

## Nebuchadnezzar's Image (Part Four): Iron And Clay

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By far, Daniel gives more details about the fourth world empire of Nebuchadnezzar's image than he does the first three. He describes this part of the image in Daniel 2:33: "Its legs [were] of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay."

As we have learned, the body parts as well as the quality of the metal offer help in understanding the identity and characteristics of each empire. Like previous empires, this one is divided into two parts, represented by the two legs and two feet. Later, it is further divided into ten toes, indicating a separation of powers into ten parts.

The iron legs suggest strength far superior to the previous empires—just as iron is far stronger than bronze—although it also shows diminished quality of its culture. With the addition of clay, a material that will not bond to iron, its power further declines to the point that is only "partly strong and partly fragile [*brittle*, margin]" (verse 42). The clay also takes its toll on the qualitative aspects. Verse 43 indicates the empire's internal unity will be very unstable in its final form, though it will retain its toughness to some degree.

The phrase "mingle with the seed of men" (verse 43) has spurred much debate. In one sense, it serves to explain why the iron and clay will not bond: The cultural and political components of this empire are too diverse to unify for long. Otherwise, the phrase suggests a mongrelized people who no longer uphold the values and goals of the original nation that founded the empire. However one understands it, cohesion within the final stages of this kingdom will be fragile.

### Toughness and Brutality

Generally, biblical commentators agree that the legs, feet and toes represent the Roman Empire. Iron indeed describes the toughness and brutality by which Rome subjugated the nations, reaching its greatest domination under Trajan (AD 98-117). The Romans had little sympathy for the populace of the nations they conquered, sending millions of men, women and children into slavery. As one commentator, John F. Walvoord, put it, "The glory of Rome was built on the misery of its conquered peoples."

When Rome finally defeated Carthage in 146 BC, Scipio Africanus Minor, the Roman general, razed the city, enslaved or dispersed its citizens and forbade anyone to live there again. Similar actions were taken against other cities. The Romans made crucifixion of the enemies of the state a standard practice. When Galilee revolted in AD 6, the legions hammered the region's untrained army and crucified two thousand men along the roads to Sepphoris, which they leveled.

Even Cicero (106-43 BC), a Roman statesman and author, wrote:

It is difficult to convey to you, gentlemen, the bitter hatred felt for us among foreign nations because of the unbridled and outrageous behavior of the men whom we have sent to govern them during these past years. What temple in those lands do you think has had its sanctity respected by our magistrates? What state has been free from their aggression?

What home has been adequately closed and protected against them? They actually look around for wealthy and flourishing cities in order to find an occasion of waging war against them and thus gratify their lust for plunder.

**The Fourth Beast**

This ferocity, strength and brutality are again depicted in Daniel 7:7-8 in the prophet's vision of the four beasts:

After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

This prophecy expands and fills in details of the image in Daniel 2. The "huge iron teeth" and the beast's actions link it inextricably to the legs and feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image. Whereas the legs, feet and toes suggest a continuous progression and dominance on the world scene, Daniel 7 shows that Rome would rise and fall in successive kingdoms and empires, represented by the horns, until the last days.

Of course, the little horn introduces a new entity to this empire. Suffice it to say that it represents the false church guiding and controlling this brutal beast (*cf.* Revelation 17; 13:11-18). The Bible shows this false church, among other things, speaking against God, persecuting the saints, sitting atop the beast, being given power "for a time and times and half a time" and being destroyed forever by the power of God.

"The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom," writes Daniel (7:24), or as Herbert W. Armstrong said, they are ten successive resurrections of the Roman Empire. The little horn, the false church, supplants the first three of these, the Vandals, the Heruli and the Ostrogoths, Germanic invaders who successfully overthrew Rome and established their own short-lived empires between AD 429 and 554.

The final seven horns (called "seven mountains," in reference to kingdoms, and "seven heads," in reference to kings, in Revelation 17:9-10) are controlled by the false Roman church. In AD 554 Emperor Justinian, ruling the eastern half of the empire from Constantinople, restored the Empire in the west and recognized the supremacy of the Pope. Justinian fulfills the fourth horn and the first of the seven heads of the beast upon which "the Mother of Harlots" rides (verses 3-5). Later, Charlemagne, king of the Franks (800); Otto the Great (962); Charles V of the Hapsburg dynasty (1520) and Napoleon (1805) were all crowned emperors of Rome by the Pope, and fulfill the fifth through eighth horns and second through fifth heads. Garibaldi and Mussolini, dictators of Italy between 1870 and 1945, received papal approval to re-establish the Roman Empire, and were later joined by Adolf Hitler in this pursuit. They combine to represent the ninth horn and sixth head.

