

23.05 Daniel Interprets the King's Unknown Dream (Daniel 2:1–49)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that will not be read aloud; they also show answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” below for additional materials needed. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Nice pictures of this story may be found at [Book of Daniel Chapter 2-8 \(Bible Illustrations by Sweet Media\) - Category:Book of Daniel \(Bible Illustrations by Sweet Media\) - Wikimedia Commons](#)

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *Scripture*: the word of God given to men who wrote it down. God’s message to Jeremiah that Jeremiah wrote down, the Old Testament book of Jeremiah, is Scripture.
- *interpretation of dreams*: Before the Bible was completed, God sometimes showed people what He wanted them to know through visions and dreams. The interpretation—telling the real meaning—was as important as the dream. However, if someone told his dream, someone else might make up any supposed interpretation of it. Let’s try telling a dream and making up an interpretation. Dream: A man walked down the street, slipped, and fell. [Supposed interpretation: You are going to slip and fall when you walk down the street.]
- *Chaldeans*: people who lived in Babylon

Scripture: (ESV)

Daniel 2:1 In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. 2 Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. 3 And the king said to them, “I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream.” 4 Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, “O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.” 5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, “The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. 6 But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation.” 7 They answered a second time and said, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation.” 8 The king answered and said, “I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm— 9 if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation.” 10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is not a man on earth who can meet the king’s demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. 11 The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.”

12 Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. 13 So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them. 14 Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. 15 He declared to Arioch, the king’s captain, “Why is the decree of the king so urgent?” Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. 16 And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king.

17 Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, 18 and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel

and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. 20 Daniel answered and said: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. 21 He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; 22 he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. 23 To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king’s matter.”

24 Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation.”

25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: “I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation.” 26 The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?” 27 Daniel answered the king and said, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, 28 but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: 29 To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. 30 But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.

31 “You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. 32 The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

36 “This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. 37 You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, 38 and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. 39 Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. 40 And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. 41 And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. 43 As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. 44 And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, 45 just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. 47 The king answered and said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.” 48 Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and

chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king's court.

Introduction/Review:

While Jehoiakim in Jerusalem was cutting up and burning the Scripture God had given to Jeremiah, Daniel and his three friends—(Who were they? [Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego])— were far, far away in Babylon [locate]. In honor to God and to God's Law, they had refused to eat King Nebuchadnezzar's meat and to drink his wine. Rather, they had eaten only vegetables and had drunk water. How did these four men appear after the ten-day test? [Healthier than all the rest of the young wise men.] What was a special gift God had given to Daniel? [To interpret dreams.]

Story:

Nebuchadnezzar's unreasonableness

Today we're going to learn about a dream King Nebuchadnezzar had and what Daniel had to say about it. But in this story the king didn't even tell what his dream was! This is how it happened in Daniel 2.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had been king for two years when he dreamed a troubling dream. ✓We don't know if he forgot the dream or if he wanted to test his wise men by making them tell its content. In either case, Nebuchadnezzar did not reveal his dream but called all his magicians, prophets, people who studied the stars, and even people who worshiped devils. "I had a dream," he said, "and it really bothers me. I want to know the meaning of this dream. Tell me the dream."

"O king," answered Babylon's wise men. "Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means."

"No," answered Nebuchadnezzar. "*You* tell me the dream. If you don't, I will destroy both you and your houses. But if you show me the dream *and* its interpretation, I will reward you with gifts and great honor. Therefore, show me the dream and its interpretation."

A second time the magicians and wise men answered, "If you tell us the dream, we will tell you the interpretation."

King Nebuchadnezzar answered, "You are just stalling for time because you can see I mean business. If you can't tell me the dream, it is clear that you have agreed to lie and speak corrupt words to me until I change my mind. Therefore, if you can tell me the dream, I will know that you can tell me the true interpretation."

The Chaldeans answered the king, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great, powerful king has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or Chaldean. The thing that the king asks is too hard. No one can show it to the king except the gods, who do not live with humans."

This answer made King Nebuchadnezzar furious. In his anger he commanded that all of the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. He sent his servants out looking for every single one of the wise men in his kingdom. Whom do we know who were wise men? [Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.] Would the king destroy even these fine young princes? Yes, he would.

Daniel's request

When Captain Arioch came to Daniel in order to take him away to be slain, Daniel politely asked, "using soft words and gentle language, humbly and modestly" [according to John Gill's commentary], "Why is the king's commandment so urgent and so severe?"

