

Revival of the Roman Empire

by J.K. McKee posted 01 September, 2000 www.tnnonline.net

On January 1, 1993 member states of the European Economic Community (EEC) became members of the European Union (E.U.), an organization designed to ultimately create a European federal super-state or "United States of Europe." Since 1993, steps have been taken to establish a central European government composed of a parliamentary and judicial system. All that currently remains is the creation of a permanent executive branch of government and other logistical details to cater to the demands of individual member states.

Many prophecy teachers believe that the European Union may be the organization or political bloc from which the antimesiah/antichrist will arise. Is it? We must consider the possibilities before us, including both prophetic parameters surrounding the final world empire and some intriguing factors surrounding the European Union.

The Fourth Kingdom

Daniel ch. 2 records a dream that the ancient Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar had concerning the Last Days about a great statue (Daniel 2:1-3). The dream was so profound that no Babylonian could interpret it, or as Daniel 2:10-11 tells us, "The Chaldeans answered the king and said, 'There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has *ever* asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with *mortal* flesh.'" Only Daniel, a captive of Judah, was able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's vision. Daniel 2:25-30 records how Daniel approached the king, as God had already revealed Nebuchadnezzar's dream to him (cf. Daniel 2:19-23):

"Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: 'I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!' The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, 'Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?' Daniel answered before the king and said, 'As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians *nor* diviners are able to declare *it* to the king. However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind *while* on your bed. As for you, O king, *while* on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place. But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than *in* any *other* living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind'" (Daniel 2:25-30).

After telling Nebuchadnezzar that God had revealed the dream to him (Daniel), Daniel proceeds to repeat the dream to the king:

"You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue *was made* of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This *was* the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king" (Daniel 2:31-36).

Daniel states that the king had a vision of "a huge statue," and that the statue had four primary components: (1) a head of gold, (2) breast and arms of silver, (3) belly and thighs of bronze, and (4) feet of iron and clay. These parts have commonly been interpreted to be representative of four major empires that have existed on Planet Earth. Daniel 2:37-38 confirms this as the Scripture tells us that this first empire is Babylon, ruled by Nebuchadnezzar:

“You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, *or* the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given *them* into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold” (Daniel 2:37-38).

Daniel continues stating that two more empires will arise following Babylon:

“After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth” (Daniel 2:39).

We can follow from history that the prominent empires or kingdoms that followed Babylon were Media-Persia and Greece. Daniel 5:24-28 records that Nebuchadnezzar’s successor, Belshazzar, was found drinking wine from appropriated gold vessels from Solomon’s Temple (Daniel 5:1-12; 23), and as a result, the Babylonian Empire was conquered by Persia:¹

“Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out. Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.’ This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENE’—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. ‘TEKEL’—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. ‘PERES’—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians” (Daniel 5:24-28).

As a consequence of drinking from the golden cups, Belshazzar’s kingdom was overrun and conquered by Media-Persia.² From history, we know that Babylon was overrun by the Persians, who established a massive empire from modern-day Iran to Asia Minor (Turkey). It was during this time that the captured Jews were permitted to return home to the Land of Israel.

According to Daniel 2:39b, a third empire would also arise “which will rule the whole earth.” This empire was Greece, whose imperial reign started around the time of Alexander the Great. By the age of 33, Alexander had already conquered as far as modern-day India, and many historians speculate that had he not died in Babylon in 323 C.E., Alexander would probably have conquered all the way to China. However, four of his top generals split the Greek Empire among themselves and pseudo-empires were established throughout Alexander’s conquered lands. History later records that these areas were yet conquered again by Rome, but by this time, much of the Greek language, culture, and thought permeated so much of the Roman world, that by the time of the Messiah, Greek was a common language in Judea. In a way, Ancient Greece continues to “rule the world” through Greek philosophy having permeated the Roman Empire and the West.

After this, we are then told of a fourth kingdom that will arise:

“Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. As the toes of the feet *were* partly of iron and partly of pottery, *so* some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery” (Daniel 2:40-43).

