

# “THE RISE AND FALL OF THE WORLD”

DANIEL 2:31-45

**Theme:** Regardless of how mighty men may appear, God remains in sovereign control.

## I. The Disclosure of God’s Plan for the World - 2:31-35

### A. *THE EXHIBITION OF THE PLAN – v. 31*

1. Having demonstrated the character of a true worshipper of God, Daniel now gets to the business of conveying the actual information God had revealed to him.
2. This section of Scripture provides tremendous hope to the people of God in every age of human history - especially those Jewish people enduring the chastening hand of God during the captivity.
3. He chooses to use Nebuchadnezzar as the vehicle through which He would lay out His plan for human history.
4. The vision, given to the King, was of such a tremendous impact, that Nebuchadnezzar was “*awestruck*.”
5. “*There was a single great statue*” - signifies that what the King saw was to be taken as a whole - as we will see, it portrayed all human history from that point until the end.
6. It “*was large and of extraordinary splendor*” - signifies that mankind would develop tremendous accomplishments that would serve as a cause to wonder.
7. “*Its appearance was awesome*” - producing a tremendous impact on the mind of Nebuchadnezzar.

### B. *THE EPOCHS OF THE PLAN – vv. 32-35*

1. Daniel then begins immediately to recount the details of the image - providing a detailed account of the epochs of the empires that would dominate human history - the “*times of the Gentiles*” that represented the apex of human power and glory.
2. There are four epochs represented - all which spring out of one another, even as the empires that are represented by each.
3. The quality of the materials used to symbolize each of these parts are interesting in two ways:
  - a) The value of the metals decreases from one stage to the next: Gold – Silver – Bronze – Iron & Clay, signifying that the character of mankind will decrease until the end.
  - b) The strength of the metals increases from one stage to the

next, signifying that the strength of mankind will likewise increase until the end.

4. The end of the vision results in the demolition of the image by a supernatural event that so effectively annihilated it, *“not a trace ... was found.”*

## II. The Description of God’s Plan for the World – 2:36-41

### A. *EPOCH #1 (605-539 BC) – BABYLON: THE HEAD OF GOLD - vv. 36-38*

1. The King was so enthralled by the accuracy of Daniel’s recounting of his dream, that he didn’t even interrupt him – *“This was the dream; now we shall tell its interpretation before the king.”*
2. Daniel reminds Nebuchadnezzar that although he takes precedence *as “the head of gold,”* he was still placed in power by *“the God of heaven [who] has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory.”*
3. This demonstrates that no matter how high human accomplishment, glory and power ascend, it is still merely granted to them by the sovereignty of the Almighty *“God of heaven.”*
4. The first great empire of world history was Babylon - *“You are the head of gold.”*

### B. *EPOCH #2 (539-331 BC) – MEDO-PERSIA: THE ARMS OF SILVER - vv. 39a*

1. *“After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you”* - a reference to the Medo-Persian Empire.
2. This reference is remarkably accurate historically - with the two-fold division of the *“breast and the arms of silver”* - the arms reflecting the two elements of the Empire.
3. That this Empire is *“inferior to you”* - reflects not the size of the Empire, for each grows beyond the preceding, but rather the quality of government: Babylon was unified whereas each successive world empires possessed significant divisions.

### C. *EPOCH #3 (331-146 BC) – GREECE: THE BELLY OF BRONZE – v. 39b*

1. *“Then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth”* - a reference to the Empire of Greece under Alexander the Great.
2. Greece succeeded Medo-Persia in history and was by far the largest of Empires - stretching from Egypt and Europe eastward all the way to India - a huge empire.
3. This empire, although more powerful than either of the previous,

was of very poor cohesion and government, unable to endure the death of Alexander.

