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The Third Empire: Belly and Thighs of Bronze 2: 39b

The third empire, belly and thighs of bronze DIG: Who founded the Third Empire? What happened after his death? What was the extent of the Third Empire's reign? What was the one thing that remained constant about these various kingdoms?

REFLECT: What does it mean to you that "God is in control of history?" How does the Kingdom of God change the dynamic of the Fourth Empire? Which kingdom are you building? How do you react when things are going badly? When life is going well?

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.



Just as **he** had spent only a half a verse on **the Second Empire, Dani'el**, again, devoted only a half a verse to **the Third Empire**, when **he** said: **Next, a Third Empire, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth (2:39a). The bronze on the statue started at the belly and ended at the thighs (2:32c). The empire** that followed Medo-Persia was

founded by Alexander the Great (see **Du - Alexander the Great**). He was born in 356 BC, his father was king Phillip of Macedon. Alexander had a famous tutor, Aristotle, who taught him **Greek (Hellenistic)** philosophy. But although Alexander was Macedonian and not **Greek**, he became fascinated with the **Greek** culture. As a result, he had a desire to spread the **Greek** philosophy, culture and language throughout **the whole world**. Phillip, united the two **kingdoms** of **Greece** and **Macedonia** and was preparing to conquer Persia when he was murdered. So Alexander became king in 336 BC when he was only 20 years old, and **the Greek Empire** dominated for 185 years. **Bronze** is stronger than silver and **the Greek Empire** was stronger than the Medo-Persian Empire. Pictured as two **thighs**, it occupied territory in both **the Greece** and **Macedonia**.

After his death, six of **Alexander's** generals fought for control of his empire in the Wars of the Diadochi (321-281 BC). The Diadochi divided the empire into four power blocks: the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt, the Seleucid Empire in the east, the Kingdom of Pergamon in Asia Minor, and Macedon. The Hellenistic period is marked by the ceaseless warfare between the Diadochi and their successors. As a result, the Hellenistic Empire gradually weakened and made room for rival forces. The power blocks that had direct bearing on **Isra'el** were the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt in the west and the Seleucid Empire (Syria) in the east, which is represented by **the thighs** of the dream statue. **Dani'el** stated next that **the Third Kingdom** would **rule over all the earth**. **ADONAI** granted Alexander the Great the same authority to rule globally that **He** had granted to **Nebuchadnezzar**. However, just like **Nebuchadnezzar**, Alexander and his successors never took advantage of **God's** grant. It was the third of **Four Gentile Empires** to dominate Jerusalem.⁸¹

The Greeks were the Third Gentile Empire: Therefore, **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. Because **bronze** is stronger than silver, **the Greek Empire** was stronger than the Medo-Persian Empire. **Iron** has a specific gravity 7.7. This shows that **the statue** was top-heavy and weak at **its feet**.⁸²

The one thing that remains constant about these various kingdoms is their lust for power

and their desire to dominate the world. But ultimately that ambition will be frustrated. In the final analysis, the kingdoms of this world, however glorious or powerful they may seem, have **“feet of clay,”** as we say, and will not stand. In fact, by linking these different empires together as parts of a single statue in the form of a man, the dream says something profound about the whole human experience viewed as one unit, from beginning to end. In a real sense, this is not simply a vision of the decline and fall of **the Babylonian Empire (to see link click [Ay](#) - The First Empire: A Head of Gold)**, and its immediate successors, but an epitaph of human history. The entire human experience, though gifted and blessed by **ADONAI** in the beginning with unparalleled glory and authority, ends up in nothing but division and disintegration. This pattern is already evident in the early chapters of **Genesis**. The glory of Adam in **Genesis 1-2** gives way to the Fall in **Genesis 3**, to the judgment of the Flood in **Genesis 6-9**, and finally to the chaos of life after Babel in **Genesis 11**. According to this pattern, our world is not destined to end with a glorious bang, but rather with rebellion against **God Himself** (see the commentary on **Revelation [Cg](#) - The Great Tribulation**).

