (Daniel 7)	THE KINGDOMS (Dates Kingdom occupied Judah)
HEAD (FINE GOLD)	LION with eagle's wings	BABYLONIA King Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar (605 BC – 539 BC)
CHEST AND ARMS (SILVER)	BEAR raised on one side; three ribs in its mouth	MEDO-PERSIA King Cyrus to Darius III (539 BC – 332 BC)
BELLY AND THIGHS (BRONZE)	LEOPARD with four wings and four heads	GREECE Alexander the Great and the Four Divisions (332 BC – 63 BC)
LEGS (IRON) & FEET (IRON AND CLAY)	BEAST iron teeth, ten horns; small horn with eyes and mouth	A DIVIDED KINGDOM Many scholars believe this kingdom to be Rome (63 BC through the time of Jesus).
STONE (CUT OUT, NOT BY HUMAN HANDS)	SON OF MAN (Jesus Christ)	THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM OF GOD

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PUBLISHING

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Rose Publishing, Inc.
4733 Torrance Blvd., #259
Torrance, California 90503 U.S.A.
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Email: info@rose-publishing.com
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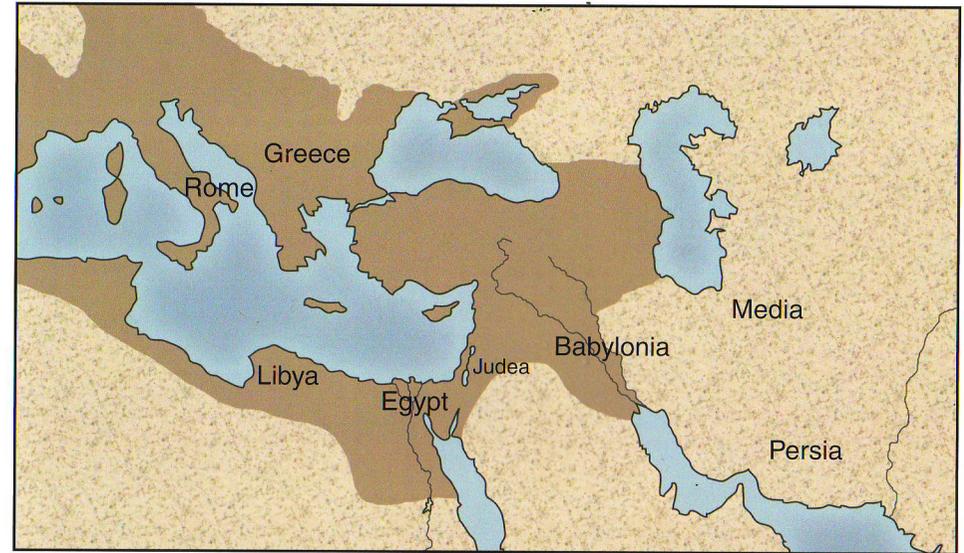
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Legs of Iron and Feet of Iron and Clay — Rome



Historical and Biblical Background

- Scholars suggest that the fourth kingdom is the Roman empire, however the Bible does not specifically identify this kingdom as Rome.
- In 63 BC, Roman General Pompey conquered Jerusalem.
- On March 15, 44 BC, Julius Caesar was assassinated by Brutus and Cassius, who fled to the East. Two years later, Octavian and Mark Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius at the Battle of Philippi.
- In 37 BC, Herod the Great was appointed king of Judea by Octavian and Mark Antony.
- In 27 BC, Caesar Augustus (Octavian) became the first Roman Emperor.
- During his reign, Herod the Great began to refurbish the Temple in Jerusalem.
- Jesus was born in Bethlehem, c. 6-4 BC.
- In AD 6, Judea became a Roman province ruled by a governor.
- Jesus Christ was crucified by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. Three days after his death, Jesus rose from the dead and was seen by more than 500 people (c. AD 30).
- In AD 70, the Romans destroyed the Jewish temple and Jerusalem.
- Over time, the Roman Empire weakened due to conflict within its borders and invaders attacking from outside.
- The Roman Empire fell in AD 476.



Legs and Feet of Statue (Daniel 2)

- The legs were made of iron and the feet were a mixture of both iron and clay.
- The legs of iron suggest that this kingdom would be strong as iron and would break, smash and crush things.
- This kingdom would be a divided kingdom, different from the others, both strong and weak, like iron is strong and clay is brittle.
- This kingdom would have a mixture of people who would not be united. (Daniel 2:41-43; 7:23)

Vision of Beasts – Terrifying Beast (Daniel 7)

- Daniel had a vision of a terrifying beast with ten horns and iron teeth.
- The beast's ten horns are ten kings that would rise from this kingdom.
- After them, another man (the "little horn" with eyes and a mouth that boasts) would speak against God and persecute God's people. Three of the first horns (kings) would be uprooted. Eventually the terrifying beast would be thrown into the blazing fire.

