

• *Fourth vision***The fourth kingdom is the Roman Empire and its successors**• *Destructive, savage & devouring*• *Many empires arose from the Roman empire*• *All modern nations - 'horns' arising out of the Roman empire***Out of the late stages of the fourth empire arises a fearful enemy against God and his people**• *'The man of sin'*• *The rise of the little horn will cause great disturbances political and social*

In his vision Daniel next sees a fourth animal.

The fourth kingdom is the Roman empire and its successors. ⁷*After that, in my visions in the night, I was still looking, and there before me was a fourth animal. It was terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the previous animals, and it had ten horns.* The fourth animal is not described as any specific animal at all. It is not a lion or bear or leopard. It has the characteristics of several savage animals. Daniel is seeing what turned out to be the Roman empire, and all its successors, even until modern times. This animal-like empire was destructive and savage. Yet it had great power as a conquering force. It had 'iron teeth' in its ability to devour the people of other countries.

Just as the 'four heads' ^{□1} of the leopard spoke of the successors of Alexander, so the 'ten horns' of the fourth animal speaks of the many empires that arose out of the Roman empire. One must remember that all civilizations today have arisen out of the Roman empire. Even the non-European powers have adopted ideas that were first pioneered by the Romans – roads, government, machinery, communications, disciplined armies and the like.

Some interpreters speak of a coming 'revived' Roman empire. But the Roman empire does not need to be 'revived'. It has really never completely ceased. Roman ways – terror, fear, power, 'iron teeth' military power, crushing and devouring victims, the trampling underfoot of peoples – have never ceased since the Romans raised them to new heights of savagery. Roman ways have remained with the entire world and still do. The fearful animal had ten horns – and they are still with us. Modern Europe arose from Rome, and the rest of the world has adopted the military empire-building ways of the west. One thinks of the way in which nuclear power was invented in the west but is now accessible to powers all over the world, and the way in which computers were invented in the west but are used by all nations. All modern nations are 'horns' arising out of the Roman empire.

Out of the late stages of the fourth empire arises a fearful enemy against God and his people. Daniel says, ⁸*I was considering these horns, and then suddenly another small horn appeared among them.* The stages in the vision refer to stages of history. So this will mean that at some stage during the 'ten horns' – the successors of the Romans – another arrogant power arises. Here is a small kingdom whose power is concentrated in its king, arising during the late stages of the world-history that Daniel is seeing in symbolic preview. We are not to look for ten specific nations. The round figure (ten) is simply a way of speaking of everything that arises from the fourth empire, the Roman empire.

Three of the first horns were uprooted before it. It had eyes like human eyes, and it had a mouth that was boasting arrogantly. Daniel 7:8 is one of the earliest mentions of the figure that Paul calls 'the man of sin'. Paul taught that the second coming of Jesus would be preceded by the arrival of a fearful enemy. 'That day will not arrive unless the rebellion comes first, and the Man of Lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition' ^{□1} 'He opposes and exalts himself over against everything called god and against every object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God' ^{□2}.

Three of the ten horns are uprooted. Interpreters find this line difficult to interpret. In some way the rise of 'the little horn' will have damaging and destructive consequences among a smallish section ('three of the first horns') of the nations that arise out of the Roman empire. What this means in exact detail, no one seems to know. It must be that the rise of the little horn will cause great disturbances political and social. More than that we cannot say.

□1 7:6

□1 2 Thess
2:3b
□2 2 Thess
2:4

- Political and religious repercussions

In the days of the fourth empire the kingdom of God would be set up over against all earthly kingdoms

- God's judgement – the fire of his holiness

- Records of everything that has taken place

- The kingdom of God will be everlastingly established

The anti-God movement that will at some point precede the second coming of Jesus will (it seems) have both political aspects and religious aspects. Daniel stresses the former; Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 stresses the latter. All one can say for sure is that in some way the rise of 'the little horn' will have some political repercussions among a section of the nations that arise out of the Roman empire. When it happens we shall be clearer as to what is precisely intended! Fulfilment is the final interpretation of prophecy!

This new power, the little horn, is clever and highly intelligent. It has 'eyes like human eyes'. It is full of arrogance and deceit.

In the days of the fourth empire the kingdom of God would be set up over against all earthly kingdoms. For the moment Daniel says no more about the late stages of the fourth kingdom – the Romans and their successors and 'the little horn'. He rather tells us of something else that he saw. He next sees a vision of the judgement of God.

⁹As I went on looking, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days – the One who has always been alive – sat on his throne. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and the wheels of his throne were all blazing with fire.

It is a judgement scene. A heavenly court is sitting in judgement. God is the judge. Others are judging with him. Presumably the ones sitting on the other thrones are the angels who will administer the judgements that are decided. God the Father is 'the Ancient of Days – the One who has always been alive'. His white clothing speaks of his stainless purity. His white hair speaks of his seniority as the most long-living Judge. His throne speaks of his sovereignty. The flaming fire tells us of his holiness that consumes all that is impure. The throne is also a chariot. It is able to move swiftly to anywhere where it is needed.

¹⁰A river of fire was flowing, coming out from his presence. Thousands upon thousands served him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court was seated in judgement, and the books were opened.

His holiness showed itself in a river of fire, flowing from the throne of God and flowing into every situation that was attracting God's attention. The angels were present in their tens of thousands. In the court's presence the books were opened. These are the records of everything that has taken place.

Daniel's vision proceeds to show him how the kingdoms of men and women will be brought to an end and the kingdom of God will be everlastingly established.



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