

lower down, he may perhaps have thought that this meant that the following kingdom would be inferior to his, when really it only meant that the following regime was represented by a lower part of the statue.

Building on the word "inferior" and on the apparent decrease in the value of the metals, some commentators have tried to show that there was a decrease in the value of the four kingdoms, each being in some way inferior to the preceding one. But the facts of history do not fit any of these efforts. The Persian empire, which succeeded the Neo-Babylonian empire, controlled at least three times as large an area and had at least twice as many people as were included in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. Cyrus and his successors were able to levy tremendous armies that would march hundreds of miles to do their bidding. Toward the end of his life Nebuchadnezzar had attacked Egypt and had overrun a considerable portion of it, but had failed to retain control. Cyrus' son, Cambyses, conquered Egypt and the Persians held it for a hundred years. Then Egypt revolted and was independent for 90 years, but ten years before the end of the Persian empire Egypt was reconquered. Not only the extent but also the power of the Persian empire was greater than that of the Neo-Babylonian empire.

The third empire, established by Alexander of Macedon, included the entire Persian empire, plus Greece and Macedonia. The power of Alexander was so great that he completely subdued this mighty empire during his short reign of twelve years -- an empire that was still very strong at the time of its destruction, a fact illustrated by its reconquest of Egypt only ten years earlier.

The Roman empire, represented by the legs and the feet, included large areas in Europe and North Africa that were never part of the third empire. Although more than half the area of the Persian empire, including part of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom, was not included in the Roman empire, the entire area controlled by the Romans was at least as large as that held by any of the preceding kingdoms. The power of Rome was very great, as was symbolized by the iron.