

# BODY, ICON, AND MYSTERY IN BIBLICAL LITERATURES

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**ABSTRACT.** The image of the body is represented in different ways in the Bible. There are many texts which describe the physical body (be it human or animal), composed of physical elements such as the eyes, hands, head, feet, internal organs, etc., but also texts describing the unified body within the marriage between a man and a woman. The Bible uses numerous comparisons between the physical and the spiritual body as well. The following texts taken from the New Testament convey images of the body of Christ as being alive (1 John 4.2, 2 John 1.7), resurrected (John 20.26-31), showing himself at his second coming (1 Thessalonians 4.13-18), and being glorified in his kingdom (Revelation 1.20). The body represented in the Scriptures has not just the meaning of a physical and spiritual organism, but there is also a clear material meaning involved – such as the statues with human like limbs and body parts. Equivalent examples can be found in Daniel chapter 2, where the Aramaic word *šelem*, meaning statue, has a correspondent in the Jewish word *selem*, which bears the same meaning of a statue. Most translations of the Bible use the word “representation”/ “image” for this text (the English King James Version uses *great image*, the Greek: *eikōn*, and the Russian: большой истукан), even if “statue” is a better translation for some biblical contexts such as 2 Kings 11, 14; 2 Chronicles 23.17, or Amos 5.26. The statue as a body as it is described in Daniel is “an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance” (Daniel 2.31b). The words used to convey the idea of a body accommodate some meanings and exclude others, corresponding to the context described, which of course dictates the nuances of the words used. The main purpose of this paper is to identify the meaning and explanations of the Greek word *eikōn*, which can be correctly translated and understood in many different ways, such as face, image, portrait, physical image reflected in a mirror, a personal description, similarity, appearance, ghost, model, archetype, etc.

**KEY WORDS:** body, icon, mystery, statue, body parts

## **Introduction**

In the Bible, the image of the body is represented in many different ways. There are tens of texts that describe the physical body (human or animal), composed of somatic elements such as the eyes, hands, head, feet, organs, etc. They also convey the representation of marriage as a body formed by a man and a woman.

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The Scripture also makes comparisons between the physical and the spiritual body. Such examples in the New Testament would be: 1 Corinthians 12.12-31, 1 John 4.2, 2 John 1.7, where we read about the body of Christ represented during specific moments of his life, see John 20.26-31 (the resurrection), 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18 (his second coming), Revelation 1.20 (his reign in a glorified body). The body presented in the Bible comprise not just the meaning of a physical or spiritual organism, but it has a distinct material meaning as well – a statue with human like limbs and body parts, for instance. Such an example is to be found in Daniel chapter 2, where the Aramaic word *šelem* (meaning statue) has a corresponding meaning in the Jewish word *selem* (which bears the same rendition, statue). Most translations of the Bible use the word “representation” or “image” for this text (the English translation uses *great image*, the Greek, *eikōn*, and the Russian, *большой истукан*), even if “statue” is a better translation for biblical contexts such as 2 Kings 11, 14; 2 Chronicles 23.17; or Amos 5.26. The statue as a body described in Daniel is seen as “an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance” (Daniel 2.31b).

The words used to describe the idea of a body include some concepts and exclude others, depending on the context and hence indicating the meaning of the word. Here we will identify the meaning and explanations of the Greek word *eikōn*, which can be correctly translated and understood in different ways, as: face, image, portrait, physical image reflected in the mirror, a personal description, similarity, appearance, ghost, model, or archetype.

### **The Body in the Hebrew *šelem/selem***

In theological literatures, the word *šelem/selem* is used with its correlative Hebrew word *demut*. These two terms are inseparably linked. The first word (*šelem*) can be translated as *portrait*, and it indicates a representation of something or somebody. It appears eighteen times in the Bible and always with the negative connotation of an *idol* (see Exodus 20.4, 2 Kings 11.18). The term is used figuratively as well, in that something/ someone contains the essence of the one it represents, as in the example of Adam who fathered a son in his own likeness or in his own image, see Genesis 5.3 (Watson 2018: 373).

