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Franco-German cooperation

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T he image seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream as recorded in Daniel 2 represents the various empires and nations that would dominate the Middle East from the time of Daniel through to the establishing of the Kingdom. The complete image also represents, however, a snapshot of the nations who will be gathered against Christ when he returns, for when the image was hit by the stone all the metals were “broken to pieces together” (v. 35). The two iron legs, originally representing the divided Roman Empire, represent at the time of the end a clear twofold division between east and west. In the east will be the Russian power, symbolised by the dragon in Revelation 16. In the west will be the European power represented by the beast.

The historic roots of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s can be traced back to the division between the eastern and western halves of the Roman Empire, a division that cut right through what became Yugoslavia. The conflict was in some ways a growing pain as the image began to stand up. Recently there has been evidence to show that the western leg of the image is consolidating.

On Wednesday 15 October 2003 the Financial Times reported the following: “Franco-German co-operation will assume a new dimension on Friday when Jacques Chirac, French president, represents Germany at a European Union summit in a display of trust between the continent’s two heavyweights.” This had been made necessary because the German chancellor Gerhard Schröder wished to go back to Berlin with his foreign minister to attend a crucial vote in the German parliament. The paper reported: “Berlin said last night that Mr Schröder would entrust the defence of Germany’s national interest to the French president.”

This level of cooperation between the two countries is unprecedented, and it shows the way that Europe is becoming united. Truly it can be said of France and Germany at present that “These have one mind”, and moreover they are pooling their resources for the European ideal, giving “their power and strength unto the beast” (Rev. 17:13).

In commenting upon this cooperation the BBC sees two things developing. Firstly, there is the goal of the two countries effectively becoming one country. Secondly, there is the aim of a united Europe as a whole. As the BBC website stated: “The BBC’s William Horsley says the breathtaking decision that Mr Chirac will speak for Germany can be seen as a logical consequence of the two governments’ pledge in January this year to move in time towards a complete union or merger of the two countries.

“It raises a host of practical questions, he says, but above all it signals to other heads of government that France and Germany are ready to act radically to build a politically united Europe”.

A “united Europe” is what is represented by the beast in Revelation 17. We are looking for the development of a great beast which will oppose the Lamb of God when he returns. The developing relationship between France and Germany at the present time shows that this beast is growing fast. At the time of Christ’s trial we read that “the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves” (Lk. 23:12). At the time of the end we once more see old enemies becoming friends as the nations unwittingly gather together for the battle against Christ at Armageddon.

The BBC described this news as “breathtaking”. We have even more reason for finding it breathtaking because we can see the way that Bible prophecy is being fulfilled. But is this our

reaction? Do we find events in the world which relate to Bible prophecy breathtaking? It is easy for us to allow the things of this life to distract us from the signs of the times. We can become like those in the parable of the sower who became choked: “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Lk. 8:14). Despite the breathtaking nature of the signs we may not see them. The words of Christ warn us of this danger: “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares” (21:34).

As the image begins to stand astride the continent of Europe we are without excuse. The signs in the earth show that the return of Christ is near. The increased Franco-German cooperation shows that the western leg of the image is consolidating.