Much detail is given to the fourth and final kingdom in Daniel 2:40-43. It is described as being made of “iron mixed with clay-like earthenware” (Daniel 2:43, ATS), which implies that it will be strong, but also mixed. Many prophecy teachers identify this to be a direct reference to the Roman Empire, as it was a collection of diverse peoples (clay), but also powerful (iron). It could be inaccurate to say that the ancient Roman Empire “fell,” because it is still very much alive today through the Western European world and European extended colonial community.

Is the fourth empire of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision a revived model of the Roman Empire? Recall that Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that the vision he had was about “what will take place in

¹ Daniel 5:13-31 tells us that Daniel, a Jewish captive still in the service of the Babylonian imperial palace, was called to interpret Belshazzar’s vision of “the handwriting on the wall.”

² Daniel 5:30 records that the evening Daniel interpreted “the handwriting,” Belshazzar was killed. From history, we know that at this time the Persians were tunneling under the city Babylon’s massive walls and they invaded Babylon from underground passageways used as aqueducts.

the latter days” (Daniel 2:28). Therefore, can we conclude that we could once again see a “Roman Empire” in existence before the return of Yeshua the Messiah?³

Many who follow prophetic related world events have concluded that the European Union could be a revived Roman Empire. It is culturally diverse (clay), but strong (iron). But if it is to be the final world empire, should we see some indication to this extent?

Daniel's Fourth Beast

Following the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the Prophet Daniel had his own vision, this one similar to Nebuchadnezzar’s statue dream, only this time of four beasts. A survey of many pre-millennial theologians will entail that these four beasts probably represent the same four empires as detailed in Daniel’s interpretation given to Nebuchadnezzar of his statue vision, and it is from this basis that we will analyze Daniel 7:1-24:

“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind *as he lay* on his bed; then he wrote the dream down *and* related the *following* summary of it. Daniel said, ‘I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. The first *was* like a lion and had *the* wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it” (Daniel 7:1-4).

The first beast, described as being “like a lion” with “eagle’s wings” (Daniel 7:4), accurately describes the emblem of Ancient Babylon: a lion with eagle’s wings.

“And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs *were* in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’” (Daniel 7:5).

The second beast, described as a bear, is usually interpreted as being Ancient Media-Persia. Persia “devoured” much of the Middle East and Asia Minor. It is also important to note that the Persian Empire had three capitals or principal centers of power: Susa (Shusan, KJV; which was the administrative capital of the Persian Empire and setting of the Book of Esther), Persepolis, and the conquered Babylon. Daniel’s vision continues:

“After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it” (Daniel 7:6).

Following in the same pattern as Nebuchadnezzar’s statue vision, *the leopard beast* of Daniel 7:6 is typically viewed as being representative of Ancient Greece and the empire left behind by Alexander the Great. What is most interesting about this beast is that it is described as having “four wings of a bird” and “four heads” (Daniel 7:6). When Alexander died in Babylon in 323 C.E., his empire was divided among four of his generals.⁴ *A fourth beast* then arises:

“After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great *boasts*” (Daniel 7:7-8).

Like the fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue vision, the fourth beast is given much detail. It is believed among many pre-millennialists that this beast has not yet arisen, as the “little horn” (Daniel 7:8, KJV) who arises from this beast “uttering great *boasts*” has not yet arrived, who most of the same will agree is the antimessiah/antichrist. In Daniel 7:23, we are told by God that “The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the *other* kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.” This may imply

³ It is interesting to note that in pre-tribulational fiction book *The Third Millennium*, the empire of antimessiah/antichrist that arises (out of the United States) is actually called the “New Roman Empire.”

⁴ The Ancient Greek Empire was divided into four separate regions: the Peloponnesus (Greece), Syria, Egypt, and Macedonia.

that the fourth kingdom and the fourth beast are separate entities, and may later merge at some time in the future. Daniel admits to being perplexed:

“Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, *and which* devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet, and *the meaning* of the ten horns that *were* on its head and the other *horn* which came up, and before which three of *them* fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great *boasts* and which was larger in appearance than its associates. I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. Thus he said: “The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the *other* kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings” (Daniel 7:19-24).

