

Daniel 2

- After our introduction last week, today we're ready to dive into the prophecies of the Book of Daniel
 - The next section of the book is written in Aramaic, which indicates that the context was intended for both the Jew and the Gentile
 - This section runs for the next six chapters
 - And it contains one of the most impressive prophetic revelations anywhere in Scripture
 - The section is organized as a chiasm, which helps us understand the overall meaning of the section
 - A chiasm is a structured way of organizing a writing to emphasize the main point – similar to the way we use outlines
 - The chiasm of Chapters 2-7 can be charted this way:

A - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world
B - God delivers Daniel's friends from Gentile persecution
C - God humbles the Gentile king (Nebuchadnezzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty
C' - God deposes the Gentile king (Belshazzar) to demonstrate His sovereignty
B' - God delivers Daniel from Gentile persecution
A' - The prophecy concerning four Gentile empires that dominate Israel and the world

- The chiasm helps explain the seemingly contradictory plan for Israel under Gentile domination and persecution
 - While at the same time God protects and preserves the Jewish people until a time of rescue
 - Israel will be on the losing side of a struggle against the Gentile world
 - But it's God Who put Israel there and it's God Who will ultimately rescue Israel
- Tonight, we study the first part of this chiasm
 - In Chapter 2, Daniel will interpret a dream for the king of Babylon

- In this dream, the Lord reveals His plan to bring a succession of Gentile kingdoms to rule the earth
- During this time, Israel will be under the authority of Gentile powers
- But at the end of this long period of history, the Lord will restore Israel as the chief nation on the earth
- And thus will the Messiah usher in the long-awaited Kingdom promised to Israel

Dan. 2:1 Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.

Dan. 2:2 Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.

Dan. 2:3 The king said to them, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream."

Dan. 2:4 Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation."

Dan. 2:5 The king replied to the Chaldeans, "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap.

Dan. 2:6 "But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation."

Dan. 2:7 They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation."

Dan. 2:8 The king replied, "I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm,

Dan. 2:9 that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation."

Dan. 2:10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean.

Dan. 2:11 "Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh."

- In v.1, we hear that in Nebuchadnezzar's second full year as king, he had dreams

- As we'll soon see in the chapter, the dreams were not the result of too much pizza the night before
 - God has given these visions to the king intentionally
 - The Hebrew indicates that the king had multiple dreams
 - There is some Hebrew in this chapter – the Aramaic doesn't begin until v.4
 - So either this dream repeated itself, or the king received the dream in pieces
 - Either way, God made the visions so dramatic, so troubling, so provocative that the king didn't forget them and couldn't ignore them
- Yet God has also done something else interesting
 - He made sure that the king couldn't understand the dreams
 - Not all our dreams have significance, much less prophetic meaning sent from God
 - Mine rarely even make sense
 - But occasionally, the Lord may use dreams to communicate to someone from behind the scenes, even today
- In this case, the Lord withheld the meaning from the king to ensure the king would reach out for explanation
 - And reach out he did
 - Nebuchadnezzar calls in all his counselors in Babylon seeking their advice
 - These men consisted of four groups: magicians, conjurers, sorcerers, and astrologers
 - A magician was one who attempted to divine the future
 - A conjurer attempted to communicate with the dead
 - A sorcerer cast spells or called upon demons for power
 - Finally, the astrologer studied the heavens to determine the future