Horns and Heads		

<b><i>Horn</i></b> <b><i>(Daniel 7:7-8)</i></b>		<b><i>Head</i></b> <b><i>(Revelation 17:9-10)</i></b>	<b><i>Historical</i></b> <b><i>Fulfillment</i></b>
1st Horn	"Plucked out by the roots" by the Little Horn, the False Church		Vandals (AD 429-533)
2nd Horn			Heruli (AD 476-493)
3rd Horn			Ostrogoths (AD 493-554)
4th Horn		1st Head	Justinian (AD 554)
5th Horn		2nd Head	Charlemagne (AD 800)
6th Horn		3rd Head	Otto the Great (AD 962)
7th Horn		4th Head	Charles V (AD 1520)
8th Horn		5th Head	Napoleon (AD 1805)
9th Horn		6th Head	Garibaldi/Mussolini/ (AD 1870-1945)
10th Horn		7th Head	Final Beast Power (AD ????)

## Ten Toes

The last horn, the last head and the ten toes are yet future, the final resurrection of the Roman Empire, the terrifying and brutal Beast power soon to arise upon the earth. Some of the details of this final revival are found in Revelation 17.

- 1) It will be brief (verses 10, 12), not much longer than the three-and-a-half years of the Great Tribulation (11:2; 12:14).
- 2) This last revival is made up of another ten horns, or ten kings, who give their power to a dictator known as the Beast (17:12-13).
- 3) The ten kings and the Beast use the false church as long as she is necessary to their plans, then they destroy her in their brutal hate (verse 16).
- 4) One of their main purposes is to "make war with the Lamb [Christ]," but they will be destroyed in His wrath at His Second Coming (verse 14; 19:11-21).

As the colossal image of Daniel 2 had two legs and two feet, the Roman Empire had two divisions, whether they were Rome and her provinces in its earlier period or a Western Empire with its capital in Rome and an Eastern Empire governed from Constantinople. The final resurrection, we assume, will have its ten toes split between the latter division, west and east. We do not know, however, if these are ten presently recognizable nations, or if they are ten major ethnic groups that cross national boundaries yet will have some autonomy.

Nevertheless, it is most likely that the ten nations will inhabit the areas formerly ruled by the Roman Empire and its subsequent revivals. It is a vast region. At its height Rome ruled from England and

Spain in the west to northern Mesopotamia in the east to North Africa in the south. However, because of Daniel's prophecies regarding the King of the North, the "last gasp" of Rome will probably be centered in Europe, the bastion of Roman culture, law and heritage.

Of all the current movements in Europe, the most likely to evolve into the final head of the Beast is, of course, the European Community (EC). Currently composed of more than ten nations, several of these, particularly the northwestern European democracies, may drop out over developing problems such as sovereignty, currency or trade. A strong possibility is that the Gentile components of the Beast will expel the nations of Israel that are presently members of the EC and/or attack and overthrow them, reducing the number to ten.

The EC has recently adopted a curious symbol that it plans to use on its stamps and currency—a woman riding a horned beast, a bull! The EC explains that it depicts Europa, the woman, being seduced by Jupiter, who had transformed himself into a bull because Europa was fond of animals. The true church, however, sees Revelation 17 being fulfilled before our eyes!

The EC no longer takes a backseat in either politics or economics. It sees itself as an equal and a rival to both the United States and Japan in areas of trade, monetary policy and international finance. Recently, it has demanded to be a partner in the "land for peace" treaties between the state of Israel and her Arab neighbors. It is also taking a firmer stand in other areas of international politics and military matters, especially if they involve the United Nations. Behind the scenes, the European nations are constantly improving their military technology and weaponry, as well as increasing and combining their armed forces.

By 1999 all the currencies of Europe will be integrated into one system, and the European Currency Unit, or ECU [now called the euro], will be the standard. Soon after a progress review in 1996, the EC hopes to have full military integration, and from that point begin speaking through one voice, that is, as one political unit. Such are their plans.

God may work things out differently, however. The final world dictator that will arise may step in and speed the process. Or there could be delays while God orchestrates events and people to bring about the "crisis at the close." There is so much we do not know, so much that God's Word does not explain.

### **Endure, Hold Fast, Be Alert**

This is where faith and endurance enter the picture. Constantly, the writers of the Bible urge us to "hold fast," "endure to the end," "watch and pray" and "be patient." We do not know the day or the hour—all we can do is watch the signs that we understand so that we can see the day approaching.

As that day approaches, life will become more difficult for those who keep the testimony of Jesus and the commandments of God. When we do them, we draw a huge target on ourselves for Satan to aim at. The Devil hates true Christians with a vehemence that we cannot imagine. He will soon be cast from heaven, if he has not been already, and he will take his anger out on God's elect (Revelation 12:12-13). He will do everything to "tighten the screws" so that we will renounce our beliefs, drift away or fall asleep.

So be alert to the times! Strive with all diligence to remain strong toward God and His Word! And pray earnestly, "Your Kingdom come!"

