

APPENDIX 6

Revived Roman Empire or a Caliphate of Muslim Countries ? The Ten Toes of Daniel 2:41-43

by
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The Issue

Some popular online writers have suggested that the empire of the Antichrist during the tribulation period is not a European revived Roman empire but rather a new caliphate of Arab or Muslim countries. I think the standard premillennial view is correct, namely, that the empire of Antichrist is a ten-nation confederation of European countries representing a revived Roman Empire.

This view is based primarily on Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 and Daniel's vision of the four beasts in Daniel 7. So before discussing the "caliphate" theory, it is important to understand the biblical evidence in these passages for the standard view. For the purposes of this appendix, however, Daniel 2 is the more important passage.

The image seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream symbolized four successive kingdoms or empires. The fourth kingdom is taken as the Roman Empire by almost all conservative scholars. However, it is the ten toes, corresponding to the ten horns on the fourth beast in chapter 7 (see also the ten horns in Rev. 13:1; 17:3, 7), that seem to describe a form of this fourth kingdom or empire not yet seen. Does it describe a ten-nation revived Roman Empire comprised of ten European nations or does it describe a caliphate consisting of ten Arab or Muslim nations? The verses related directly to this question are 40-43.

One of the best scholarly commentaries on the Book of Daniel was written by Leon Wood: *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973). According to Wood, the rather lengthy chapter 2 can be outlined as follows:

Nebuchadnezzar's dream (1-13)
The dream revealed to Daniel (14-30)
The dream and its interpretation (31-45)
Daniel honored (46-49)

Since verses 40-43 are the most significant for addressing the question at hand, Wood's discussion of these verses is given here (pp. 68-71 in his commentary).

Commentary by Leon Wood

2:40: "Then there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong, like iron--for iron breaks and smashes

everything-and, as iron breaks in pieces, so it will crush and break all these."

A fourth kingdom: This fourth kingdom must be Rome, for it succeeded Greece. Conservative expositors agree on this identification, but liberals do not. The latter believe it must be Greece, with the second and third kingdoms being Media and Persia, respectively (thus separating the two, rather than taking them together). Their main reason is their denial of true predictive prophecy. Believing that the book was written in the late Grecian period, they can explain the symbolism in history that far, in their naturalistic manner, but not as far as Rome. The descriptive items listed for symbolism from the part of the image concerned, however, do not fit Greece, but Rome; and the parallel symbolism of the animals in Daniel's vision of chapter seven is equally convincing. The four countries in view, then, are Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome--each distinct from the other as the respective part of the image are distinct. At the same time, the fact that all are symbolized by one unified image should not be overlooked. This signifies a unity in the distinctness, probably referring to the unity of mankind running through the distinct kingdoms. Before God, history is a whole, made up of variations of the same basic aspirations and activities of mankind involved. *Strong, like iron:* In this fourth aspect of the image, the metal involved is made symbolic of intrinsic quality as well as relative value. The stress regarding this kingdom is on strength. Rome was strong, so that no power could dislodge her as world leader for more than half a millennium, far longer than the other kingdoms.¹ *Smashes everything:* The word for "smashes" (*hashel*) is a participle and means *one which breaks by a hammer*, connoting continuedness of action. *All These:* This is a reference to the preceding kingdoms. The Roman kingdom would break the three earlier ones. The thought is not that Babylonia and Medo-Persia would still exist at the time Greece was overrun by Rome. History indicates that each was destroyed by its predecessor in turn, which is implied also in this passage (vs. 39) by the use of "after" (*batrak*, literally, "in your place") and in 8:3-8, where Medo-Persia and Greece are each represented as destroying its predecessors. The thought is that the two kingdoms preceding Greece would be broken representatively, in that the elements of each would have been respectively caught up and reduplicated in its successor.

2:41: "Also, as the feet and toes were partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, as you witnessed, so the kingdom will be composite; and some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, inasmuch as you saw iron mixed with brittle baked clay."

Feet and toes: The toes of the image are mentioned here for the first time. When Daniel set forth the contents of the dream, he mentioned only legs and feet. Here, however, the idea of compositeness, which characterized the feet only (legs solidly iron), is developed as the interpretation reveals the dream in greater detail. *Composite:* The word used (*peligah*) means basically "divided." In this instance, however, the division is not of one part from another, but rather of a dissolution within, as the last phrase makes clear. *Firmness of iron:* The word for "firmness" (*nitsbetah*), from the verbal root (*yetsab*) meaning "to be firm," carries the idea of *resistance to outside influence*. Rome was able to maintain her identity for centuries. Her government was solidly organized, her armies well drilled and disciplined, her policies with subjugated territories well defined and not overly oppressive. *Brittle baked*

¹ Babylonia lasted 66 years (605-539 B.C.); Medo-Persia 208 years (539-331); Greece 185 years (331-146), though a specific date for the fall of Greece is difficult to assign).

clay: The word for "baked clay" (vv. 33, 34) is here modified by *tina'*, meaning simply "clay." The intent is to stress the clay-type characteristics of hard baked clay, thus signifying the true brittle nature of it, in contrast to the strong iron. Because the mixture of baked clay and iron is found only in the feet and toes, and not in the legs, it follows that this element of brittleness would be true of the Roman empire only in its later period, rather than in its former. Some expositors hold that the symbolism in view carries reference to the East-West divisions of the Roman rule, but this cannot be, since, as noticed, the divisions are intermixed. The weakness of Rome, which led to its fall and which did come to existence especially in its later period, was a deterioration of moral fiber among the people. Idleness, luxurious living, and dissipation of character found their way into, and intermixed with, the still firmly structured aspects of government.