The depiction of these changing and ultimately failing earthly empires stands in stark contrast to what replaces them, however. **The kingdom of God** enters the chaos and hopelessness of human history and brings fresh and lasting hope to us. After the despair of **Genesis 11** comes a new hope of **God’s** call to **Abram** in **Genesis 12**. **Nebuchadnezzar’s dream** comes to a similar conclusion. The final word of history doesn’t lie with a new and improved version of the statue of man. Rather, it lies with something radical that **God** will do: **a rock not cut by human hands** will strike and demolish **the statue** and then grow to **fill the entire earth** (see **[Bg](#) - The Fifth Empire: The Messianic Kingdom**). Only that divine **Kingdom** is eternal.

This reality challenges the focus of our priorities and values. Which kingdom are we building? Are we pouring ourselves into the pursuit of the power and glory of this world’s kingdoms, and power and glory that must inevitably decay and topple into irrelevance? Or instead, are we pouring ourselves into the pursuit of **God’s Kingdom**, the only **Kingdom** that will truly last (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ [Dw](#) - The Narrow and Wide Gates**)? What is more, are we measuring our success by the fickle standards of present appearances, or do we have our eyes fixed on ultimate things? It is easy to become discouraged in our pursuit of **God’s Kingdom** if we measure things by the present. The Church here on earth often seems powerless and weak, overwhelmed with problems. Our own lives may also show little progress in the pursuit of holiness. Yet, the answer to that temptation to despair is to fix our eyes upon the glorious promises of **YHVH** and trust that, in **His** own good time, **He** will build **His Kingdom**, both in our lives and in this world.

Nothing can prevent **Him** from accomplishing His purposes, for we know that the final pages of history have already been written (see the commentary on **Revelation Fr - Then I Saw a New Heaven and a New Earth**).

There are two particular circumstances where we most need to hear and heed this truth. One is when things are going badly for us in this life. When our earthly hopes and dreams are in tatters, and our lives are being crushed painfully under the heel of the kingdoms of this world. We need to remember that this world is not the ultimate. When we face sickness, isolation, and disability, even death itself, we need to remember that there is a kingdom that lasts beyond the grave. There is a time coming when **the kingdom of the world will become the Kingdom of our God and of His Messiah and He will reign forever and ever (Revelation 11:15b)**.

Yet paradoxically, we also need to be reminded of this truth when life is going well for us. This **dream** had a message not just for **the Israelites** who were squirming under the foot of **the statue**, but also for **Nebuchadnezzar himself**, who was **the head of gold**. In times when we may feel like **the head of gold**, when this world showers its honors and favors upon us, we need to remember that there will be an "after this." There will come a day when all our little triumphs and glories will lie in the dust and will stand before our **Creator** (see **Revelation Cc - We Must All Appear Before the Bema Seat of Christ**). When that day comes, what will count will not be our standing **statue**, but our standing on **the Rock (Psalm 18:2)**.⁸³

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being such a wonderful **King**, who rules with **righteousness and justice**. **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne**. **Lovingkindness and truth go before You (Psalms 89:14)**. What a comfort to know that **Your Kingdom** will last forever! **Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you (Psalms 63:3)**. **You** paid such a high price to redeem mankind from the curse of sin. **Your love** did not stop there, for you planned to include me in your eternal kingdom! It is one thing to help someone out a couple of times, but **You** are so wonderful that **Your love** keeps on giving throughout all eternity! **Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds (Psalms 36:5)**.*

*What a joy it is for me to realize that this life will soon be over and in its place will be a glorious eternity with **You** in heaven. **Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In My Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I***



am you may also be (John 14:1-3). When my eyes focus on eternity and life with **You**, trials on earth will not seem so harsh nor so long lasting. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** I delight in loving **You** back by living for **You** as I use my time, money and thoughts for **You**. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of resurrection. Amen