- As we see in the text, these men were called to give an interpretation, but the king wanted to be sure they were telling the truth
 - So Nebuchadnezzar wisely required that the men tell him both the dream and the interpretation
 - Normally, these men expected their leader to describe the dream first
 - Then, they would each appeal to their respective demonic power to arrive at an answer
- Probably if their sources failed to answer, the men might simply propose their own answer to satisfy the king's curiosity
 - It seems the king suspected they might do this
 - Which is why he threw them this curveball
- Predictably, the counselors object to the new rules, since it makes their job much harder and will expose any fraud
 - Starting with their first protest in the second half of v.4, Daniel switches to writing in Aramaic
 - The first three verses were still in Hebrew
 - But now from v.4 until 7:28, the original text remains in Aramaic
 - This indicates that the subject of Daniel's writing is to be known by the Gentiles and Jews
 - When these men protest, the king sees right through their scheme
 - In v.5, he declares that he will tear them limb from limb and destroy their families' homes if they won't do as he instructs
 - He's calling their bluff
 - If they can't tell him something he already knows (*i.e.*, the content of the dream)
 - Then by what power could he expect them to tell him things he doesn't know?
 - And that's the only reason they are employed
 - This back and forth of the king's demand and the counselors' protests serve to set up the next part of the story

- Notice how they end their final protest against the king's methods
 - They insinuate that Nebuchanezzar isn't a great king, since no great king would ask such a thing
 - And they claim that only gods could reveal the things that the king seeks to know
 - And that is precisely the conclusion the Lord wants Nebuchadnezzar to reach, as well
 - This is a dream that only the Lord will reveal, though contrary to their claims, He will reveal it through flesh (Daniel)
- This sets up the entrance of our hero
 - The king received these dreams in his second year
 - The ancient Babylonians counted a monarch's first year of reign as starting on the first calendar year after he took the throne
 - Ancient records show that Nebuchadnezzar became king at the halfway point in the year of 605 BC
 - So the king's first full year didn't start until he had already been ruling for six months
 - So his second full year started in 603 BC and ended in 602 BC
 - Therefore, Daniel was either just ending his three-year training, or very near the end, when these dreams came to the king
 - In either case, Daniel was the least qualified among all the king's men
 - Which made him the perfect candidate to be elevated into God's service
 - For when Daniel is able to interpret the dream, God will be glorified, not Daniel

Dan. 2:12 Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

Dan. 2:13 So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them.

Dan. 2:14 Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon;

[Dan. 2:15](#) he said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter.

[Dan. 2:16](#) So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.

[Dan. 2:17](#) Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter,

[Dan. 2:18](#) so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

- Predictably, Nebuchadnezzar declares that all wise men be destroyed
 - Since Daniel had just entered service in this capacity, he and his friends suddenly find themselves caught up in this melee
 - In fact, they know nothing of what brought about this sudden decree
 - So Daniel shows great discretion, but with discernment
 - In other words, Daniel doesn't panic, he doesn't beg or argue
 - He remains rational and thoughtful, though aware of the seriousness of this situation
 - Simply put, Daniel doesn't operate in fear
 - Fear is a sinful response to the circumstances of life, reflecting a failure to trust the Lord
 - And it's often born out a longing to preserve this life at the expense of the next
 - Jesus was speaking about this dilemma when He said:

[John 12:25](#) "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

- Daniel didn't want to die if God would spare him
 - But he knew that his ability to understand and operate in God's will in the midst of these challenging circumstances depended on keeping his wits about him
 - Daniel's example continues to be eminently practical

- Be smart, be creative, be adaptable, be calm, be thoughtful and be unyielding in your character and godliness
- Trusting God for whatever comes next
- Daniel's next step is to buy some time
 - He needs time to appeal to the Lord for an answer, for he knows that only the Lord can grant him the insight to save his life
 - To get the time he needs, Daniel goes to the king and asks for the time
 - And the reason he gives is so that he can interpret the dream
 - He's already assuring the king that he can give the interpretation, which suggests that Daniel had a sense of his calling and gifting already
 - He wasn't presuming God's will, except to assume that God wouldn't have placed him here except to serve this purpose
 - It's a fine line, admittedly, but I think we can operate in a similar confidence when we know the calling on our life
 - Evangelists who are confident in their gifting and mission will step forward to present the Gospel when others hesitate
 - Teachers who know they are called and gifted with insight will tackle a study of Scripture that others struggle to understand
 - The same can be said of those who have calling and gifting to pray, heal, plant a church or make a large financial gift
 - If you're operating in God's calling and gifting, then you don't need to hesitate or apologize for confidence
- Daniel declared that he was ready to serve the king, but then he stepped back long enough to seek the Lord's blessing
 - Presumably, if the Lord had not granted approval, Daniel would have retreated from serving and gone to his death
 - But that would have been God's will
 - Of course, that wasn't God's will in this case

[Dan. 2:19](#) Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven;

[Dan. 2:20](#) Daniel said,

“Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,
For wisdom and power belong to Him.

