

PROPHETIC EMPIRES

The Bible makes it clear that there is a great struggle going on between the forces of light and the forces of darkness in this world and in the heavenly realm. Much of the history of the world arises out of this spiritual battle. God has chosen for Himself a people who will trust and believe in Him. Before the birth of Jesus, God chose for Himself the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to believe in Him and to do His will. It was God's will that the law, the prophets, and the Christ would come through the Jews. For this reason, Satan has always opposed the Jews and has sought to destroy them. Since God's creation of the nation of Israel during their Egyptian captivity and enslavement in about 1800 B.C., Satan has used seven world superpowers to attempt to destroy Israel. In the last days of the history of the world, Satan will raise up an eighth world empire that will be governed by the Antichrist. This world empire will make one last desperate attempt to destroy God's people, as identified in Israel and the Church. These world empires are spoken of in the book of Revelation by John the Apostle. Let's take a brief look at this prophetic Bible verse.

Revelation 17:3, 9-13

3 *And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.*

9 *"Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits,*

10 *and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.*

11 *"And the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.*

12 *"And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.*

13 *"These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast. (NAS, underlining added)*

The beast spoken of in Revelation 17 is the eighth world empire that will seek to destroy God's people during the last days of the Great Tribulation. The prophetic language of Daniel 7 had already established the prophetic language of beasts representing ungodly governments that would try to destroy Israel. Also, in prophetic language, heads are symbolic of leaders while mountains are symbolic of governments. A horn, in the Bible, is symbolic of power, or an individual leader.

Summary of Symbolism:

- Beast - empire (sometimes the dictator that rules that empire)
- Head - leader
- Mountain - government
- Horn - power, ruler

At the time of the writing of Revelation by the Apostle John in about 95 A.D., five of the eight prophetic empires that would attempt to destroy Israel had already arisen and fallen on the stage of world history. These five empires were Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, and Greece.

- Egypt (modern Egypt) attempted to prevent the birth of the nation of Israel in about 1400 B.C. by killing all new born male Jewish children, including Israel's future deliverer, Moses (*Exodus 1 and 2*). Also, the army of Pharaoh sought to destroy Israel, but God intervened and destroyed Pharaoh and his army first. (*see Exodus 14*).
- Assyria (modern Iraq and Iran) tried to destroy the Jews in about 750 B.C. The ten northern tribes of Israel were exiled from their homeland and scattered all over the known world (*2 Kings 17*). Sennacherib sought to destroy Judah during the reign of Hezekiah, but God intervened, through the agency of an angel who killed 185,000 men in the Assyrian army in a single evening (*2 Kings 19*).



Babylon
The capital of the Babylonian Empire. This was the third kingdom to oppose the Jews.

- Babylonia (modern Iraq and Iran) exiled the remaining Jews of Judah to Babylon for 70 years (*Jeremiah 52*). Jerusalem and the Temple were completely destroyed (586 B.C.). The Jews were only allowed to return to their homeland in 535 B.C., after the Persians and Medes conquered the Babylonians.
- Although the Persians (modern Iran) allowed the Jews to return to Israel, the Persian Prime Minister, Haman planned to eradicate all Jews from the world until God stayed the hand of Haman through the influence of Esther (*Esther 3 and 9*).



Alexander the Great

The ruler who established the ancient Greek empire using tactics of mobility

- The Greeks (modern Greece) conquered the Persians in about 335 B.C. under the leadership of Alexander the Great. After Alexander's death, his empire was divided among his four principal generals. A descendant of one of these generals, Antiochus IV ("Antiochus Epiphanes"), worked to eradicate Israel in about 167 B.C. He outlawed circumcision, made owning a copy of the law a capital offense, forced Jews to sacrifice pigs, and placed a statue of Zeus in the Jewish Temple and commanded all Jews to worship it. This last act is called "the abomination of desolation." The Jewish revolt that arose out of these edicts finally overthrew the regime of Antiochus IV, but brought Roman domination into their country (*1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees, apocryphal books found in the Catholic Bible*).



Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)

The Greek ruler who outlawed Judaism in Israel and set up the "abomination of desolation" in the Jewish Temple.

The Apostle John was living and writing in the age of the sixth world empire that took an active role in destroying Israel as a nation. This empire was the Roman Empire. In 68 A.D., Israel rebelled against her Roman oppressors. The Roman general Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus ("Titus") brought an army to Israel and destroyed Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple in 70 A.D.. The Jews were exiled to all parts of the Roman Empire in an event called "the Diaspora." Because of this Roman action, Israel failed to exist as a nation until 1948 when the United Nations again declared the presence of the nation of Israel. Israel did not possess her capital of Jerusalem again until she recaptured it in the 1967 Six Day War.



