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The Second Empire: Chest and Arms of Silver 2: 39a

The second empire, chest and arms of silver DIG: Why was Dani’el’s phrase, “after you” so important? Did king Nebuchadnezzar take the prophet’s message to heart? What did the statue’s chest and arms of silver represent? In what way was the Medo-Persian Empire inferior to the Babylonian Empire?

REFLECT: How much thought have you put into the “after you” question in your own life? “After you,” what kind of financial situation are you going to leave to your loved ones? “After you,” how will you be remembered by your spouse, children, grandchildren, and friends? How much do you look forward to the Messianic Kingdom? Who can you tell?

ADONAI begins to reveal to Dani’el the initial revelation regarding the Times of the Gentiles (see [Ao](#) - The Times of the Gentiles). He provides an initial overview of the four empires that will govern this period. As the book progresses, God’s revelation becomes increasingly specific, reaching their climax in Chapter 12.

While **Dani’el** devoted two verses to describing **Nebuchadnezzar’s empire**, he only devoted half a verse to **the next empire**. **But after you, another empire will arise (2:39a)**. Probably the most telling blow comes with the words, “**after you,**” where **Dani’el** delivers what seems to be an almost passing jolt to human pride. Now that’s a striking thought! One wonders if it stuck in Nebuchadnezzar’s mind. Such a simple yet powerful assumption in those words, “**After you.**” **Nebuchadnezzar’s Empire** would not last. Kings and kingdoms, presidents and dictators, democracies and tyrannies and monarchies come and go and enter the landfill of history. Only **Messiah’s Kingdom will endure forever (2:44)**.

How then are the various “audiences” of **Dani’el Chapter 2** meant to respond to this **dream** and **its** interpretation? What about **Nebuchadnezzar himself**? Surely **he** was to acknowledge that **his** kingship was a gift from **the God of heaven**, that

his own empire was but a passing episode, and that **he** simply belonged to **the chaff on a threshing-floor in the summer (2:35)**. However, **Nebuchadnezzar** still didn't get it. **He** didn't ask any questions about the future or about **Dani'el's** great **God**. Relieved that **he** was **the head of gold (to see link click [Ay - The First Empire: A Head of Gold](#))**, and that **his** fears of a crumbling empire were relieved, **he** only concerned **himself** with the present, and **Dani'el** who had met **his** need. **The king** confessed that **Dani'el's God** was **a Revealer of mysteries (2:47)**, but at this point such revelation did not spur **him** on to ask what those **mysteries** might be.

What of **Isra'el**? What were **the exiles** and those who would become **exiles** to understand from this revelation? **They** should at least see that **the Kingdom of God** (see [Bg - The Fifth Empire: The Kingdom of God](#)) was not going to come as soon as **Babylon** passed off the political scene. How often **God's people** have to be saved from the "if only" heresy, whether it's "if Babylon bites the dust, then . . ." or something else. **Dani'el** was not trying to rob **Isra'el** of **her** hope, but wanted **her** to have a true and realistic hope that also recognized that it will be a long historical road before **the Messianic Kingdom** comes. Then, what should **they** do in the meantime? It is not coincidental that **Chapter 2** ends with **Dani'el and his three friends** promoted to responsible positions within **Babylonian** society (see [Bi - Nebuchadnezzar Promotes Dani'el](#)). **They** didn't isolate **themselves** from **the Empire** of their world as **they** waited for **God** to establish **His Kingdom** in the next; rather, **they** poured **themselves** into seeking the welfare of **their** temporary home in **Babylon**.⁷⁹



The Medo-Persian Empire was second. Thus, **Nebuchadnezzar** was the **head** made **of pure gold (2:32 and 38)**. When viewed from **head** to **foot**, the various metals decreased in value, but increased in strength. For the decrease in value,

three points can be made. First, the value of the materials decreased from the head downward. **Silver** is less valuable than **gold**, **bronze** is less valuable than **silver**; **iron** is less valuable than **bronze**; and **clay** is less valuable than **iron**. Second there is a decrease in position moving from **the head** to **the feet**, with **the head** being the most important element of **the statue**. Third, there is a decrease in the specific gravity of the elements. Pure **gold** has a specific gravity of 19.32; **silver** has a specific gravity 10.5; **bronze** has a specific gravity of between 8.7 and 8.4; and **iron** has a specific gravity 7.7. This shows that **the statue** was top-heavy and weak at **its feet**.