Arioch explained, "The king asked his wise men to tell what dream he had. He became furious when the men couldn't tell the dream, and he wants all the wise men of the kingdom slain. So, come with me."

✓"Wait a minute," said Daniel. "I will make an appointment with the king to tell him his dream and the true interpretation." [Some say he directly asked the king for time, saying he would answer the king's request.]

Arioch allowed this. Then Daniel went home and informed his friends about the situation. “Seek mercy from the God of heaven about this mystery,” he requested. “Pray for wisdom to know the king’s dream!”

God’s answer

While Daniel slept at night, God showed him in a vision what Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was and what it meant! I am so excited to see another wonderful thing God did—telling Daniel a dream that no one else knew! Daniel was excited too. He blessed the Lord with a wonderful psalm. It is such a great praise to our wonderful God that I am going to read the whole thing. Listen.

“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and mysterious things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and strength, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to us the king’s matter” (Daniel 2:20–23). Hallelujah! God is good!

Daniel went to Captain Arioch, the slayer, saying, “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon. Bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation.”

✓Arioch was probably only too glad to bring Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar. I don’t suppose he liked the job the king had given him. He announced to his king, “I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who can make known to the king the interpretation.”

“Can you tell me my dream?” King Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel.

Daniel answered, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery which the king has asked. But there is a God in heaven.” No one can do these things, “but there is a God in heaven.” What a great thought to ponder when all seems lost and hopeless—“There is a God in heaven.”

Daniel went on: “There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream is this: To you, O king, God revealed mysteries of what is to be. As for me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than others has this mystery been revealed to me but so that the interpretation may be made known to the king.”

What was Daniel saying here? Two things: (1) *God* reveals the future. (2) Daniel didn’t find out what God revealed because he was smart but because God wanted the king to know the interpretation of this dream.

Do you want to know what the king dreamed? Here it is, finally. Daniel revealed, “You saw, O king, a great image—a statue. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. The head of this image was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

“As you looked, a stone was cut out, not by a human hand, and the stone struck the image on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, clay, bronze, silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the threshing floors. The wind carried them away so that not a trace of them could be found. The stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”

God’s interpretation

That does sound like a scary dream! How would you interpret it? Unless you’ve read your Bible, you wouldn’t know how to interpret it. Daniel, however, was given the interpretation by God Himself.

Let’s remind ourselves of this statue’s composition—gold, silver, bronze, iron, iron/clay, the great stone. Notice that the metals deteriorate in value.

Here is how Daniel interpreted: “You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory. . . —you are the head of gold. After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And

there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron. . . like iron which crushes. . . . And as you saw the feet and toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom. . . . And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle, . . . but . . . it will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. . . . It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever; just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. The great God has made known to the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure."

This was a detailed interpretation, wasn't it? Basically, it described all the kingdoms that ruled over the known world of their times—Babylon and those to follow: Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and divided nations. All of these kingdoms have already ruled the world, as you will learn in world history. In the present we are in the time of the iron- and clay-mixed toes—divided nations. Sometime in the future, God will destroy all of these kingdoms and will set up His own kingdom on a new heaven and new earth. Then He will rule and reign over all the earth in power and great glory, in righteousness and judgment.

Nebuchadnezzar's response

After hearing Daniel explain his dream, Nebuchadnezzar kneeled down before Daniel, treating him like a god. But then he proclaimed great words about our one true God: "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."

As he had promised, King Nebuchadnezzar gave many great gifts to Daniel and made him the ruler over the main state in the country of Babylon, putting him above all of the other wise men of the entire country. Oh, Daniel had great honor and authority. What a blessing to see a man of God in such a position of power! He requested that King Nebuchadnezzar also give authority to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and it was done. God was honored that day in Babylon.

Lessons from This Lesson:

- We see Jesus:
The great stone that struck the image, became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth is Jesus, whom God the Father will set up as King in a kingdom that shall never be destroyed. He is ruling now, but one day He will rule in His physical presence.
- When you are treated unjustly, respond as Daniel did—with carefulness and kindness, with soft and gentle words.
- "There is a God in heaven" who can do all things, even tell an unknown dream and its interpretation.
- When God does something through us, we should give Him, not ourselves, the glory.
- We are in the "latter days." Will you reign with Christ, or will you be destroyed with the nations? Trust Jesus to save you.

