

Daniel 7 part 1 (verses 1- 14)

Chapters 7 – 12 consist of prophecies.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 5 (given about 30 years previously) is very similar to the dream given to Daniel, although outwardly it looks very different. One is about 5 empires represented by different kinds of metals. Daniel's dream compares the different empires to various kinds of animals. In both cases, the 5th kingdom is God's kingdom and is represented by a stone in one and by a vision of the heavenly court in the other.



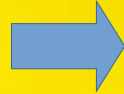
Nebuchadnezzar's dream

The Five Empires

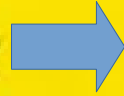
1, Babylonian
GOLD



2, Medo- Persian
SILVER



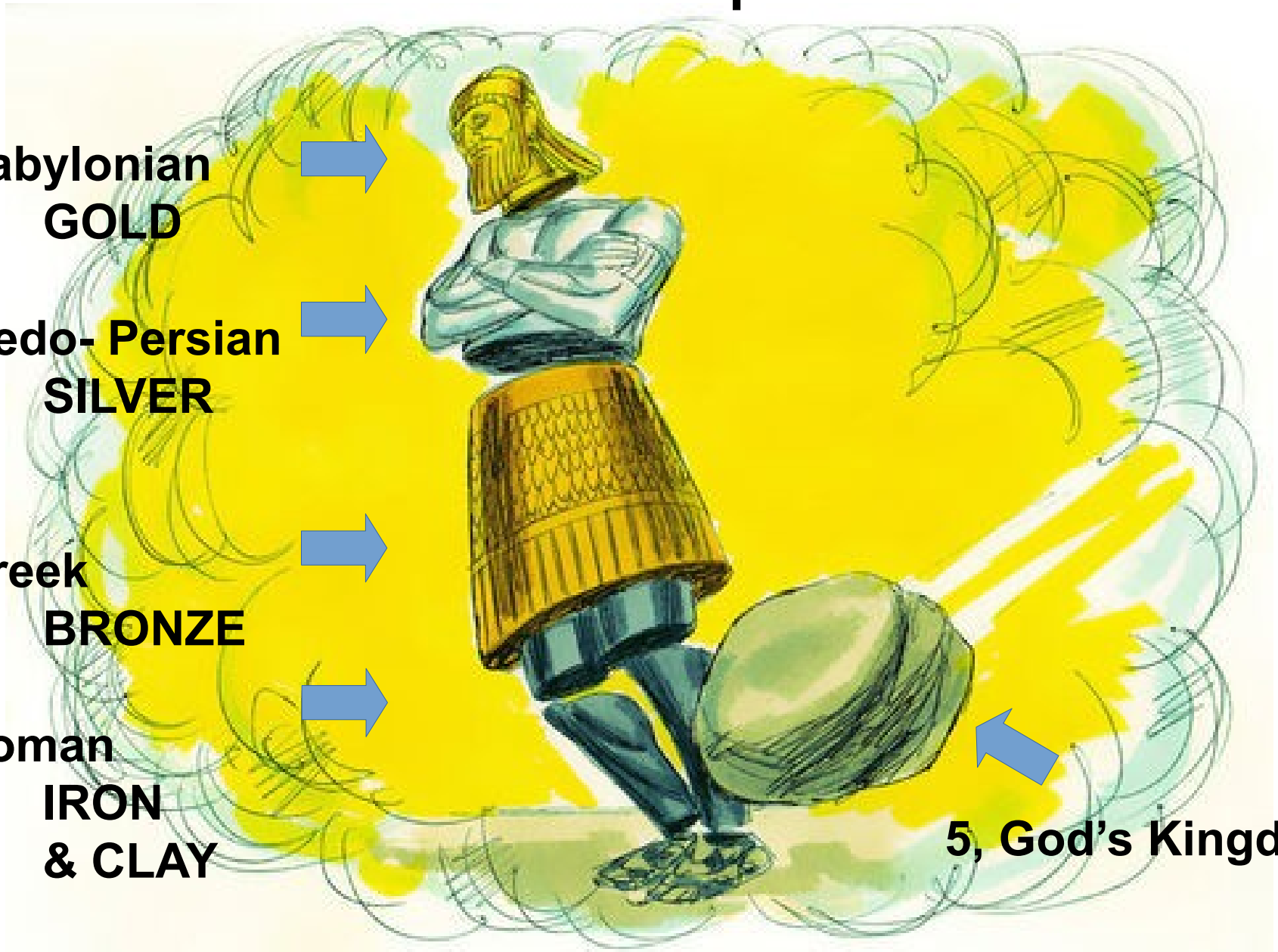
3, Greek
BRONZE



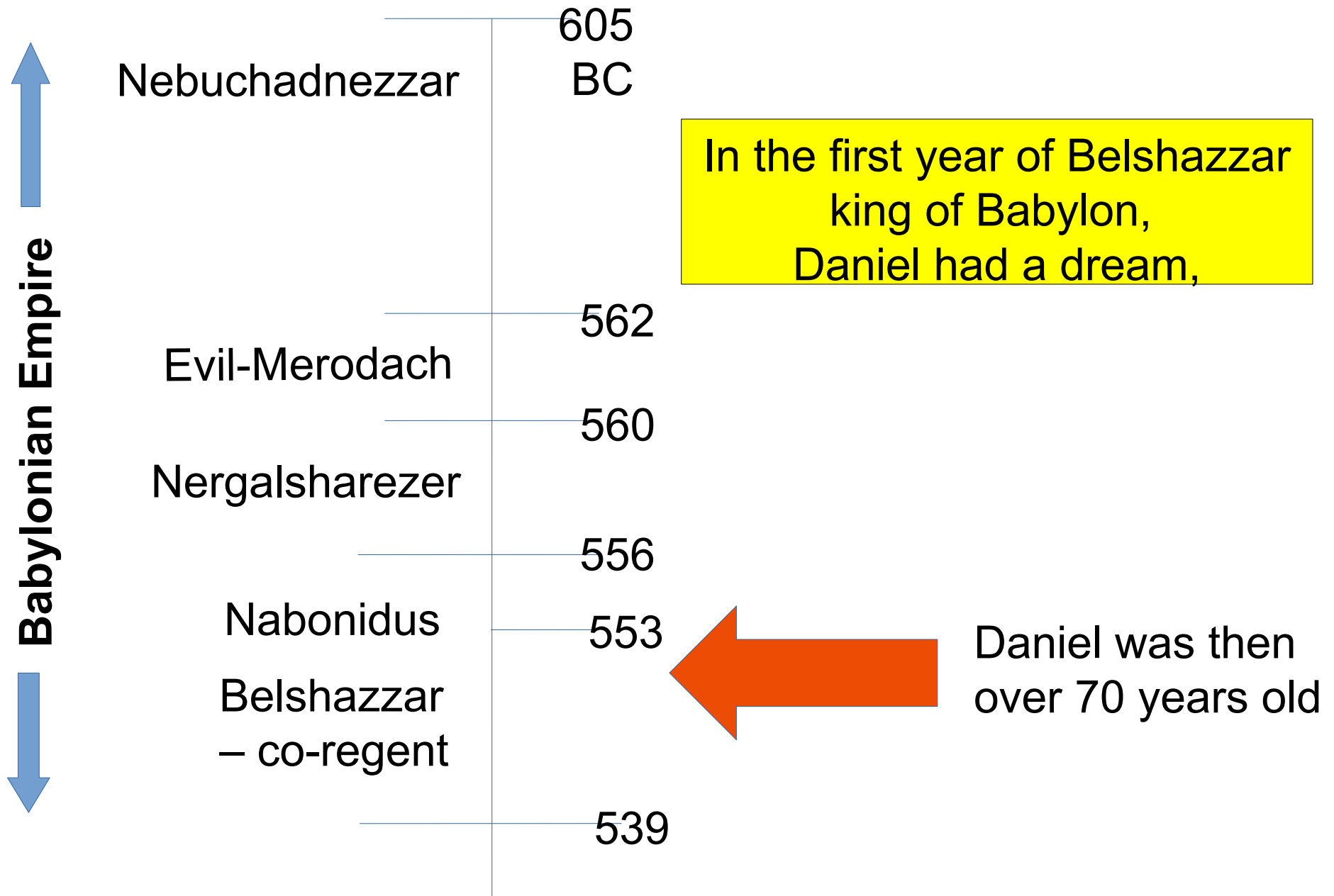
4, Roman
IRON
& CLAY



5, God's Kingdom



The Babylonian Empire



In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.



Daniel sensed that this was a significant dream. It was one that was not just for him but to be shared, so he wrote it down.

Daniel is given the interpretation of the dream.

Daniel 7:17

The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth.

The kings are now represented by beasts – violent, dangerous creatures in opposition to God. God sees the inner nature of their kingdoms and uses dangerous animals to represent them.

In the vision more details are also given to Daniel about the future of each kingdom.

This vision sets out the broad plan of the rest of the book of Daniel as future visions give more details of each kingdom.



Daniel said.. "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea.



There were great forces at work from all points of the compass.

The sea is sometimes used in Scripture to represent the gentile nations around Israel. The term 'Great Sea' may refer to the Mediterranean Sea.