[Dan. 2:21](#) “It is He who changes the times and the epochs;
He removes kings and establishes kings;
He gives wisdom to wise men
And knowledge to men of understanding.

[Dan. 2:22](#) “It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things;
He knows what is in the darkness,
And the light dwells with Him.

[Dan. 2:23](#) “To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise,
For You have given me wisdom and power;
Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You,
For You have made known to us the king’s matter.”

- In Daniel’s narrative, he jumps immediately to receiving an answer from God
 - We don’t know how long he prayed to the Lord, since his prayer isn’t captured in the text
 - But it appears that he prayed that night and received an answer in the same night
 - It’s hard to believe the king allowed Daniel much more time
 - That night, the Lord gives Daniel his answer through a night vision
 - A night vision in this case could be a euphemism for a dream, or it can mean a conscious revelation that occurred in the evening
 - The point is that Daniel received the answer to the dream directly from the Lord
 - So the Lord delivered the coded message to the king
 - And He delivered the decoded interpretation to Daniel
 - We might ask why didn’t the Lord just give the king the decoded message in the first place?
 - Two reasons: since Abraham, God has always revealed himself through the Jewish people

- He may use Gentiles like Nebuchadnezzar as well, but even then, the Lord requires that a Jew be involved to explain God's purpose
- Secondly, the Lord is speaking to a Gentile leader about the rise and fall of Gentile kingdoms
- But the ultimate subject of the vision is Israel's future, so the Lord uses a prophet to reveal this truth to Israel
- Daniel then responds in a praise of God for His revelation
 - Daniel's words indicate he not only understood the vision, but its significance
 - First, he credits God's wisdom and power for the plan that was revealed
 - He isn't merely talking about God's ability to reveal these mysteries
 - Daniel is talking about the subject matter of the revelation itself
 - God's wisdom and power is evident in the plan that the dream reveals
 - In v.21, Daniel extolls the works of God as revealed in the dream's interpretation
 - God changes times and epochs
 - And He establishes and removes leaders of nations
- As Daniel speaks of times and epochs, he's referring to something very specific, the very topic of the dream
 - The word "times" refers to the course of history, and the word "epoch" refers to specific periods of time
 - So history can be called "times"
 - And therefore epochs are the sectioning or dividing of history into periods
 - God is both the author of history (times) and the One Who divides time into its periods (epochs)
 - God does these things with purpose, according to a master plan

- These concepts are also taught in the New Testament, though with slightly different terms
 - In the NT, the term for epochs is “ages”
 - The history of Creation is divided into ages, which the Lord controls, as Daniel says
 - Ages are long, but finite, periods in God’s program for history
- For example

Mark 10:29 Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, **Mark 10:30** but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

- Jesus speaks about a “present age” and an “age to come”
 - It’s clear that we exist in one age (or epoch) today, yet God has another period of history, another age, planned after this one
 - This pattern of one age leading to another age is the way God has always worked in history
- Furthermore, the Lord generally gives notice when these changes in ages happen, just as He is giving notice through this dream
 - In the NT, the transition from one age to another is characterized as “last days”
 - The last days are the final period of one age that ushers in the next age

2 Tim. 3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

2 Pet. 3:3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts,

- Daniel is praising the Lord for His sovereignty in these transitions
 - God authors the events of history
 - But more than that, He has set these events into ages so as to accomplish a greater purpose