Activities:

- Play dough: bed; big rock not made with human hands (hmmm, how can you do that?)
- Remember another man way back in the book of Genesis who was given the gift of interpreting dreams? [Joseph.] Let's recall the dreams and interpretations Joseph gave: (1) The sun, moon, and stars bow down to a boy. (Joseph's father and brothers would bow to him.) (2) From three baskets on top of the head of Pharaoh's baker, birds ate bread. (Pharaoh's baker would be slain.) (3) Pharaoh's butler squeezed grape juice into Pharaoh's cup. (Pharaoh's butler would return to service.) (4) Seven thin sheaves of grain ate up seven healthy sheaves of grain. (Seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine.) (5) Seven thin cows ate up seven fat cows. (Seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine in Egypt.)

- Review questions: (Game: On card stock, print the picture found below of the statue Nebuchadnezzar saw. Back with flannel or paper towel; cut sections apart. Students may place a section of the statue on a flannel board after answering a question correctly.)
 1. What did King Nebuchadnezzar demand of his wise men? [That they tell his dream and its interpretation.]
 2. When the wise men couldn't fulfill the king's request, what did he threaten to do? [Kill them all.]
 3. When/how did God reveal the dream and interpretation to Daniel? [While Daniel slept, God showed him the dream and interpretation.]
 4. Who was represented by the statue's head of gold? [Nebuchadnezzar and the kingdom of Babylon.]
 5. What did the other inferior metals represent? [Kingdoms to follow that were inferior to Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom.]
 6. Who is the stone cut out without human hand? [Jesus Christ.]
 7. (Trick question) When will the kingdom of Jesus be destroyed? [Never.]

Memory Verse[s]: This should be the last lesson for Psalm 139, a total of about 33 lessons for 31 verses.

¹O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*.

²You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.

³You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴For *there is* not a word on my tongue, *But* behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.

⁵You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me.

⁶*Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot *attain* it.

⁷Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?

⁸If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*.

⁹*If* I take the wings of the morning, *And* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me;

¹²Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, *But* the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light *are* both alike *to You*.

¹³For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb.

¹⁴I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And *that* my soul knows very well.

¹⁵My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

¹⁶Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When *as yet there were* none of them.

¹⁷How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!

¹⁸*If* I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You. . . .

²³Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;

²⁴And see if *there is any* wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

Handwork:

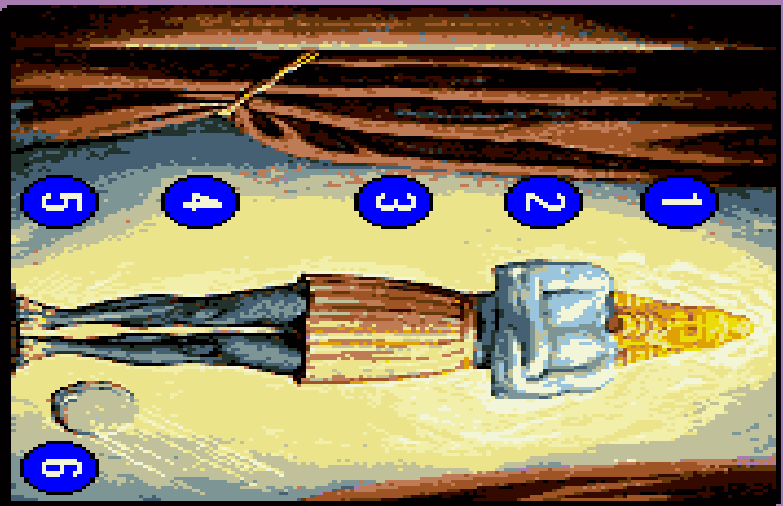
- Older students may do the word search found below. Younger students may color the coloring page.



Peter Dennis (c) Dorling Kindersley at dkimages



Let's sketch out the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had seen:



