

# Daniel 2:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

## Analysis

**And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.** This verse concludes Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue, focusing on the feet and toes—the final phase of Gentile world dominion. The mixed composition of iron and clay represents an inherent instability in this kingdom that the previous kingdoms (gold, silver, bronze, iron) did not possess.

The Aramaic word for "divided" (ܠܗܝܠܐ/peligah) suggests not merely separation but fundamental fracture—a kingdom unable to achieve genuine unity despite attempts at consolidation. This heterogeneity proves fatal: though iron represents strength (military might, administrative efficiency), the clay represents weakness (perhaps democratic elements, diverse peoples, or spiritual decay). The mixture produces neither strong clay nor flexible iron, but a brittle, unstable compound.

From a Reformed perspective, this vision traces God's sovereign control over human history. Each kingdom rises and falls according to divine decree, not human ambition. The progression from gold to clay represents both temporal succession and qualitative deterioration—history moves toward climax and judgment, not evolutionary progress. The stone "cut without hands" (v.34) will destroy this final kingdom, establishing God's eternal reign.

The phrase "there shall be in it of the strength of the iron" indicates residual power—this final kingdom retains coercive force and administrative capacity. Yet the fundamental instability (iron and clay cannot truly bond) ensures its eventual collapse. Human governments, however powerful, contain inherent weaknesses that guarantee their demise before God's unshakeable kingdom.

Historically, interpreters have identified this divided kingdom variously: the Roman Empire's eastern/western division, the Holy Roman Empire's church-state tensions, or the modern post-Christendom West's ideological fractures. Reformed eschatology emphasizes that regardless of specific historical referents, the vision affirms God's sovereignty over all earthly powers and the certainty of Christ's kingdom displacing all human governments.

## **Historical Context**

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Daniel delivered this interpretation around 603 BC during Nebuchadnezzar's second year, early in Judah's Babylonian captivity. The dream's multi-metal statue represented successive empires: Babylon (gold), Medo-Persia (silver), Greece (bronze), Rome (iron), and a final divided phase (iron/clay).

The ancient Near Eastern context provides crucial background. Imperial propaganda regularly depicted kingdoms as eternal—Nebuchadnezzar claimed his Babylon would endure forever. Daniel's interpretation directly confronted this hubris: even the mighty Babylon was merely the "head of gold," destined to give way to inferior kingdoms, which themselves would crumble before God's eternal kingdom.

The iron-clay mixture has sparked extensive interpretive debate. Some Church Fathers saw Rome's division into eastern and western empires (AD 395). Reformation-era interpreters identified the Holy Roman Empire's fractious mix of ecclesiastical and secular powers. Modern interpreters suggest democratic elements (clay = common people) mixed with authoritarian power (iron = centralized control) characterizing post-Christendom Western civilization.

Importantly, Daniel's vision functioned to encourage Jewish exiles: their captivity wasn't the end of God's purposes. Despite Gentile dominion, God remained sovereign, orchestrating history toward the Messiah's kingdom. The "stone cut without hands" (v.34-35, 44-45) pointed to divine intervention—God's kingdom wouldn't emerge through human effort but through supernatural establishment.

For John's first-century audience and the early church, this vision affirmed that Roman power, despite its apparent invincibility, would fall before Christ's kingdom. Persecution was temporary; God's sovereign plan guaranteed ultimate victory. This eschatological confidence sustained believers through centuries of opposition.

## Related Passages

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. How does Daniel's vision of deteriorating kingdoms challenge modern notions of inevitable human progress and societal evolution?
2. What does the inability of iron and clay to bond teach us about attempts to unify fundamentally incompatible worldviews or systems?
3. In what ways do contemporary governments exhibit both the 'strength of iron' and the 'weakness of clay' that Daniel describes?
4. How should the certainty of Christ's kingdom displacing all earthly kingdoms shape Christian engagement with politics and culture?
5. Why is it significant that the final kingdom retains military/administrative power yet remains fundamentally unstable?

## Interlinear Text

וְדִי	חָזַר יָתָה	רַגְלֵי אֶ	וְאַצְבָּעֶתָ אֶ	וּמִן	בְּחָסָר	דִּי
H1768	And whereas thou sawest	the feet	and toes	and part	clay	H1768
	H2370	H7271	H677	H4481	H2635	
פְּחָר	וּמִנֶּה וּן	פֶּרֶזֶל אֶ	מַלְכוּת וֹ	פְּלִיגָה	לְהֵיֶא	
of potters	H4480	of iron	the kingdom	divided	but there shall be	
H6353		H6523	H4437	H6386	H1934	
וּמִן	נֹצֶבֶת אֶ	דִּי	פֶּרֶזֶל אֶ	לְהֵיֶא	בֶּה	כָּל
and part	the strength	H1768	of iron	but there shall be	H0	forasmuch as
H4481	H5326		H6523	H1934		H3606
קֶבֶל	דִּי	חָזַר יָתָה	פֶּרֶזֶל אֶ	מִעֵבָב	בְּחָסָר	
H6903	H1768	And whereas thou sawest	of iron	mixed	clay	
		H2370	H6523	H6151	H2635	
טִינָא:						
with miry						
H2917						

## Additional Cross-References

**Revelation 17:12** (Kingdom): And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.