- As Daniel proclaims in v.20, God is the One Who *changes* these periods of history
- He is in control of them, leading the world to a certain purpose
- As we'll see, this dream is an elaborate description of one such age, of how it begins and how it ends
- Furthermore, the Lord decides who He permits to see these things and understand them
 - Daniel acknowledges in v.21 that many people live and die without ever understanding what God is doing around them
 - Of course, we can only see a few decades of history, which naturally limits our ability to understand the larger scale of God's plan for time
 - Only if He reveals it to us by His Word can we understand the big picture
 - Daniel praises the Lord for choosing to grant him that revelation
- Finally in v.22, Daniel praises the Lord for His purposes in these matters
 - God is working to bring light into darkness
 - The light of His truth into a world darkened by the lies of the enemy
 - Ultimately, He is working through ages of history to bring evil and darkness to an end
 - God will triumph over evil, but He chooses to do it on His own timetable
 - Daniel has received a remarkable insight into both
- So in v.23 Daniel ends in thanks for the revelation, knowing it has saved his life and the life of his friends

Dan. 2:24 Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king's presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king."

Dan. 2:25 Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!"

Dan. 2:26 The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?"

Dan. 2:27 Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.

Dan. 2:28 "However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed.

Dan. 2:29 "As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place.

Dan. 2:30 "But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

- That next morning, Daniel hurriedly reaches the king's representative to stop the executions of the wise men
 - When Arioch hears Daniel's story, the guard goes to the king, claiming to have found the man to interpret the dream
 - We see the guard seeking a little credit for himself
 - Meanwhile, Daniel consistently redirects credit away from himself and toward the Lord
 - When the king asks Daniel if he can reveal both the dream and the interpretation, Daniel says, in effect, "no"
 - Daniel can't do such things, but the One true God can
 - Daniel specifically locates his God as the One in Heaven
 - As opposed to the false gods of Babylon that occupied earthly temples
 - And of course, Daniel's accurate revelation is his proof that the God of Israel is true
- As Daniel prepares to give the king his answer, he introduces his answer by describing it as a prophecy concerning "latter days"

- The term “latter days” simply means future days of the end, but that just begs the question, “the end of what?”
 - As you probably guessed, latter days refers to the last days of an age
 - And in fact, this dream is a description of an entire age, from beginning to end, not just of the last days
- Daniel says this is a prophecy about the future, but he refers to the latter days because that is the main point of the dream
 - It’s a description of a period of history, an age, but the meaningful part of the vision is in how the age ends
 - Just as in a story about an important football game, the most important part of the story is how the games ends
 - Similarly, in this prophecy, the most important part is how the age ends
- Even more important, knowing the age and how it ends explains God’s purpose in this age
 - The events that make up history are not random...
 - They are part of a plan God is working to bring an age to conclusion and lead us to the next age
 - All ages work together to bring God glory and accomplish all that He has promised to His people
 - Through this dream, the Lord is communicating what happens in this age of history and why it is happening
- So then, Daniel begins to explain to the king what none of the other men could do: he describes the king’s dream

Dan. 2:31 “You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome.

Dan. 2:32 “The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze,

Dan. 2:33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

Dan. 2:34 “You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.

[Dan. 2:35](#) “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and 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.

- The king’s dream is one of the most intriguing visions in the Bible
 - The dream was of a strange and majestic statue
 - The materials of the statue vary from head to toe
 - They progress from greater value to lesser value
 - And from softer to more brittle
 - Daniel describes the divisions of the statue from head to toe, and then he describes what came next
 - A stone, uncut by human hands, descended from above, like an asteroid, and struck the statue at the feet
 - Though it struck at the feet, nevertheless, the statue was completely destroyed and obliterated
 - Leaving nothing of the statue
 - The stone remained, however, and it grew to a giant mountain that filled the entire earth
 - This is the dream, and obviously, despite its simplicity, no one could imagine its meaning simply by hearing the description
 - It could mean almost anything
 - But it has a specific, assigned meaning given by God
 - So unless we know and accept the Lord’s own interpretation, we will not have the correct understanding
 - That’s why it required that God provide the decoder ring to the dream
 - It forced Nebuchadnezzar to seek for Daniel, whom God empowered to answer the king’s inquiry
 - Ultimately, it results in Daniel being elevated as God intended
- Now we turn to Daniel’s interpretation

[Dan. 2:36](#) “This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king.