1. The head of gold

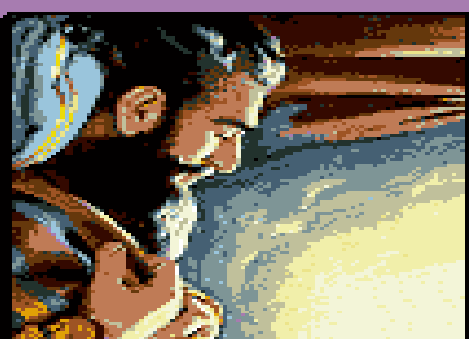
2. The chest and arms of silver

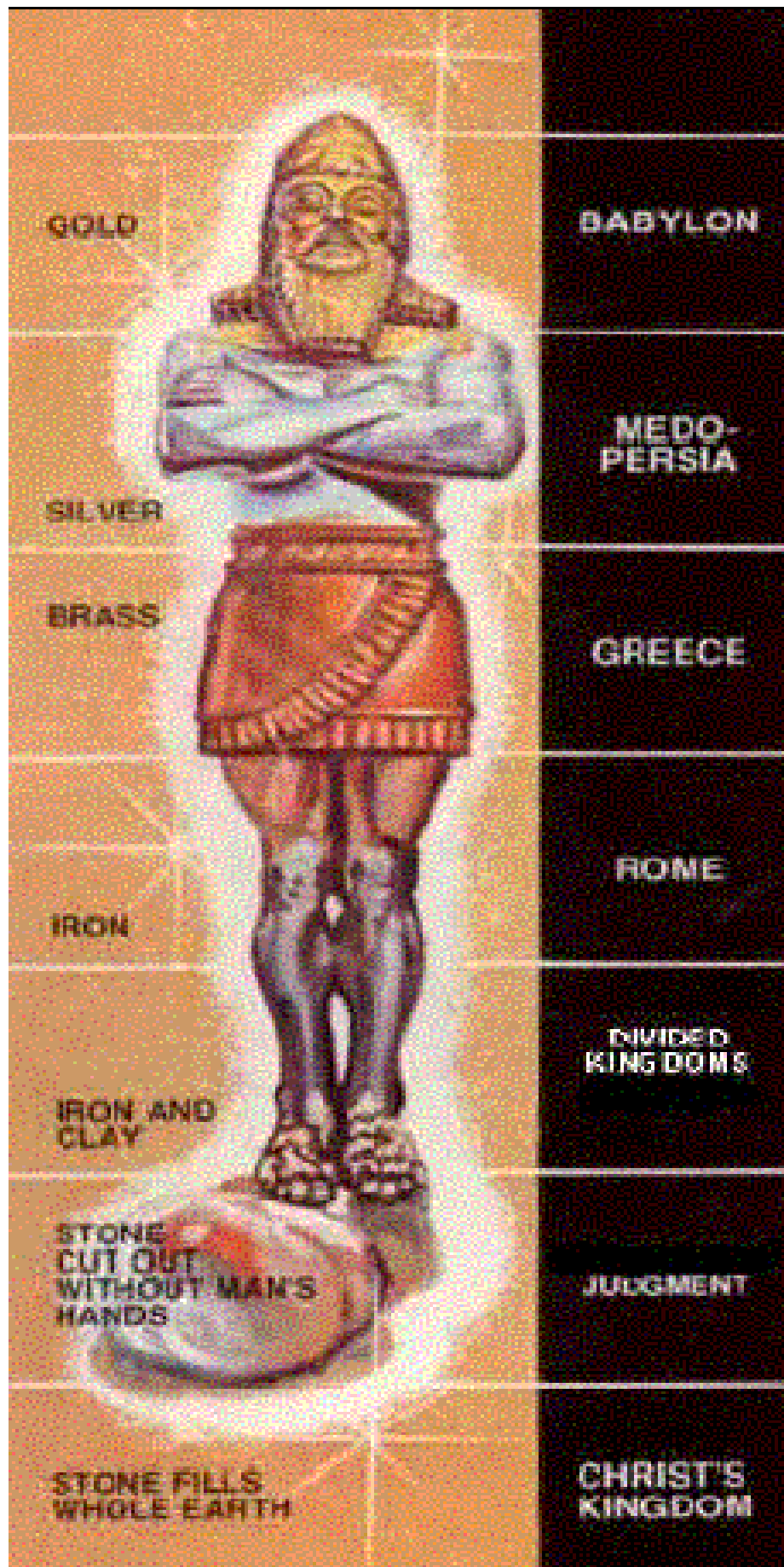
3. The belly and thighs of bronze

4. The legs of iron

5. The feet partly of iron and partly of clay

6. The stone breaking the statue and becoming a mountain







Peter Dennis (c) Dorling Kindersley at dkimages



K N D T S Y Z P D C N R E Z W D C P
N E B U C H A D N E Z Z A R A E H Q
A Z A C H L N R M D S C D H R U I F
M Z B U O D T E E A L O A O Z T R G
A U Y W O N S A N C O U N S E L O R
N I L C L I H M A N X A I D T H D O
I D O L W O R S H I P P E R S O Y B
B O N X R E A D P E Y A L D X W C R

FIND THESE
WORDS ON THE
BLACKBOARD:
SCHOOL
DANIEL
BABYLON
IDOL -
WORSHIPPERS
NEBUCHADNEZZAR
COUNSELOR
DREAM
WISEMEN



Daniel Explains the Dream