This is not the only reference to the idea of likeness; the first reference can be found in Genesis 1.26, where God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our *likeness*.” Here, the word *šelem* is coupled with the second word, *demut*, which is the Hebrew for *likeness* (Watson 2018: 373). This term appears twenty-five times in the Bible and it describes a thing that exists in the likeness of another thing, *i.e.*, it has the same model, configuration, or form like the latter (see 2 Kings 16.10, 2; Chronicles 4.3; Ezra 1.10). Some

biblical commentators argue that in these contexts the idea of likeness refers both to exterior features and to character, maintaining that this infers man's spiritual nature, which is man reflecting God in a unique way (Elwell 2001: 241). The image exemplifies in a very clear fashion the divine original (Elwell 2001: 241). The text in Genesis 1.27 and 5.1 ("This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him", KJV) serves the same purpose: to underline that man reflects God. In the same way, C.F.H. Henry (1976: 125 fwd.) highlights in his comments on the image of God a series of four arguments in favor of the original image, which was to reflect God's grace: 1. the image of creation has been given once and for all at the creation of the first Adam, while the image of salvation is formed in time, *i.e.*, gradually; 2. the image of creation is offered, in one way or another, to the entire human race, while the image of salvation is offered to those who have been saved; 3. the image of creation distinguishes man from animals, while the image of salvation creates a difference between those who are in the family of the saved and the rest of humanity; 4. the image of creation was experimental, while the image of salvation is not (also Elwell 2001: 242).

In his commentary, William MacDonald (1989: 33) explains, with reference to the concept of image and likeness, as follows: "... this means that man was placed on earth as ambassador of God, and that he resembles God in some fashion. As God is Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), so man is a tripartite being (spirit, soul, and body)." Calvin Wittman, in his commentary on the *Book of Genesis* (2015: 48-49), adds some interesting explanations to Genesis 1.26 and 27:

1. the image is one of *substance* (the resemblance of God and man is at the level of reason, spirit, aesthetic taste, the ability to be aware of sin, morality, etc.);
2. the image manifests itself in *relationships* (due to man being created in the likeness of God, he can establish relationships with others and with God. He was created to know, communicate and love);
3. the image implies *functionality* (man's ability to rule over the rest of creation, for God created the human body to function physically just as God functions without a physical body (also Morris 1976: 74). In other words, *telem* is used alone in Genesis 1.27 ("So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them"), while *demut* is used alone in 5.1 ("So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them").

Returning to the Book of Daniel, we note that the author describes in surprisingly minute detail the statue image. It is evident that the image has a human form, see all the body parts depicted in Daniel 2.32-33, which can only lead to the idea that they describe, in the form of a human body, the various and complex ages in world history:

*Head:* 2.32 – made of pure gold  
*Chest and arms* – made of silver  
*Belly and hips* – made of copper  
*Ankles:* 2.33 – made of iron  
*Legs* – made of iron and ceramic.

### **The Body in the Greek *eikōn***

*Eikōn* – secret meaning of a dream or revelation. Daniel describes king Nebuchadnezzar's dream as a secret which no wise man, astrologist, wizard or witch was able to interpret for the emperor (2.27). However, as Daniel put it, there is one true God in heaven who uncovers secrets and brings the unknown to light for the emperor, regarding upcoming events and times (2.28).

In Daniel 2.31 (καὶ σὺ, βασιλεῦ, ἑώρακας, καὶ ἰδοὺ εἰκῶν μία, καὶ ἦν ἡ εἰκῶν ἐκείνη μεγάλη σφόδρα, καὶ ἡ πρόσοψις αὐτῆς ὑπερφερῆς ἐστήκει ἐναντίον σου, καὶ ἡ πρόσοψις τῆς εἰκόνοσ φοβερά·), the prophet refers to the *eikōn* revealed in the image or shape of a statue (its comprising elements will be presented as follows). The statue seems to bear a human image considering its elements resembling human body parts, but here we have a concept referring to divinity, since it represents God's will in relation to His people in different historical times.