[Dan. 2:37](#) “You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory;

[Dan. 2:38](#) and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.

- Daniel says the head of gold at the top of the statue represented Nebuchadnezzar as ruler of Babylon
 - Daniel tells the king that his power to conquer the nations of the world was a direct result of Israel’s God giving them into his hand
 - And the Lord’s decree was even more comprehensive than the king may have imagined
 - By God’s decree, Nebuchadnezzar ruled over every inch of the physical earth
- Now, we know Nebuchadnezzar didn’t travel to every inch of the globe during his time as king, so how can Daniel say he ruled the entire earth?
 - He’s describing the authority God gave to Nebuchadnezzar, regardless of the degree to which Nebuchadnezzar actually assumed that authority
 - Jeremiah confirms Daniel’s words

[Jer. 27:5](#) “I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight.

[Jer. 27:6](#) “Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him.

[Jer. 27:7](#) “All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant.

- Jeremiah confirms that for a time, God appointed Nebuchadnezzar king of the world
- The choice of gold for Babylon represents the style of government in that kingdom
 - In Babylonian society, the king was all-powerful
 - No one could challenge his rule or edict

- There was no senate or prime minister
 - Gold represents the absolute authority of Nebuchadnezzar
- But notice also in Jer. 27:7 that his rule is temporary
 - In fact, Nebuchadnezzar would lose his authority while he was still alive
- The next part of the statue confirms this conclusion

Dan. 2:39 “After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

- Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar something comes after him
 - In fact, another kingdom will arise to replace his kingdom
 - Though Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon falls to another kingdom, nevertheless, this new world power is somewhat less powerful
- Before we look at the second and third kingdoms, let’s understand what our statue represents
 - We see the head of gold is Babylon, and that the silver and bronze represent subsequent kingdoms in the statue
 - Therefore, the statue represents a timeline of history
 - Each part of the statue replaces the prior part, indicating time progressing from the head of the statue to the feet
- So the statue represents an epoch, or an age, of time in history
 - We know when it began, since it starts with Nebuchadnezzar
 - And when we get to the end of the dream, we will know how it ends as well
 - So what does the Bible call this age?
- Jesus names this age and defines its purpose in Luke 21

Luke 21:24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

- In Chapter 21, Jesus is in the midst of explaining how Jerusalem will be destroyed by the Romans
 - As He's explaining the coming fall of the city in AD 70, Jesus says these events are part of a larger plan of God
 - Specifically, the people of Israel are to be scattered outside their land
 - And the city of Jerusalem is to remain under control by Gentile oppressors
 - Until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled
- The Greek word translates as "times" in my Bible is the Greek word *kairos*
 - That word can also be translated "season" or "age"
 - In other words, Jesus said there is an age called the Age of the Gentiles
 - It is defined as a period of Jewish exile
 - And of the city of Jerusalem under Gentile domination
 - It's called the Age of the Gentiles because it will be a period of history when Gentile nations rule over Israel
- So the events of AD 70 were merely a continuation of the age, which is why Jesus said these things will happen until the age is fulfilled
 - The Greek word for "fulfilled" is *pleroo*, which can also be translated "completed"
 - So the Roman sacking of Jerusalem was just another moment in a timeline of Gentile domination of Israel
 - And this domination will continue until it reaches its appointed end
- And from the statue in Daniel 2, we now see where this age began
 - The head of gold, which is Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar, was the first time in history that a Gentile authority scattered the Jews of Jerusalem and captured the city
 - That's why Nebuchadnezzar represents the start of the statue and the timeline