Isaiah 17:12 Woe to the many nations that rage-- they rage like the raging sea! Woe to the peoples who roar-- they roar like the roaring of great waters!

Of course, other nations existed at this time in distant lands, but the Bible focuses on the central events relating to God's kingdom and the land of Israel.

Four great beasts, each different from the others,
came up out of the sea.



The differences between the beasts may represent the
different characteristics of each kingdom.

Babylonian

The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle.



This was a very appropriate image to represent the Babylonian kingdom. The decorations on the Babylonian Ishtar Gate are full of winged lions.

The lion (like the head of gold) is seen as the king of the beasts and the eagle as the king of the birds.

Babylonian

I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it.



This says that there was a fundamental change in the nature of the kingdom after it was deprived of its power, so that it became more humane. This suggests the way nations can become part of God's Kingdom. The change that happened to Nebuchadnezzar would match with this.

Medo-Persian

And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear.



The Babylonian empire was conquered by the Medo-Persian empire.

A bear isn't considered as magnificent as the lion, but it can be a powerful and ferocious hunter.

It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, `Get up and eat your fill of flesh!`



The uneven nature of its stand suggests the imbalance between the two members of the empire. The Persians were the much stronger force.

The three ribs may represent the 3 people groups that they subdued to form the Medo-Persian empire –e.g. Babylon, Lydia, & Egypt.

Grecian

After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard.