Hadrian's Arch, in Rome, shows a scene from the Roman looting of the Jewish Temple. Roman soldiers are shown carrying out the Menorah, and other implements of temple worship as booty.



Adolf Hitler

The German dictator that founded the Third Reich that attempted to destroy every Jew through the use of systematic

The seventh world empire that would seek to eliminate the Jews as a nation could have been the one that John said "has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while." (Revelation 17:10) Although one cannot be dogmatic about the identity of this empire, only one modern empire seems to fit the description of the seventh empire given by John. Nazi Germany conquered most of Europe, the Balkans, and most of North Africa. Hitler called his empire the "Thousand Year Reich", but it only lasted about a dozen years – "a little while." Each of the prior world empires remained in power for hundreds of years. Also, Hitler carried out a brutal attempt to destroy all the Jews in extermination camps. The slaughter of over six million Jews in Nazi concentration camps was a significant factor in convincing the United Nations to re-establish a homeland for the Jews in Israel.

The eighth and final beast, or World Empire predicted by the Apostle John to try eliminating the Jews was represented in Revelation 17 by ten horns (Revelation 17:12,13). Each of the ten horns represents rulers who have but one purpose - to give their power and authority to the beast who is the

Antichrist. This is the ungodly empire that will dominate the entire world in the final days of history. It is also the empire that will try to destroy the Church and eliminate the Jews. The empire of the Antichrist will be in power when Jesus Christ makes His Second Coming to the earth as Lord and King. This great event, often called the Parousia, is predicted in Daniel, chapter 2.

The book of Daniel foretells an era that Jesus called the "time of the Gentiles." This would be a time in history when Jerusalem would be under the domination of some gentile world empire.

Luke 21:24

24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (NAS)



Vespasian

The Roman Emperor at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. by his son, Titus.

The "time of the Gentiles" began with the Babylonian exile of the Jews in 605 B.C. The "time of the Gentiles" comes to an end when Antichrist is destroyed and Israel is re-established as a sovereign nation. Interestingly enough, this great prophesy of the "Age of the Gentiles" comes to us through a dream given to Nebuchadnezzar by God, and interpreted by the prophet Daniel.

Daniel 2:31-45

31 "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.

32 "The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze,

33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

34 "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.

35 "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.

36 "This was the dream; now we shall tell its interpretation before the king.

37 "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;

38 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.

39 "And after you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

40 "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.

41 "And 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.

42 "And 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.

43 "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.

44 "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

45 "Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy." (NAS)



Ancient Assyrian Empire

The second world empire to try to destroy the Jews. The ten northern tribes of Israel were exiled all over the world

In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar sees a great statue made of various metals. The golden head on the statue was interpreted by Daniel to be Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire he ruled. The statue's breast and arms of silver represented Persia (along with their allies, the Medes), the kingdom that replaces Babylonia as the world's new superpower in about 539 B.C. The statue's belly and thighs of bronze symbolized the Greek empire, which conquered the Persians and all of the known ancient world under Alexander the Great by 332 B.C. The legs of iron signified the Roman Empire which became the world's most enduring, extensive and powerful empire by about 100 B.C. The Roman Empire was sixth empire of Revelation 17, and it held world hegemony at the time of the Apostle John's writing of the book of Revelation. It is interesting to note that the Roman Empire separated into an eastern and western empire by about 400 A.D. Each leg of the statue envisioned by Nebuchadnezzar may represent each part of the Roman Empire. Arising out of the legs of iron came the feet of the statue with ten toes of iron mixed with clay or pottery. The feet and toes of the statue of this prophetic dream represents the eighth and final gentile kingdom that will arise

in the world's history to dominate and seek to destroy the nation of Israel. This is the nation composed of a loose confederation of ten rulers who will give their power to the Antichrist to pursue Satan's agenda of opposing God and God's people. The second coming of Jesus destroys the empire of the Antichrist. This is signified Nebuchadnezzar's dream by the rock that was cut from the mountain without human hands that struck the statue in the feet causing the entire statue to collapse. The fact that no human hand would be involved in fashioning the rock reveals to us that the demise of the Antichrist and his evil empire will occur without the efforts of mankind. The collapse of the entire statue signifies the end of the "times of the gentiles" and the beginning of Christ's rule on the earth.