- He is the beginning of the Age of the Gentiles
 - So the statue represents a timeline for the Age of the Gentiles
 - We know the age began in 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar first conquered Judah and Jerusalem
 - We know the age was still ongoing in Jesus' day
 - And we know its purpose is to subject Israel to Gentile domination until the age is completed
 - Like all ages, this age has a beginning and an end, so one day, Gentiles will no longer dominate Israel once this age is over
 - From studying the rest of the dream, we will come to understand how the Age of the Gentile progresses and how it ends
 - Moving to the second and third kingdoms
- Daniel says the silver (the second kingdom) will be inferior to Babylon
 - The inferiority of the second kingdom is represented by the lesser value of silver, compared to gold
 - How will the next kingdom be less than Babylon?
 - To understand this question, we must determine which kingdom replaced Babylon in history, since Daniel doesn't name it
 - So we must determine the criteria for defining each kingdom
 - The criteria to be one of the kingdoms in the statue derive from the definition of the age itself
 - Each kingdom must be a Gentile kingdom
 - Each kingdom must be the most powerful kingdom on earth, having replaced the prior kingdom in that position
 - Therefore, each kingdom must possess Babylon and Jerusalem
 - Because Babylon possessed each of these cities originally
- Looking at history, only three kingdoms meet these criteria
 - First, the kingdom of the Medo-Persians replaced the kingdom of Babylon in 550 BC

- We read of this transition later in the book of Daniel, because it happened in Daniel's lifetime
- This kingdom was formed by the alliance of the Medes and Persia, represented by the two arms of the statue
- It grew in power until it challenged and defeated Babylon under Cyrus the Great
- The kingdom was less majestic than Babylon because the king Medo-Persian empire was not all powerful
- He had checks on his own authority
- In particular, the Medo-Persian laws stipulated that a king could not reverse the decisions of prior kings
 - We will see this rule at work later in the book of Daniel
 - So the rule of a Medo-Persian monarch was like silver, compared to Babylon's gold, because it wasn't as absolute
 - Nevertheless, the Medo-Persians will defeat the Babylonians at a point in the age and assume their position of authority
 - Meanwhile, the Age of the Gentiles presses onward
- In v.39, Daniel adds that a third kingdom is also slated to assume power over the world
 - That kingdom will replace the second, and will likewise exhibit lesser majesty in its rule
 - Based on our criteria above, the next kingdom to qualify for the statue was the Hellenistic Empire of Alexander the Great
 - Alexander extended the Greek empire out of central Europe and into the East
 - He defeated the Persians in 330 BC
 - He is represented by bronze because the leader of the Greek empire was far less powerful than those of either the Medes or Babylonians
 - He competed with the leaders of city-states within the empire and with land aristocracy

- Ultimately, the sovereign enforced his control through a powerful military that could impose his will
- Also, the statue divides during this period, represented by the division of the legs
 - This division reflects the way the Hellenistic Empire evolved
 - Alexander the Great died barely four years into his reign
 - At that point, he had no heirs, so his kingdom was divided into four parts assigned to four generals to rule
 - The two generals in the West allied together and the other two generals in the East were allied
- This East-West political divide has never changed
 - Even today, we still speak of the East and West, politically
 - The division that began under Alexander the Great remains throughout the rest of the age
 - Just as the legs in the statue remain forever separated
- Daniel's interpretation sped past the second and third empires because they were not important features in this timeline
 - They must be covered, of course, but only because they lie along a path leading us to the final kingdom
 - As we said in the beginning, the part of the timeline that is most important is how it ends
 - And therefore, this fourth kingdom gets the most treatment in the interpretation

Dan. 2:40 "Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.

Dan. 2:41 "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 saw the iron mixed with common clay.

Dan. 2:42 "As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle.

Dan. 2:43 “And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.

