

In the time of Cyrus there was likewise in this temple a figure of a man, twelve cubits high, entirely of solid gold.⁴⁴

Herodotus further relates that this statue was finally carried off by Xerxes, the Persian king that Daniel 11:2 says “will be far richer than all the others. When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece.”

Gold seems to have been the metal of the state idols of Babylon.

Silver. The next kingdom is Persia. The religion of Persia was not polytheism as in Babylon or as in Greece afterwards. By the time of King Cyrus, Zoroastrianism was the state religion of Persia. A monotheistic religion using altars and sacrifices, it excluded the use of idols.⁴⁵

Babylon was described via Nebuchadnezzar as “that head of *gold*” but note in Daniel 2:39, Persia is *not* described as a “kingdom of *silver*.” It is only said to be “closer to the earth” in Aramaic and is translated as “*inferior*.” “Inferior” is used due to the theological tradition that emphasized Persia’s being inferior to Babylon in terms of how much power the head of government had to make and repeal laws.

However, with each metal of the image proposed to be the material of state idolatry we can consider the literal translation. The text of Daniel 2:39 can be read as, “After you shall rise another kingdom closer to the earth than yours.”

Zoroastrian writings are the three-volume *Zend-Avesta*. In the first volume we see, of all things, the places the earth feels happiest. The earth feels happiest where followers grow crops and raise livestock, so agriculture and animal husbandry are emphasized as important. Therefore, Persia’s devotion to Zoroastrianism is the fulfillment of the second kingdom being literally closer to the earth than Babylon.

Bronze. The third “kingdom” is the Hellenistic realm, which we studied in the last chapter. Alexander the Great established it over the whole region of the Persian Empire through his conquests. His realm was divided finally into Egypt, Syria, Thrace, and Epirus. Daniel 2:39 says, “a third kingdom, one of *bronze*, will rule over the whole earth.” If Babylon was mentioned as gold and it used gold in its idolatry, and if Persia was not specifically mentioned as silver and used no idols in its worship, what might