

28 ANCIENT ISRAEL WAS THE FOURTH KINGDOM/BEAST, NOT ROME—THEORY

Introduction: It is deeply engrained in our traditional thinking that the 4th kingdom of Daniel 2 was the Roman Empire and it is difficult to entertain any other conception. However, pertaining to Israel, Rome was not the 4th kingdom after Greece. Rather, a Jewish independent state followed directly from the Greek occupation and spanned from 142 BC to 63 BC. During this time, the kingdom of Israel reached a size comparable to the spacious Solomonic kingdom and, we believe, corresponds to the iron legs of the image. From the Roman occupation in 63 BC to AD 70, we see in Israel, the discordant iron and clay mixture in the feet of the image, that ended in the zealot take-over of the government 67 to 70 AD and the complete collapse of Old Covenant Israel. When viewed in this way, the prophecies concerning the 4th kingdom/4th beast are easily discerned as descriptive of Israel from 142 BC to 70 AD. This paper explores this theory and requires familiarity with “The Wars of the Jews” by Josephus.

1. “Its legs of iron, its feet, part of them of iron, and part of them of clay.” Dan. 2:33

Rome: Rome endured some perturbations, but was exceedingly durable and strong for centuries.

Israel: Immediately following Israel’s occupation by Greece (Seleucid), we see a completely independent Jewish state from 142 BC to 63 BC. The much expanded Israel entered into a treaty relationship with the Roman Republic, illustrating an equal “collegial” relationship. The feet mixed with clay image represented the weakening effect of the Roman occupation and Herodian rule from 63 BC to AD 70.

2. “Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away.” Dan 2:35

Rome: Rome was not broken up or dissolved during the first century.

Israel: These images describe the dissolution of the first century state of Israel.

3. “You saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron. It shall be a divided kingdom; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, because you saw the iron mixed with clay.” Dan 2:41

Rome: Rome was not divided during this time.

Israel: After the invasion of Pompey in 63 BC, the Hasmonean kingdom was divided into 5 parts (57-55 BC) and Israel was subsequently subject to Roman appointed governors and kings (clay). However, they still retained their religious independence (iron).

4. “In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed...but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” Dan. 2:44

Rome: Rome was stronger than ever in AD 70 and that strength grew steadily through the second century AD.

Israel: During the Roman-Jewish conflict, AD 67-70, all semblance of Old Covenant Israel was destroyed.

5. “The fourth animal shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be diverse from all the kingdoms.” Dan. 7:23

Rome: Rome was fairly similar to the other pagan kingdoms named.

Israel: Israel was unique because of its covenant relationship with Yahweh.

6. “As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings.” Dan. 7:24

Rome: To our knowledge, We don’t see ten of anything referenced as coming from Rome in the Jewish conflict.

Israel: Ten generals from the Jewish aristocracy, assigned to various partitions of Palestine in preparation for the war, were installed and radicalized zealots (“little horn”) killed three of them. (Wars. 2.20, 4.5, 4.6.1)

7. “ Leave out the court which is outside of the temple, and don't measure it, for it has been given to the nations. They will tread the holy city under foot for forty-two months.” Rev. 11:2

Rome: The Romans didn’t set foot in Jerusalem until the last 5 months of the conflict in AD 70.

Israel: The zealots were using the temple as a military base, plundering the city, fighting each other, burning food supplies and killing their own countrymen for the duration of the war—3 1/2 years.

8. "When they [two witnesses] have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them... and kill them...will not allow their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb...They will give gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth." Rev. 11:7-10

Rome: No matter how one interprets the two witnesses, Rome did not enter Jerusalem to kill them.

Israel: Josephus reported of two former high priests, Ananus and Jesus, who were sympathetic with the common people and attempted to reason with the zealots and finally lead a resistance movement. They were killed, denied burial, and their deaths were celebrated by the depraved murderers. (Wars: 4.5.2)

9. "I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads. On his horns were ten crowns." Rev. 13:1,2

Rome: The ten horns/crowns is a problem for the 7 emperor interpretation.

Israel: Ten generals were named to command the various territories of Palestine. The seven heads may refer to the zealot family dynasty of Hezekiah which numbered seven: #1. Hezekiah, #2. Judah of Gamla, son of Hezekiah #3. Jacob, son of Judas, #4. Simon, son of Judas #5. Jair, son of Judas #6. Eleazar son of Jair #7. Menahem, grandson of Judas. (<https://kloposmasm.files.wordpress.com/2018/01/an-overview-of-the-zealot-movement-and-12-key-leaders-by-adam-maarschalk.pdf>)

10. "One of his heads looked like it had been wounded fatally." Rev. 13:3

Rome: It is thought this is a reference to the civil wars in Rome, AD 68-69.

Israel: The potent and successful Menahem who captured Masada in AD 66, taking its arsenal and setting himself up "messiah" in kingly attire, was killed in AD 66 and hope of victory appeared lost.

11. "His fatal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled at the beast. They worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?'" Rev. 13:3-4

Rome: Some believe this is in regard to the healing of Rome from civil war under Vespasian in AD 69.

Israel: A surprising and complete rout of the Syrian Roman legion shortly after Menahem's shocking death in AD 66, emboldened the zealots, making them believe that they could actually defeat the Roman Empire. Losing only a few zealot warriors, they came back from battle "running and singing" having slain 5,680 Romans and having stolen much of the Roman weaponry and supplies. (Wars 2:19) Two new leaders emerged: Simon bar Gioras and Eleazar ben Simon and enthusiastic throngs of new recruits were added to their ranks.

12. "It was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. Authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation was given to him. 8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life..." Rev. 13:5-8

Rome: Some expositors believe this refers to the requirement of emperor worship. However, we do not see emperor worship addressed as an issue anywhere in the New Testament books.

Israel: The word "saints" (a word for old covenant people Ps 31:23) appears to refer to the great number of hapless Jews, referenced frequently by Josephus, who were caught up in the conflict and punished mercilessly if they were unenthusiastic for "the cause", tried to defect to the Romans, showed pity for the sufferings of others, or hid food. They had to "worship" the beast.

13. "I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke like a dragon." Rev. 13:11

Rome: This is thought to be the Jewish leadership urging Jews to "go along to get along" with Rome.

Israel: The zealots hired "prophets" to keep people from defecting and function as propaganda ministers maintaining the "righteousness" of the zealot cause and the deliverance they would receive. (eg. Wars 6.5.2)

14. "It was given to him [second beast] to give breath, to the image of the beast... and cause as many as wouldn't worship the image of the beast to be killed." Rev. 13:15

Rome: This is thought to be referring to emperor worship and those who refused. (See #12)

Israel: As the war wore on, all those wanting peace with Rome were killed by the zealots. (eg. Wars 4.5.3)