Years ago, Matthew Henry wrote a commentary (one of many) on Daniel chapter 2, expressing his opinions on the religion of king Nebukadnezzaar, who worshiped different images (or idols). The king honored them, and used to meditate on them. This habit led to the dream of the image in the form of a statue:

Nebuchadnezzar perhaps was an admirer of statues, and had his palace and gardens adorned with them; however, he was a worshipper of images, and now behold a *great image* is set before him in a dream, which might intimate to him what the images were which he bestowed so much cost upon, and paid such respect to; they were mere dreams. The creatures of fancy might do as well to please the fancy. By the power of imagination he might shut his eyes, and represent to himself what forms he thought fit, and beautify them at his pleasure, without the expense and trouble of sculpture... (see <https://bible.by/matthew-henry/27/2/>; see also <https://www.biblestudytools.com/-commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/daniel/2.html>.)

- A. *Eikōn – worshipping the creature.* One of the New Testament texts to exemplify the image to which the word *eikōn* makes reference is to be found in Romans 1.23. Here, the word is εικονος, meaning figures by which they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, animals and disturbing things (και ηλλαξαν την δοξαν του αφθαρτου θεου εν ομοιωματι εικονος φθαρτου ανθρωπου και πετεινων και τετραποδων και ερπετων).

One possible explanation of the word *eikōn* in this text is that it portrays the human wish to worship the creature rather than the Creator. There is this rush to represent God in images that resemble man, birds or animals. In other words, it is a way of worshipping God in tangible representations, such as through paintings, statues, nature, etc. (Elwell 2001: 568). This speaks for the moral and intellectual degradation of humanity in its state of producing unclean representations of the pure and holy God (hence the ontology of God does not reside in the physical status of this representation, if it is to be considered divine and gradually different from said image, see Mittleman 2015: 31; also, Mittleman 2018: 3; also, Heschel 2001: 95). Therefore, the main problem of worshipping images would be that man praises the creature rather than the Maker of all things alive (Barclay 1992: 37-38). This is exactly what the apostle Paul deplored in Romans 1.19-23, where he described the Jewish people with their state of mind and actions, and said that their thinking became futile, their foolish hearts were darkened and they became fools. Not only that, but they exchanged the glory of the immortal God with images that resemble mortal beings, birds, animals and reptiles, which is a pretty daunting picture.

- B. *Eikōn – the worship of beasts.* Revelation 13.14-15 uncovers another distinct portrayal of the word *eikōn*, one that talks of the wish to worship the image of a beast. The text presents the living that dwell on the earth in their eagerness to make an image in the form of a beast (or an idol which they were to worship)... “which had a wound by a sword, and did live”; see also Revelation 14.9: “And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand...” (και τριτος αγγελος ηκολουθησεν αυτοις λεγων εν φωνη μεγαλη ει τις το θηριον προσκυνει και την *εικονα* αυτου και λαμβανει χαραγμα επι του μετωπου αυτου η επι την χειρα αυτου). Initially, though, the image was not intended as an object of worship. Its purpose was to reveal unto the worshiper the god it represented, by giving him something visible as set in space, in a definite place. However, this purpose attained, it was almost inevitable that man

should begin worshipping the idol instead of the specific god it stood for.

If so far we analyzed and found the various meanings for the Hebrew word *telem* and the Greek word *eikōn*, we will now look into Daniel chapter 2 to observe in detail the features of the image described in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

### **The Body with Features in Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

It is worth mentioning here Joseph Benson (<https://www.studydrive.net/commentaries/rbc/daniel-2.html#36>; also Benson 1857), whose explanations on Daniel 2.31 emerge as follows:

It appears, from ancient coins and medals, that cities and people were often represented by figures of men and women. A great, terrible human figure was therefore a proper emblem of human power and dominion; and the various metals of which it was composed not unfitly typified the various kingdoms which should arise. It consisted of four different metals, gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, mixed with clay; and these four metals, according to Daniel's own interpretation, mean so many kingdoms; and the order of their succession is clearly denoted by the order of the parts; the head and higher parts signify the earlier times, and the lower parts the latter times. Hesiod, who lived two hundred years before Daniel, spoke of the four ages of the world under the symbols of these metals; so that this image was formed according to the commonly received notion, and the commonly received notion was not first propagated from hence... This image, says Grotius, appeared with a glorious lustre in the imagination of Nebuchadnezzar, whose mind was wholly taken up with admiration of worldly pomp and splendour; but the same monarchies were represented to Daniel under the shape of fierce and wild beasts, chapter 7, as being the great supporters of idolatry and tyranny in the world...