It is interesting to note that the seventh empire mentioned in Revelation 17 is not clearly revealed in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2. There may be several reasons for this.

- Germany arose out of the Holy Roman Empire; the descendent of the Roman Empire. The First Reich, ruled by Frederick the Great during the early to mid-1800's, came from the Holy Roman Empire. Germany's Second Reich was ruled by Kaiser Wilhem at the turn of the 19th century. It should be noted that the title "Kaiser" comes from the Roman title "Caesar." Hitler's Third Reich could be the seventh empire revealed by Revelation 17.
- One could argue that the Nazi Empire was, in fact, an extension of Rome's power, part of the "iron legs" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream statue. Israel did not exist as a nation during the time of the Nazi Third Reich. Daniel 2 seems to deal with gentile empires that oppress the nation of Israel. The Nazi Third Reich only lasted 12 years. This is a very brief time for world history. Most of the other empires mentioned in prophetic scripture lasted several hundred years.



The Holy Roman Empire

The descendent of the ancient Roman Empire. This empire consisted of several kingdoms and was a loose federation.



**Statue of Nebuchadnezzar's
Dream:**

Gold Head - Babylonia

Silver Chest/Arms - Persia/Medes

Bronze Belly/Thighs - Greece

Iron Legs - Rome

Iron/Clay Feet - Empire of the Antichrist

Daniel himself received a vision from the Lord about the empires of the “times of the gentiles.” This vision is found in Daniel 7, and it gives us much more detail about these world superpowers. The prophetic symbolism of this vision shows beasts that signify these great empires. The characteristics of the beasts represent the characteristics of the empires.

Daniel 7:2-27

- 2 Daniel said, “I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.
- 3 “And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.
- 4 “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.
- 5 “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!’
- 6 “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.
- 7 “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.
- 8 “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.
- 9 “I kept looking Until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire.

10 *"A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat, and the books were opened.*

11 *"Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire.*

12 *"As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.*

13 *"I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.*

14 *"And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.*

15 *"As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.*

16 *"I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:*

17 *'These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth.*

18 *'But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.'*

19 *"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,*

20 *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.*

21 *"I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them*

22 *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.*

23 *"Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms, and it will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.*

24 *'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.*

25 *'And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.*

26 *'But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.*

27 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.' (NAS)

In this dream, Daniel sees four beasts arising out of the sea. In prophetic symbolism, the sea often signifies the world of politics (Revelation 17:15). The winged lion in Daniel's vision represented Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, the main ruler of Babylonia, temporarily lost his sanity, but regained his reason ("human mind") when he acknowledged God to be sovereign. The second beast of Daniel's vision was a bear, which is a large ponderous beast. The bear symbolized the Persian Empire, which conquered the Babylonians. The bear was raised up on one side to symbolize the unequal partnership between the Medes and Persians. The Persian army devoured its enemies because of its huge ponderous size rather than because of smart generalship or brilliant tactics. The leopard with four wings and four heads represented the Greeks who conquered the Persians under Alexander the Great. The leopard is a very swift animal. The Greeks invented the phalanx, which was a military formation of soldiers that was capable of swift movement and change in direction. Using the phalanx, the Greeks were able to defeat much larger armies by outflanking them through mobility and maneuver. The four heads represented the four Greek generals who divided up Alexander's world empire at his death. Each Greek general would continue to use tactics of mobility and maneuver, as symbolized by the four wings. The fourth vision in Daniel's vision was different from the other three and corresponded to the statue's iron legs of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2. This beast represented the Roman Empire, but it also gives evidence of a new world empire that arises out of the former Roman Empire. This evidence consists of the ten horns seen on the beast, which is consistent with the description of the eighth and final world empire of the Antichrist described in Revelation 17. The little horn seen in Daniel's vision represents the Antichrist who overthrows three of the ten rulers of the eighth empire. Daniel's vision teaches us that the kingdom of the Antichrist will persecute the saints and will overcome them until the second coming of Christ. It also tells us that the Antichrist's warfare against the saints will last three and one-half years ("time, times, and half a time"). Thereafter, Jesus will halt Antichrist's rule and the Antichrist will be judged and destroyed. This brings us to the establishment of the millennial rule of Christ on the earth and the restoration of Israel as a faithful people of God.



Ancient Persian Empire
The fourth empire to seek Israel's destruction through the efforts of Haman.

Revelation 13 gives us additional information about the Antichrist's kingdom that is not available to us through Daniel 7.

