

DANIEL 7 AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

(Danny Hays)

One of the most interesting and controversial images in the book of Daniel is that of the "ten-horned beast." Daniel refers to this beast repeatedly (7:7- 8, 20, 24). Drawing from Daniel's imagery, John likewise mentions this "ten-horned beast" several times in the book of Revelation (12:3; 13:1; 17:3 - 16). This beast has been the subject of much speculation, especially from some popular prophecy writers who are convinced that most of the imagery used in biblical prophecy refers specifically to entities in our current day.

In searching the contemporary world for an entity that corresponds with the "ten- horned beast," several writers over the past forty years have concluded that the "ten-horned beast" of prophecy refers to the present-day European Union. Most of them arrived at this conclusion by making the following assumptions: (a) the "ten-horned beast" refers to a revived Roman Empire; (b) since the Roman Empire was largely in Europe, then Europe today must be the new embodiment of that empire; (c) the ten horns on the beast refer to nations; and (d) these must be European nations. The European Union, or EU (often referred to as the European Common Market in earlier literature) seems to fit the profile, and several popular writers are convinced that the EU is the "ten-horned beast," indicating the end times are very near. Is such an identification valid? The European Union is a peaceful alliance of European nations, joined together primarily for trade and other economic reasons. In 1973 the EU was made up of nine countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom). Thus they seemed very close to becoming a ten-nation coalition. When Greece joined the EU in 1981, the number of nations grew to ten! Now there was a ten-nation coalition of European nations, just like the ten-horned beast in Daniel and Revelation. End times writers of the 1970s and 1980s such as Hal Lindsey proclaimed rather confidently that the ten-member European Union was indeed the ten-horned beast, and that the revived Roman Empire of prophecy would soon emerge out of the EU. These startling facts, according to pop prophecy writers, proved quite clearly that the events of the end times were unfolding before our very eyes. Indeed, the end was very near!

In 1981 this argument could at least find some support in the current geopolitical situation. For many this argument was therefore quite convincing, and many people actually believed that the end-time events of Daniel and Revelation were beginning and would soon escalate. However, nothing happened and time passed. The end did not come. Two more countries (Spain and Portugal) joined the EU in 1986, bringing the number to twelve members. Over the years since then an additional fifteen countries have joined the

EU (Austria, Finland, Sweden, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Romania), bringing the membership of the EU up to 27, where it stands at the time of this writing¹. In what sense can this 27-member alliance be the fulfillment of the biblical ten-horned beast? The confident identification of the ten-horned beast with the EU has proved to be over-speculative and misleading. Perhaps some of the sensationalist writers of the 1970s and 1980s owe their readers an apology.

Not only does the number of members not match the prophetic imagery, but a close historical and geographical study of the Roman Empire also reveals numerous points of incongruity with the modern European Union. For example, quite a few of the countries currently in the EU were not part of the Roman Empire in the first century, and many of them were never part of the Roman Empire. Large



¹ Current membership in the EU is still at 27 with the departure of Great Britain and the addition of Croatia.

portions of Germany and the Netherlands fall into this category, as do Denmark, Ireland, Finland, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. In addition, several large, critical regions of the first century AD Roman Empire are not even in Europe. These regions included countries such as Egypt and Libya, which were extremely important to the Roman Empire since they provided a large percentage of the empire's food supply. Numerous other non-European countries were important regions in the Roman Empire as well (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey, although Turkey has applied for membership in the EU). Even if the ten-horned beast referred to a revived Roman Empire, in what sense should it be restricted to Europe?

In more recent years, other pop prophecy writers have abandoned the EU theory and argued that the United Nations is the fulfillment of the ten-horned beast prophecy. Again, the evidence is flimsy and the argument is based largely on sensationalism and an unfounded conviction that the end time events must betaking place in our lifetime.