Previously, we discussed in some detail the elements of the image, which we will resume later on; there are, however, some aspects related to the image that we shall be focusing on at this point, namely that it is:

- a human image
- a huge human image
- a human image shining brightly
- a standing human image
- a scary human image
- a human image created out of a metal mix that decreases in value from head to feet
- a human image standing on ceramic legs
- a human image destroyed by a stone
- an self-decomposing human image

- an image whose decomposed parts are blown away by the wind
- an image that is never to be found again not even in its tiniest particles.

So what is the meaning of this image's different body parts? In what follows we will be focusing on the description of the image with and its intricate appearance. Daniel was a man of faith (6.16) who served God with all his heart, and by his help he was able to interpret the dream for the king (2.25). Before all of Babylon's wizzards, astrologists and wise men, and even before king Nebuchadnezzar,

**(Dan 2:27-28)** Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these.

He gave all credit to God for his ability to uncover the secrets and hidden truths epitomized by the image. In this way, Daniel recognised and proclaimed that God is the only God and the Lord of lords. After some time spent in solitary and also group prayers, Daniel went to Arioc and then to Nebuchadnezzar with the sole purpose of giving a detailed interpretation to the king's dream. The meaning Daniel gave to the statue's body parts comes as follows:

*Head*, 2.32 – made of pure gold – represents king Nebuchadnezzar. He was a very powerful king because God gave him power, kingdom, wealth and glory (v. 37). God also gave him servants, livestock, birds and made him master over all these: he is the golden head! (v. 38)

*Chest and arms* – made of silver – which represents another kingdom, less important or powerful than Nebuchadnezzar's (39).

*Belly and hips* – made of copper – is a third kingdom that will rule the world (v. 39).

*Ankles*, 2.33 – made of iron – it represents a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, a very cruel kingdom that destroys everything in its way (v. 40).

*Legs* – made of a mix of clay/ceramic and iron – the fifth period of time described here, is a time marked by divisions, but still with some reminiscence of its past glory and from its iron age, such is the way that Nebuchadnezzar saw the ceramic mixed with the iron. In the same way, the fingers of the statue were a mix of these two elements, hence this kingdom will be partly strong and partly weak (40-41).

The Bible commentators have reached some conclusions regarding the historical eras described by the image in the Book of Daniel, chapter 2. These are as follows: the first era obviously signifies Nebuchadnezzar's

Babylonian rule starting in 605 B.C., which is also shown as the golden head of the statue, according to the text. This era is followed by the times of the Medo-Persian Empire, 539 B.C., represented by the silver body parts of the image. This empire came into being in 538 B.C. and lasted for about 200 years. After this long period of time, the Medo-Persian Empire crumbled down as it was defeated by the Greek Empire.

This new empire was, in turn, led by Alexander the Great (Dan 11.3, “and a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will”) who, during the Battle of Arbela, which took place around the year 331 B.C., recorded a crushing victory over the Persians (see Cummings 1968: 108 ff). Little by little, the powerful Medo-Persian Empire disappeared. Through this victory, Alexander The Great began ruling over the most powerful empire of his time, the Greek Empire (which, as known, was divided into small city states that shared a common language, but otherwise showed little unified action); in the list quoted in the Book of Daniel, this is the third empire portrayed by the image in the dream. The Greek Empire was registered in history around the year 331 B.C., and in this image it is represented by the copper body parts. It is not a coincidence that it is represented by copper, since the Greeks were the first in history to wear war clothing made of copper over their kevlar-like linen garments, hence they appeared like they were made of copper (copper was indeed a metal extracted at home, that is, in Kittim/Cyprus/Kypros, see Finegan 1981: 73 fwd.). The helmet, chest cover and shield gave the soldiers enormous advantages in winning over adverse armies that far exceeded their number (see Stewart 1994: 96; also, about Alexander’s army appetite for mutiny, see Ashley 1998: 333, 353, 371).