4. In this sense, it was likewise *“inferior”* and is therefore reflected by bronze

D. **EPOCH #4 (146 BC - 474 AD) – ROME: THE LEGS OF IRON – vv. 40-41**

1. *“Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron;”* - a reference to the might of Rome - *“inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things.”*
2. Indeed, Rome succeeded Greece *“like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.”*
3. The Roman legions were noted for their ability to crush all resistance with an iron heel.
4. However, their awesome strength is represented by iron, the lack of inner unity is reflected in v. 41: - *“In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you say the iron mixed with common clay.”*
5. At the beginning of the Roman empire, they were all iron - “her government was solidly organized, her armies well drilled and disciplined, her policies with subjugated territories well defined and not overly oppressive” (Wood, p. 69).
6. However, in its later period, they stability and firmness of the empire became brittle and fragile, and it broke apart.

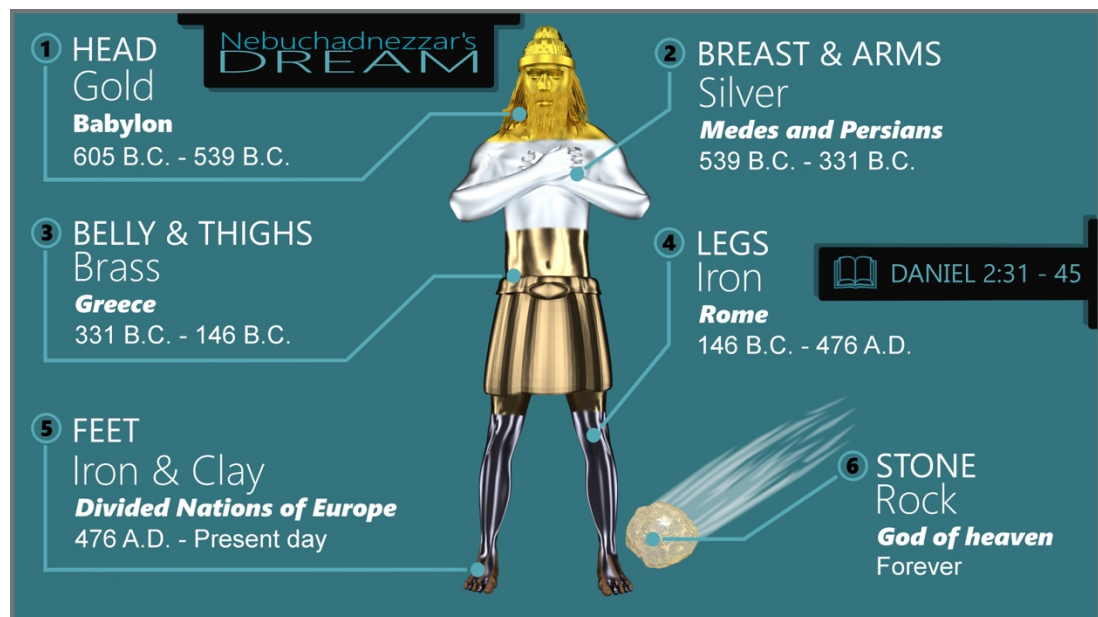


Figure 1 Downloaded from iStock

### III. The Detriment of God's Plan for the World – 2:42-45

#### A. *THE DEGENERACY OF MAN* – v. 42-43

1. As we will see later in the book, the Roman empire is the last great empire portrayed in Scripture - one that, having never been conquered, simply degenerated, and withered away, will be revived in the end times.
2. I believe that between verses 41 & 42, is the period that we are currently in.
3. The moral degeneracy that characterized Rome will continue to prevail even as the Roman empire is revived - aptly being described in [v. 42](#).
4. May it suffice to say that toward the end of time, mankind will not be evolving to a greater sense of moral strength but will be increasingly plighted with clay until there remains no more strength - [v. 43](#).

#### B. *THE DESTRUCTION OF MEN* – vv. 44-45

1. As the dream indicated, mankind will increase in its might and strength, but decrease in its moral stability and strength.
2. *“In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed . . . it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms.”*
3. This is a clear reference to the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom - a future event that will remove the glory of all the combined glory of the kingdoms of mankind, so that they *“became like chaff from the summer threshing floors, and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”* - [v. 35](#).
4. Next week we will look at the qualities of this Millennial Kingdom by taking a closer look at these verses – 44-45.

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God remains in sovereign control.