Dani’el specifically stated that **another empire** would **arise**, not just **a king**. Not only was **Nebuchadnezzar** replaced as **king**, but **his empire** was also replaced with another **empire**. **The statue’s chest and arms of silver** represented **the Second Gentile Empire**, which was **the Medo-Persian Empire (Dani’el 2:32b)**. As we go down **the statue**, there is a *decrease* in the value of the metals, gold being the most valuable, **silver**, being less valuable than gold, bronze, being less valuable than **silver**, and iron being the least valuable. Thus, **the Medo-Persian Empire** lacked the inner unity of **the Babylon Empire** and never blended into one people. But there was an *increase* in the hardness and strength of the metals. **Silver** is stronger than gold, and so on. This increase in hardness was reflected in the increased strength of each **empire**. Thus, **the Medo-Persians** were militarily stronger than **the Babylonians**, and the second of **Four Gentile Empires** to dominate **Jerusalem**.

Then **Dani’el** pointed out that this new **empire** would be **inferior to the Babylonian Empire (2:39a)**. Critics have used the word “**inferior**” to sow doubt about the accuracy of the book of **Dani’el**. After all, **the Medo-Persian Empire** covered greater geographical territory and lasted over 200 years (539-331 BC), longer than **the Babylon Empire** of 87 years (626-539 BC). However, the term “**inferior**” relates to quality, not inferiority in every respect. The historical truth is that **Babylon** had greater global influence and accomplishments. In fact, the roots of that **empire** go back to the time right after **the Flood**. As early as **Genesis 10** and **11**, **Babylon** had already begun playing a major role in human history (see the commentary on **Genesis DI - The Tower of Babel**). The history of **the Medes** and **the Persians** was not as old. Furthermore, **the Medo-Persians** lacked the ingenuity of **Babylon**. Represented by **the silver chest and arms of the statue**, **the Medes** and **the Persians** were united politically and militarily, but they never bonded into **one people**. **They** lacked the insight of **the Babylonian Empire**.

Lastly, **the Medo-Persian Empire** lacked the central authority and fine organization that had characterized **Babylon**. As **Dani'el Chapter 6** will point out, **Medo-Persian** rulers did not have absolute power, but were held captive by **their** own decrees.⁸⁰

In summary, **the Medo-Persian Empire** was **inferior** to **the Babylonian Empire** in influence and achievement. The roots of **the Babylonian Empire** began soon after The Flood (**Genesis 10-11**); but **the Medo-Persian Empire** does not go that far back. **They** lacked the inner unity of **Babylon**. Although **the Medes and the Persians** were united politically, **they** never blended into one people. **They** were an **inferior** type of government. **God** gives each Gentile Empire a certain amount of time, and then **He** terminates their **kingdom** and gives it to another. So as **the Medo-Persian Empire** faded away, **YHVH** raised up **the Greek Empire**.

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for **Your** great wisdom in the way **You** rule your **Kingdom**. In **Your Kingdom**, **You** are the absolute **Supreme Ruler** and **You** rule with incredible love and wisdom. **Your** purpose is for believers to be united with **You**. **You** lavished the riches of **Your** grace on us for that purpose. **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:7-10)**. Thank you for not ruling like the Medes and Persian kingdom. For **You** rule with steadfast love and complete wisdom. What a loving and wise **Sovereign King** and **Heavenly Father** **You** are! In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*