In this regard, we can find different explanations and informations about the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great, some of which we will try to exemplify. Historians greatly acclaim Alexander’s reign, designating him the lord of war and conquerer of the Middle East, who in so doing made the most grand gesture of all times by protecting the identity and integrity of South-Eastern European civilizations. We read that Alexander was a young and charismatic king, who showed magnanimity, but that he also was a megalomaniac, cruel, brilliant and famous tactician in Macedonia thanks to his conquests. Nothing stood in his way. The enemy armies were destroyed, the resisting towns were wiped from the face of the earth, and their inhabitants massacred. On the other hand, the world knows him not only as a conquering warrior, but also as the builder of a new world that underpinned the modern civilization. At only sixteen, Alexander defeated the enemy in his first battle. At twenty, he became king of Macedonia, and at thirty he had already conquered the East (see Cummings 1968: 108).

The Greek Empire was not eminently powerful, since it was superseded by the Roman Empire, here represented by iron (this event actually took place in 63 B.C.). In his commentary, MacDonald (1989: 981) explains, with regard to the Roman Empire, that it is envisaged in the ankles and legs made of iron, whereas the ankles stand for the East and West wings of the said empire. They are arguably the Roman Empire awakened from its dormant state, while the toes represent ten different kingdoms. (If we look closely in Daniel 2.43, the number of toes is not specifically mentioned, perhaps because this was of secondary importance. Supposedly the toes are a total of ten, since we are talking about human-like impressions associated with such depictions/images. These ten toes would be the ten crowns of the fourth beast.) It is, however, important to note that this kingdom will be divided as well. In approximately 500 B.C., the Roman state became a republic, and maintained this status for about 500 years. During this period of time, Rome had come out of a lifetime of struggles, thus remaining the dominant power in the Western Mediterranean world. Rome dominated and then absorbed the three surviving kingdoms of Alexander Macedon's successors (see <https://mybible.ro/vdc/daniel/2/comentariu>). In other words, it can be described as

an empire divided into two distinct sections. The text in Daniel 2.33 tells us that in its first part of existence ("the legs"), the empire had the power of the iron, while in its latter existence (from the ankles down) the empire is represented by an uncommon alloy of iron and clay, which were curiously amalgamated. (<https://semnelevremurilor.wordpress.com/profetii-biblicei/4-daniel/>)

Of course, it can't be denied that the Roman Empire lasted the longest, conquered the most, developed civilizations, and surprisingly enough was never conquered by any other power in all this time. On the contrary, by the force of its army, it subdued vast territories using its force and terror. It is famous until today for having been the most powerful empire in the human history, and this is partly due to its longevity.

An important thing to notice with respect to the four empires being conquered is the depiction of *the time frame*, that is before the time implied by the mixture of iron and clay and the toes. They clearly represent a strong part and a weak part (2.42). This mix depicts fused marital bonds which are not homogenous as the iron is, and cannot be bonded as with the help of clay (v. 43). The Septuagint (LXX) presents some differences from the Masoretic text (MT), vv. 42 and 43 being reproduced as follows: "And the fingers of a certain portion of iron and a certain portion of ceramics, a certain part of the kingdom will be strong and a part will be fragile. And as you have seen iron mixed with ceramics, so will be the mixing among the nations (or among generations) of men, but they will not be understood

(literally, they will not be the same) nor will they be friendly to each other, as it is impossible to mix the iron with the clay.” Daniel’s translation by Theodotion, who actually replaced the original Greek translation (known as LXX), is more akin to the Masoretic text, and it also shows some differences: “And the toes of a certain part of iron and a certain part of clay, a certain part of the kingdom will be strong and from it (part) will be fragile. Because you saw the iron mixed with ceramics, there will be mixing in the seed of men, and it will not stick to the other as the iron is mixed with the ceramics.”

This, however, is not all. As no human empire lasts forever, no matter how strong, courageous, well armed or ruled by intelligent people, chapter 2 verse 44 warns that something amazing shall happen *and in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

The words of the Lord bring to our attention the fact that the rock which will bring everything down is a mere piece in a mountain, and that it detached from the mountain with no additional help, crushing the iron, copper, clay, silver and gold (v. 45). The rock carved by no hand portrays Jesus Christ. He will destroy all his empires and then rule over the whole world, and His kingdom will stand forever (see MacDonald 1989: 981). The rock that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream is the corner stone, the forever standing rock, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (see Negruț 2017: 64). The presence of this rock is considered by some theologians to signify the first coming of Christ and the settling of the Church, while others think (see, for instance, Whitcomb 1995: 320) it is the apex of the prophecies about the second coming of Christ, when Israel as a nation shall once again have a leading role in God’s relationship with the human race.