Rev 13:1-2

1 And he stood on the sand of the seashore. And 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.

2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. (NAS)

The Eighth Kingdom: Antichrist's Empire (?)

The kingdom of the Antichrist will consist of a strange amalgam of the characteristics of the previous gentile empires. The full significance of this mixture is unknown but one possibility includes a confederation of Muslim nations that now surround Israel and are hostile to her very existence. Consider the evidence.

- Old Testament specifically condemns the Muslim nations the now surround Israel in the context of the end-times. These include
 - Ammon & Moab: **Jordan** (Ez 25; Is 15; Jer 48; 49)
 - Damascus: **Syria** (Is 17; Jer 49)
 - Edom: **Jordan & Saudia Arabia** (Ez 25; Jer 49)
 - Philistia: **Palestinians** (Ez 25:15-17; Jer 47)
 - Tyre & Sidon: **Lebanon** (Ez 26-28; Is 23)
 - **Egypt** (Ez 29 - 32; Is 19; Jer 46)
 - Babylon & Assyria: **Iraq** (Is 13-14; 21; Jer 50)
 - Cush: **Ethiopia, Sudan** (Is 18)
 - Elam: **Iran** or Persia (Is 21; Jer 49)

- Turkey, another Muslim nation, was the capital of the old Ottoman Empire. Ezekiel 38 & 39 refer to the antichrist figure, “Gog”, who is said to come from Magog, and is the “head” (Hebrew: “rosh”) of Meshech and Tubal. Aligned with Gomer and Beth Togarmah, these peoples refer to Asia Minor, modern Turkey.
- The Muslim Ottoman Empire “once was”, but now “is not”, but if it arises again, it will look much like the former Roman Empire, as this map shows.



- Notice that the former Ottoman Empire is not only a Muslim empire that surrounds Israel, it is also made up of the Muslim nations that are condemned by the Old Testament. Indeed, this Empire, if it “will be”, would fit the mongrel beast seen by Daniel and described in Revelation.
- All these nations look to Jerusalem as a vital capital of Muslim religious life. Jerusalem, the “great city” becomes the Harlot of Babylon, the capital of the Antichrist’s Empire (Revelation 11:8; 17:18; 18:16, 18, 19, 21).
- The Eight Empire under Antichrist will be hostile and try to destroy both Christians and Jews. The Church will become a prime focus of this empire. The Muslim religion is opening antichrist, as these quotes from the Qur’an show.
 - “They blaspheme who say that Allah is the third of three.” (Qur’an 5:73)
 - “In blasphemy indeed are those that say that God is Christ, the son of Mary.” (Qur’an 5:17)
 - “The Most Gracious has begotten a son! You have uttered a gross blasphemy. It is not befitting the Most Gracious that He should beget a son.” (Qur’an 19:88-92)
 - “. . . the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. . . Allah’s curse be on them . . .” (Qur’an 9:30)
 Note: “Far be it from God that he should have a son!” encircles the inside of the Dome of the Rock Mosque, in Jerusalem.
 - Regarding the crucifixion of Christ, “That they said ‘We killed Christ Jesus, the son of Mary,

the Messenger of Allah'; but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no knowledge . . . for as surety they killed him not." (Qur'an 4:157-8)

- o "Strike off the heads of the disbelievers . . ." (Qur'an 47:4) Compare with **Revelation 20:4**, speaking of the saints martyred during the Great Tribulation, "And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

Muslims also believe a future Deliverer will come to establish a Millennial Muslim Kingdom. They call this Muslim Deliverer the "Mahdi". According to Muslim eschatology, the Mahdi will be a great religious, civic, judicial, and military leader who will unite all of Islam and will destroy or forcibly convert all Jews and Christians to Islam. Should such a leader emerge, possible from Turkey, a NATO nation allied with western powers, Israel would find herself in a untenable situation. She may be forced to yield sovereignty over part of Jerusalem, making it an "open city" for Jews, Muslims, and Christians. In exchange for this concession, perhaps with the "guarantee" of western powers, Israel might be allowed to rebuild her Temple on Mount Zion. After three and a half years, the "guarantee" will be violated and Antichrist will rule his wicked empire from Jerusalem, the Harlot of Babylon. Fortunately, it will be the empire that will compel God to intervene in order to prevent the annihilation of the saints. Thereafter, the Kingdom of God will be on earth as it is in heaven. Israel will embrace the Messiah and be restored. The lion will lie down with the lamb and there will be no more war. God will finally be victorious and His plan will have been accomplished.