- The final kingdom moves to the least valuable, but more brittle materials: iron and clay
 - This kingdom replaces the prior kingdom by breaking it down and crushing it into pieces
 - The fourth kingdom follows a very different pattern, compared to the first three
 - Rather than consolidating power into a single entity, the fourth kingdom will assimilate existing powers, yet leave them as pieces
 - Some of these pieces will be stronger than others, resulting in an empire that is unbalanced in power
 - Just as clay and iron do not stick together well, this kingdom will find its various pieces combining for a period of time and then breaking apart again
 - Nevertheless, this combining and separating pattern will not mean the end of the kingdom overall
 - Together, the pieces continue to act together to perpetuate the Age of the Gentiles
 - Together, they function to dispossess the people of Israel from their land
 - And they take turns trampling the city of Jerusalem
 - Finally, as the kingdom comes to its end, a division of ten emerges, represented by the ten toes of the statue
 - Daniel doesn't explain what the ten toes represent, at least not in this chapter
 - But we will get our explanation in Daniel 7
 - For now, we simply understand that the kingdom ends in a division of ten
- What kind of earthly Kingdom fits this unique set of details? We know from history that the next Gentile power to follow Greece was the Roman Empire

- The Roman Republic defeated the Hellenistic Empire in 168 BC
 - Rome eventually defeated Judea in 63 BC and took control of Jerusalem and Babylon
 - And Rome continued to expand even after for the next several centuries
- As Rome conquered, it transitioned from a republic to a monarchy ruled by Caesars
 - Yet it added territory by assimilating cultures and lands without changing the culture of these lands
 - As a results, the Roman Empire could very well be described as iron held together by clay
 - The Romans conquered like iron, crushing those who opposed them and cutting up land into new divisions
 - But because these lands retained their cultures, they continued to see themselves as independent of Rome
- At this point, we ask the natural question, “What came after the end of the Roman Empire?”
 - Well, in a word...nothing
 - The Roman Empire has never completely disappeared, at least not in the sense intended by the statue
 - Remember, this fourth kingdom is made up from “pieces” not a single entity
 - These pieces combine for periods of time, but like iron and clay, they don’t adhere, so they eventually break apart
 - This pattern has never ended
 - It defined the period of Roman rule
 - But it’s only increased in the centuries since the Roman Empire disappeared
 - Western and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and even North Africa and Western Asia have all experienced this pattern
 - New alliances are created and then later dissolve

- So given this unique pattern, as reflected in the statue, we can't call this fourth kingdom the Roman Empire
 - Certainly, the Roman Empire began this fourth period, but the period extends beyond the Roman Empire itself
 - In later centuries, the kingdom was still operating, but different pieces and different unions were at work
- So we must see this fourth kingdom in the way the statue represents...“pieces” combining and breaking apart over history
 - Instead of calling them “Rome”, we might call this kingdom the Imperialistic-Democratic Alliances
 - This name better reflects the changing nature and identity of the actors that combine to make up this kingdom
 - Collectively, these parts serve to dispossess Israel and keep Jerusalem under Gentile authority
- Daniel then writes of an interesting end, about a stone that came down

Dan. 2:44 “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

Dan. 2:45 “Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”

- Finally, the last piece of the puzzle, the stone falling from the sky
 - Daniel says the stone that fell and crushed the statue is itself a new kingdom
 - The kingdom represented by the stone is not connected to the prior Gentile kingdoms
 - We see this because the arrival of the stone coincides with the destruction of the statue
 - The statue represents an age of time, the Age of the Gentiles
 - When this new Kingdom comes, it puts an end to the Age of Gentiles

- Therefore, this new Kingdom is something entirely different from what came before it
- We can understand what this new kingdom is by first remembering that the Age of Gentiles is defined as a period of history when Israel is scattered and the city is ruled by Gentiles
 - So, by definition, if this age comes to an end, then the scattering of the Jewish nation must have come to an end
 - All Jews must be returned to their land
 - Likewise, if the Age of Gentiles has ended, then the trampling of Jerusalem by Gentile nations has ended as well
 - So Israel must have regained complete control of their beloved capital city
- So we know that this coming Kingdom represented by the stone cannot be another Gentile Kingdom
 - It must be a Jewish Kingdom, for what is not Gentile is Jewish (again, by definition)
 - And this Jewish Kingdom must be the most powerful nation on earth
 - Just as in the statue, whatever replaces the prior dominant power must itself become the dominant power
 - Daniel confirms this assumption for us in v.44 when he says this new Kingdom will end all other kingdoms on earth
 - Furthermore, this new Kingdom will endure forever...no more transitions, hence the end of the statue
 - Next, notice that this Kingdom is set up by God Himself
 - This is an odd detail, since Daniel already told us that the Lord is always the One removing and establishing kings (v.21)
 - But this time, Daniel means that God doesn't just place another man as king of the world
 - This time, God Himself is the King on Earth and He personally sets up the Jewish Kingdom that replaces the Gentile powers