Pompey conquers Jerusalem for Rome (63 BC)

Julius Caesar, Crassus and Pompey form the First Triumvirate (60 BC)

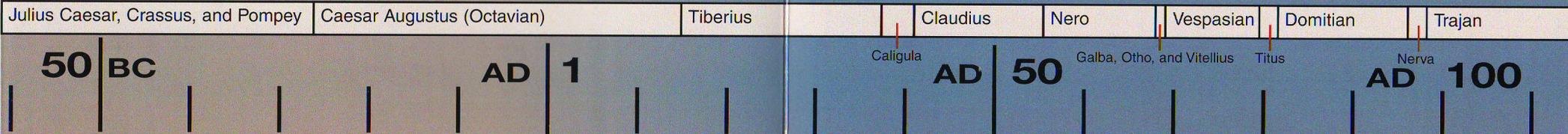
Jesus Born in Bethlehem (6-4 BC)

Paul's Conversion (c. AD 44)

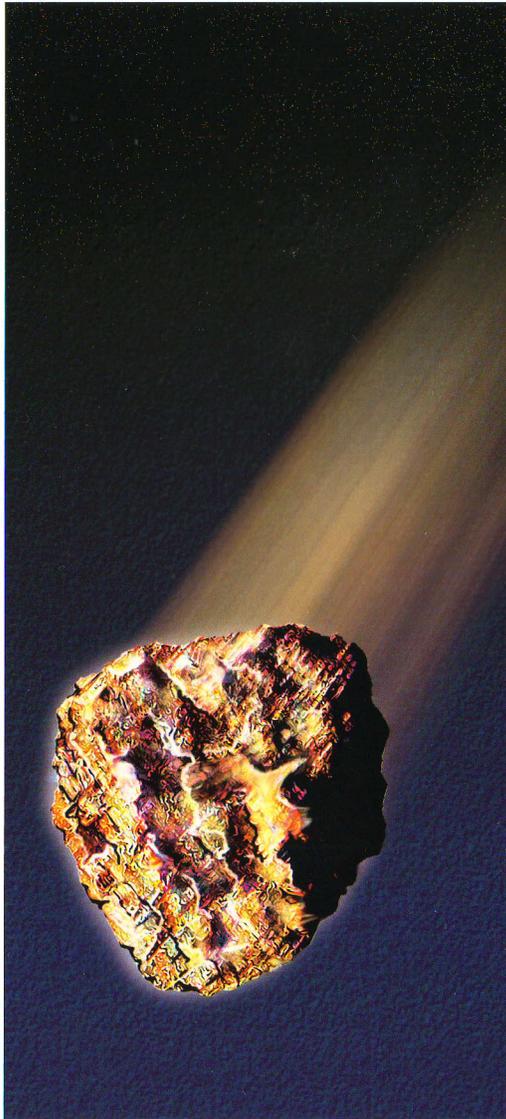
Jesus Baptized (c. AD 26)

Jewish Temple destroyed (AD 70)

Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (c AD 30)



Stone Cut Out, Not By Human Hands — Everlasting Kingdom



Bible References & Spiritual Application

- The stone represents God's eternal kingdom that is more powerful than any other kingdom.
- At the time of Daniel, the Temple in Jerusalem was in shambles and the people of Israel were placed in captivity. The defeated captives may have feared that their God was weak and unfaithful.
- Daniel's writing demonstrates that in the midst of despair, God is still present, powerful, and in control. Kingdoms and rulers come and go, but God is ultimately in charge. (Daniel 2:20-21; 7:9-14, 27)
- Despite Babylonia's wealth and power, Daniel emphasized that God's kingdom is eternal and more powerful than any earthly kingdom. (Daniel 2:44)
- The book of Daniel shows that God did not forget his promises. God's promises have been fulfilled in the Son of Man (Daniel 7:13-14), who established an everlasting kingdom on earth. (Daniel 2:44; 7:27)

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

—Revelation 21:3, 4 (KJV)



The Rock (Daniel 2)

- A stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. Then the rest of the statue broke into pieces and what remained was carried away in the wind. Then the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain that filled the whole earth.
- Daniel told the king that God will set up a kingdom that will crush all earthly kingdoms and bring them to an end.
- God's kingdom will never be destroyed and will endure forever.

Vision of Beasts The Son of Man (Daniel 7)

- After seeing the four beasts in a vision, Daniel saw one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.
- The son of man [Jesus] approached the Ancient of Days [God, the Father] and was led into his presence.
- The son of man was given authority, glory and sovereign power.
- All peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him.
- His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom will never be destroyed.