The third empire is prophesied as being represented by the leopard which is noted for its speed in hunting its prey. The wings would also convey the idea of great speed and agility. It is less powerful than the lion or bear.

Grecian

And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird.
This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.



Alexander the Great defeated Persia and established his extensive empire within just a few years. The four wings would carry him to a world-wide conquest. He died at the age of 33 and his empire was divided between his four generals. The number of 4 heads represents the four-part break up.

Roman

After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast--terrifying and frightening and very powerful.



The fourth beast, represents the next empire to come - the Roman. It is not compared to any known creature. It was truly frightening to Daniel and he wanted to know much more about this one than the others.

Roman

It had large **iron** teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.



The ten horns compare with the ten toes of iron mixed with clay in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar.

The toes suggest that this phase of the fourth kingdom comes towards its end.

Horns often represent strength, a powerful ruler or kingdom in Scripture.

Luke 1:69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David

While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it.



This is a new feature in the description where one horn displaces three others.

The end of chapter 7 goes into much more detail about this.

This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully.



This horn represents a human power as a cunning and arrogant individual.

As I looked, thrones were set in place,
and the Ancient of Days took his seat.



The scene moves from earth to the heavenly courtroom.
God is called the 'Ancient of Days' i.e. the eternal one
And He presides as judge in the court.