Daniel 7:24 tells us that the fourth beast will be composed of “ten horns,” presumably ruled by “ten kings” or leaders. The verse ends with telling us that “another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.” This has commonly been interpreted to be a direct reference to the antimessiah/antichrist, and the belief that he will subdue or dismiss three leaders who may not approve of his leadership or authority. Revelation 13:1 gives us some further clues:

“And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns *were* ten diadems, and on his heads *were* blasphemous names.”

This verse is very intriguing, especially when one considers that the fourth kingdom of Daniel 2 and the fourth beast of Daniel 7 have different characteristics. Some, not surprisingly, believe the four beasts of Daniel 7 to be major Twentieth Century world powers (Great Britain/United States, the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, the United Nations) as opposed to ancient world empires. Could the fourth kingdom and the fourth beast possibly have two different identities? Because we are dealing with *future events*, it is important that we consider all plausible possibilities before us.

It is commonly held that the fourth kingdom is a revived Roman Empire, possibly today's European Union. Daniel 9:26 clearly tells us that the antimessiah/antichrist will be descended from the people who destroy Jerusalem, the Romans:⁵

“Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.”

What if the fourth beast is a different entity than the fourth kingdom? According to Revelation 13:1, the beast (antimessiah) will rise up out of the sea, perhaps symbolic of the nations or the world (sea of peoples), with seven heads and ten horns. Could this mean that the fourth kingdom that has ten horns, of which three are subdued (Daniel 7:24), control the ten-horned fourth beast? If this is the case, than who is the fourth beast?

If the European Union is the fourth kingdom of which three kings (or leaders) are subdued, leaving seven heads, then is it feasible that the ten horns represent another world power or organization? If so, then should we believe it to be the United Nations? Notably, the U.N. has divided the world into ten bio-zone regions. Also consider the possibility of what happens if the European Union continues on its course towards a super-state. Is it possible that it may become the prominent *state* in the U.N.? Consider Revelation 13:4-5:

“[T]hey worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?’ There

⁵ It is also important to note that every major European royal family claims some ancestry from Rome's caesars, meaning that the antimessiah/antichrist could indeed be a literal “Roman” prince.

was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.”

At the moment, the European Union has no definite leader. Every six months, the presidency of the European Council rotates between each member state. However, due to the launch of the new Euro currency, some political analysts have projected that only E.U. members that embrace the new monetary system will be granted the six-month presidency. Presently, only twelve member states compose the Euro-zone, exceeding the “ten” requirement. But the European Union is still a developing world entity and it is hard to tell how it will evolve in the coming decade.

Let us consider this possible scenario:

Perhaps the European Union will evolve to eventually being led by a council or tribunal of ten, of which three leaders are subdued (Daniel 7:24)? If this is the case, then could the antimessiah/antichrist who has *with him* seven heads (European leaders?) and ten horns (United Nations world regions?), allow those seven leaders, presumably Europeans, to rule with him for forty-two months (Revelation 13:4) during their six-month terms? Six multiplied by seven does equal forty-two! We must consider this possibility before us.

Conclusion

Is the fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream the European Union? Will this kingdom ultimately control the fourth beast, presumably the United Nations? Truly, we will have to keep following world events and see how they play out.

Consider this: the European Union is indeed becoming a *united* major world power of clay (diversity) mixed with iron (power). Some prophecy teachers believe that the world government of the antimessiah only comes from Europe, and there are others that teach it only comes from the United Nations. Interestingly, the European Union is in a very unique position as it is composed of many different states and ethnic groups. As we watch its development, could we see the E.U. invited to take a lead role at the head of the United Nations?

There are many questions surrounding Europe’s potential role in prophetic events. We will have to continue following developments in the European Union that suggest whether or not it is truly Daniel’s fourth kingdom and whether or not it controls the fourth beast, possibly the United Nations.

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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, published by The Lockman Foundation.

revised 09 July, 2004

edited for spelling/grammar; minor theological fine tuning
08 October, 2006