2:42, 43: "Indeed, as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly baked clay, part of the kingdom shall be strong and part of it fragile. Further, as you saw iron mingled with brittle baked clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men, but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron does not mix with baked clay."

Indeed: This is a translation merely of the waw conjunction which is not usually so translated. Emphasis is called for here, however, because a long gap of time is intended to be distinguished between what is said in verse forty-one and what is said in verse forty-two--a gap falling historically between the demise of the original Roman empire and a restoration of it at a time still future. Several considerations point to this conclusion. (1) A time-gap must fall somewhere in these verses, because verse forty-four speaks of Christ's millennial kingdom (cf. v. 44 for discussion) being established in the days of "these kings," and His kingdom is yet future. The words "these kings" obviously refer back to the immediately preceding verses, making at least some part of them refer to a time contemporary with that future kingdom. (2) If that gap is seen between verse forty-one and verse forty-two, a reason is supplied for the repetition in verse forty-two regarding the intermingling of iron and clay, something strange otherwise, verse forty-one speaking of the intermingling existent during the original empire, and verse forty-two speaking of it during the restored time. (3) The existence of an intended time-gap here would give a reason for only the toes of the feet being mentioned in verse forty-two as being intermixed, whereas both feet and toes are so mentioned in verse forty-one: that reason being that the toes, and the toes only, carry reference to the millennial kingdom, signifying that it will have ten contemporary kings. The existence of these ten contemporary kings is symbolized also by the ten horns of Daniel's first vision (cf. 7:7, 24). (4) This interpretation finds a close and meaningful antecedent for "these kings" of verse forty-four, namely the ten toes just mentioned, as symbolic of ten kings. No other logical antecedent exists in the preceding verses. (5) The general idea of a time-gap of this kind finds support from pertinent aspects of all four of Daniel's visions in the last six chapters of the book, as will be seen. These reasons, taken together, mean that the subject matter of verses forty-two and forty-three concerns restored Rome, which, as the verses indicate, will be characterized by a condition similar to that of original Rome: party strong and partly weak. *Fragile*: The word used (*tebirah*) comes from a verbal root (*tebar*) meaning "to break," and carries the thought of *something breakable*, a characteristic of baked clay in distinction from iron.

They shall mingle themselves: The activity to which this phrase makes reference will be undertaken for the purpose of offsetting the conflicting elements of strength and weakness, symbolized by the iron and clay. The nature of the activity is difficult to determine,

however. The word used is a hithpael participle from the root *'arab*, meaning "to mix," and refers to something which "mixes itself." The idea of intermarriage is held by some, and Ezra 9:2 does use the same participle in reference to intermarriage, but this idea does not fit the context. It is better to think in terms of a general intermingling of people, the strong with the weak. The reference may be either to intermingling strong people from strong countries with weaker people of weaker countries, or else strong people within a given country with weaker people of that country, to provide greater overall strength. The Antichrist, called "little horn" in 7:8, 24-26, the leading king of the restored empire (cf. discussion, chap. 7), will doubtless lead in this activity. *They shall not cleave*: The effort at gaining overall strength in this way will fail. As baked clay and iron will not mix, so also these diverse elements will not mix. This means that the empire of the Antichrist will have its internal problems, making for weakness.

Proposal

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, there were only four kings or kingdoms, beginning with Babylon. The fourth kingdom will be destroyed by God when he sets up "a kingdom that will never be destroyed" (v. 44). But, as noted by Wood in his commentary on verse 40, "This fourth kingdom must be Rome, for it succeeded Greece."

Wood also rightly concludes that the ten toes represent ten kings (kingdoms or countries) that combine to make the final stage of the Roman Empire. Since it is the final stage of the *Roman* Empire, the ten toes almost certainly represent ten European countries, as per the standard view mentioned earlier in this appendix.

Finally, note that Wood gives a very probable interpretation of the iron and clay that characterize the ten toes:

The reference may be either to intermingling strong people from strong countries with weaker people of weaker countries, or else strong people within a given country with weaker people of that country, to provide greater overall strength.

Now suppose we consider the second of these two options. What is happening in Europe today? England, France, and Sweden, for example, are inundated with Muslims, complete with many mosques and so-called "no-go-zones" where Shariah law is enforced. The Muslims, of course, are more militaristic than native Europeans.

Therefore, although I do not think a caliphate of Arab countries meets the requirements of the text of Daniel 2:40-43, perhaps Muslims will indeed play the primary roll in the final form of the revised Roman Empire under the rule of the Antichrist. They might indeed be the "iron" elements in the ten European nations, while native Europeans might be the "clay" elements. But "they shall not cleave to one another" (v. 43), and the mix will weaken to some extent the empire of the Antichrist.

The Antichrist himself, of course, could be a native European, but he could also be a Muslim living in one of the ten European countries.