His clothing was as white as snow;
the hair of his head was white like wool.



Daniel tries to describe
what he can see:-

Brightness and light are
the main features
conveying purity and
holiness. The pure white
hair speaks of God's
great wisdom.

Several of the biblical authors have difficulty in describing what they have seen when they have witnessed the glory of God!

His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.



The description is similar to the vision that Ezekiel had seen about 40 years before: -

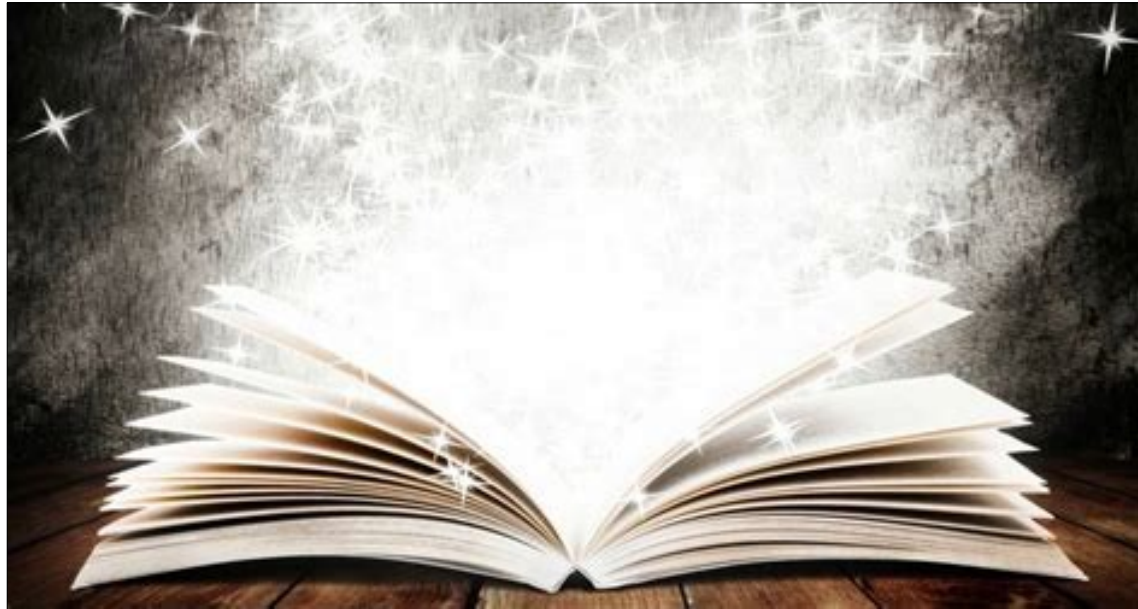
Ezekiel 1:4 I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north--an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The centre of the fire looked like glowing metal ...

A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him.
Thousands upon thousands attended him;
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.



This was a view of heaven!
An awe inspiring scene.

The court was seated, and the books were opened.



We are shown a picture of judgement – c.f. Revelation 20:11-12

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

God's righteous judgements are based on evidence.

Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.



Daniel sees the fourth beast judged, sentenced and destroyed.
c.f. the eternal destruction in the lake of fire in Revelation 20.

(The other beasts had been stripped of their authority,
but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

The remains of
these kingdoms
continue for a
period.



In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.



We will consider the aspects of the fifth and final kingdom next time, but just to note that this verse is quoted by Jesus about himself as the 'Son of Man' in Matthew 26:64.

He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.



The person was understood to be the Messiah coming before God to be given the role of bringing about the rule of the Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God

He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him.



Matthew 28:18-19 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, ..."

His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.



These verses show that the Messiah's Kingdom is the fifth and final one!

I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this.



It was the troubling character of especially the fourth kingdom and particularly the 'little horn' that disturbed Daniel. He wanted to know what it meant, perhaps for the state of God's people in the meantime.

Jesus' disciples had a similar concern to know what would happen.

Matthew 24:3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"



But whatever the future may hold, we have eternity before us.

Luke 21:28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

Hebrews 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