It is a fact that the coming of this rock represents the Empire of the forever living God. That rock-mountain is the fifth kingdom in the list presented in Daniel chapter 2. The prophecy announced by Daniel proclaims a simple, yet powerful event, namely that the long awaited kingdom of God will come sometimes during the Roman Empire. Daniel says that *in the days* of the fourth kingdom, God will raise a kingdom that will stand forever, v. 44 (see Pitre 2017: 128). Even if at a first glance it might seem a powerless stone, it is the very stone that smashed the image with all its kings and kingdoms. This new kingdom (of God), as Brant Pitre holds (2017: 128), will spread throughout the world until the stones become *a huge mountain* – a worldwide kingdom.

It is interesting to see how the prophecies in Daniel 2 are enacted in history: Babylon and its witchcraft, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greek Empire of Alexander The Great, the Roman Empire with all its infrastructure and civilization they brought about. This brings about

Daniel's words in chapter 2, *shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom*, see also Mark 1.15, "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." But what is this kingdom? How will it look like? How shall it be welcomed? Although it is not the purpose of this paper to talk about the stones and kingdoms represented by this image, some commentators explain, for instance, 1. the Kingdom as conquered by the Gospel according to Christ's word; and 2. the Kingdom established when Christ will come to judge the living and the dead (2 Timothy 4.1, Matthew 25.31-34). This kingdom, we are told, is superhuman and it must be founded not by the skillful hands of man, but by the mighty hand of God.

Taking the events one by one as they are described in Daniel chapter 2, we are getting closer to the awaited end. There is a contrast in the moment Daniel first started his interpretation of the king's dream. In the beginning, the king's soul was troubled (v. 2), he could not sleep (king Nebuchadnezzar), but in the end Babylon's king showed Daniel the highest esteem and reverence, ordering that he be honored with food and scented offerings (v. 46). Not only this, but Nebuchadnezzar praised the God of Daniel as the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the One who reveals it all (v. 47).

In the final verses (48-49) of chapter 2, Daniel is said to have been entrusted a quintessential position in Babylon. He was designated as the chief administrator over the entire empire and head of Nebuchadnezzar's ministers. His three friends were also put in high esteem among Daniel's assistants (MacDonald 1989: 981).

## Conclusions

It is fair to say that the image described in Daniel chapter 2 is a condensed version of the history of the four kingdoms (namely Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire, and the Greek and Roman Empires), the total amount of years of the kingdoms' existence – if we consider it between the year 626 B.C., when the Babylonian Empire came into being, and the year 30 A.D. at the death of Jesus Christ – is around 656. Moreover, if take into account the first year of the Babylonian Empire (626 B.C.) up until the year when the last Roman emperor was dethroned (cca 476 A.D.), there is a total of 1,102 years. We know that the last Roman emperor in the West was overthrown in 476 A.D., while the regions of the Eastern Empire were administered by the Roman emperor in Constantinople. The Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) continued to exist, although its territory slowly diminished until its actual disappearance in 1453, when Constantinople was conquered by the Ottomans. The successor states in the West (the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire) and the East (the Russian territories) used titles specific to the Greek practice up to Modern times (see *basileus*,

*rhomaion, kaisar, sebastos, tsar*, <https://www.heraldica.org/topics/royalty/emperor.htm>). If, on the other hand, we bear in mind the reference to the rock coming from the mountain without the help of a hand (2.34), the count fails, since we do not have a precise reference to the oncoming Kingdom of God. This shows that the image was a discovery/revelation given by God to Nebuchadnezzar (and not only) in order for him to know (according to verse 45) what will happen to his kingdom in the future. The dream was a real vision and its interpretation was meaningful.

The image pictures both the present and the future. The present is described in the life and work of Nebuchadnezzar, while the future regards the history of the kings and kingdoms to come, and also the coming of the Kingdom of God. As the only unfailing kingdom, God's Kingdom will never break or end, because it lasts forever. Its king is the Lord of heavens and earth: he is just, holy, good and loving, "and he hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (Revelation 1.6).

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