- Furthermore, the symbol of a stone uncut by human hands confirms that this Kingdom comes as a result of God's arrival on earth
 - The term "uncut stone" finds its source in the Law, where the Lord declares:

Deut. 27:6 "You shall build the altar of the Lord your God of **uncut** stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the Lord your God;

- The Lord commanded that Israel only use uncut stones for His altar
- The use of natural, unworked stones signified that our atonement could not be earned through our own works
- The altar of sacrifice would be a place where only God's work (*i.e.*, the Creator of the stones) was applied
- Likewise, the uncut falling stone represents the work of God, and since it falls on the statue, we conclude that it comes from the sky (*i.e.*, Heaven)
 - It grows into a mountain that fills the earth
 - Mountains, when used symbolically in Scripture, represent kingdoms
 - And here, we see that pattern continuing, since we're told the mountain represents a Kingdom filling the earth after the statue is gone
 - Notice also, the stone fell "on the feet" of the statue, indicating that the coming of Christ happens at the end of this age
- Therefore, the falling uncut stone pictures the coming of Christ to set up His literal Kingdom on earth
 - It will be a Jewish Kingdom, in that Jesus is Jewish
 - It will replace all other ruling authorities on Earth
 - It brings an end of the Age of the Gentiles and ushers in a new age on Earth
 - And it will result in the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel to grant them an eternal Kingdom in their land

- Daniel's interpretation reveals a long history of world empires that bridge history from Judah's first dispersion until their final regathering under Christ
 - Obviously, we've already seen three of these four kingdoms rise and fall
 - And we're currently somewhere in the midst of the fourth kingdom
 - How close are we to the end?
 - We will get a better sense of that question when we get to Chapters 7 and 11
 - But consider that Daniel gave us this progression of kingdoms before any of these transitions took place
 - Given his accuracy today, we can trust him for the rest of the prophecy
 - Which means we're still waiting for the stone, the coming of Christ
 - But He will come, and He will set up a Kingdom
- Obviously, Daniel's interpretation more than satisfies the king

Dan. 2:46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense.

Dan. 2:47 The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery."

Dan. 2:48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

Dan. 2:49 And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king's court.

- The king's response is understandably appreciative
 - He sees in Daniel a power of gods and pays Daniel homage as a result
 - Of course, it didn't hurt that the king liked what Daniel said
 - At least he liked the idea of being the chief power on earth

- Consider for a moment that the most powerful man on earth has bowed to the least in his service
 - On what basis would such a thing happen? Only because of the revealed Word of God
 - God's Word is more powerful than kings, even those who God Himself has placed in power
- Despite his homage to Daniel, it's also clear that Nebuchadnezzar is not a man ready to bow down to Daniel's God
 - He calls the Lord "Daniel's God", though he does recognize that this God is above other gods
 - He's just a step short of recognizing that the Lord is the only God
- The king appoints Daniel over all other wise men and gives him gifts, probably great wealth
 - Daniel is still a teenager, barely out of basic training
 - And suddenly, he rules over all the wise men of Babylon
 - Do you suppose that Daniel has just made some powerful enemies within the Babylonian government?
 - Never mind that Daniel saved their collective lives
 - Daniel's intellect and wisdom and savvy come to his aid again at this point
 - And with the king of the world paying homage to you, what should you do next? You make requests of the king
 - So Daniel asked for positions of power for his friends, as well
 - This isn't simply cronyism
 - Daniel wants friends in his new role, especially since he knows everyone else will be against him
 - So his friends join him in administering the province of Babylon