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The territory of the 'Old Roman Empire' back in focus once again!!



Map showing recent outbreaks of the disease!

The Coronavirus outbreak appears to have started in China but it has quickly spread to Europe and seems to have centred upon those lands that once lay at the heart of the old 'Roman World'!

The 'Coronavirus Crisis' is not just a matter of public health but it is, if anything, a much more serious financial catastrophe!

Major business organisations are facing utter ruin, as are smaller 'high street' merchants.

The whole population here in the United Kingdom has been placed under restrictions utterly unknown in our history. Even during World War II, there were not such constraints placed upon the citizenry.

The elderly have been told to stay indoors and avoid contact with virtually everyone and that for

the foreseeable future.

We have never lived through such circumstances before!

What has the Bible to say about this?

Some Bible students and preachers have, for well over 150 years in recent times, been urging Christians to see that God's Word plainly indicates that the final years of this age will see events that will signal the approach of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the days of Daniel, (Daniel chapters 2, 7 and 8) God's people have been plainly told that four great empires will be featured in that territory of the world which centres upon the Mediterranean Sea and more especially, the Holy Land.

Those empires were the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian and the Roman empires. History tells the story of the rise and the fall of these empires.

However, the Word of God tells us that the final empire, the Roman Empire, will still be in existence in a form different from its days of might and power between the years BC 27 to AD 480, though it continued much longer in the eastern lands it once dominated.

That it will be in existence when the Saviour returns is clearly taught in the Bible.

In Daniel 7, the prophet is given a vision of the four world empires, all of which arise from the territory of 'the great sea', which is the Mediterranean Sea, verse 2. This emphasised again in Revelation 13:1 where we have the 'Beast', the Antichrist, revealed to us in his day of power.

Back in Daniel chapter 7, the man of God is greatly concerned to understand just what has been said about the fourth empire.

"Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; and of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;



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until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" verses 19-22.

It is to be noted that this empire will be in existence when "the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom", verse 22.

This truth is to be observed in the angel's explanation of the meaning of the vision given in verses 23-27. The verses 25 to 27 detail the last three and a half years of the Antichrist's dominion. The phrase "until a time and times and the dividing of time" is a Biblical form of stating three and a half years. That this is so, you have only to compare Revelation 13:15, where the period of the Antichrist's 'continuance' is given as forty and two months. "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months."

This truth was stated in the vision which was given to Nebuchadnezzar and which is recorded in Daniel chapter 2. The great king was totally unable recall the vision let alone understand it, and of course, neither were his 'magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans' able to explain it, especially since the king could not tell them what he had seen!

It was Daniel who was enabled by the Lord to explain it to the king.

The vision was of a great image consisting of a "head . . . of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay," verses 32-33.

This 'image' displayed the characteristics of the four great empires centred upon the 'Holy Land'. It will be noted that though one empire evolved into another three times in all, they remained in essence, One Empire in their moral character.

We are told in verses 44-45: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

Notice the phrase: "In the days of these kings." When the God of heaven sets up His kingdom, it is in the days of 'these kings'.

Now, in fact, none of these four kings or empires co-existed alongside each other. Historically and chronologically they succeeded each other. So when the Lord sets up His kingdom in the 'days of these kings' it can only mean that it was in the days of 'the kings' represented by the 'ten toes' upon the image. It is upon these ten toes/kings that 'a stone' which was 'cut out without hands, . . . smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth," Daniel 2:34-35.

The 'ten toes' mark the final manifestation of that represented by the great image and it is upon them that God sends destruction.

The 'kingdom' set up by the Lord spoken of here, and represented by the picture of 'a stone cut out without hands', is the 'kingdom' of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not however, the gospel kingdom established by the Saviour and which in its beginnings was spread abroad by the Spirit-anointed apostles.

No, that cannot be. Here is depicted a scene of judgments, of the destruction of the Gentile powers as represented by the great image. That was not Christ purpose in the gospel. "For the Son of man is not come



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to destroy men's lives, but to save them," Luke 9:56. Again, in Acts 9:15, we see that Saul of Tarsus, Paul the apostle, was ordained that he might "bear my (the Saviour's) name before the Gentiles." Furthermore, in the home of Cornelius, this truth was further endorsed. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost," Acts 10:44-45.

No, this reference cannot refer to the establishing and spreading of the gospel amongst the Gentile nations, rather it refers to that day when the Lord shall come in power and great glory at the sounding of the seventh angel. "And there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever," Revelation 11:15.

This is what is meant by the words: ". . . the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth," Daniel 2:35.

Since the events in the aftermath of World War II, when the European nations formed themselves into an economic/political alliance known as the 'Common Market', there have been many who have seen this as the beginnings of the emergence of that spoken of by the Lord in Daniel chapters 2 and 7 and elsewhere. That alliance has evolved much since that day in which was created by the Treaty of Rome of 1957. The United Kingdom, refused entry at first, was admitted in that rather fateful day in January 1973. The name has changed and now the United Kingdom is withdrawing/withdrawn! Others have also indicated that they are very unhappy with the structures and management of the 'European Community'.

However, 'the four winds of the heaven' which Daniel saw striving upon 'the great sea' (Daniel 7:3) have yet some striving still to do before that which is depicted in the vision given him fully emerges upon the European/Asian stage.

But surely there is none but will acknowledge that there is much more than a mere suggestion of the scene, which numerous faithful and godly preachers have said the vision of Daniel 2 represents, is taking place before us today in Europe!

I believe that something else should be noted. From the whispered rumours of a 'plague' in China at the end of 2019, we have moved swiftly to a state of affairs in which governments in many lands are struggling to avert utter financial chaos and collapse! Some three months or so have passed since most of us heard, for the first time, anything of that which now we hear constantly referred to in every news broadcast!

Virtually all other matters have been squeezed out!

Students of the Bible should note that fact. In His sovereign power God can very quickly 'overturn and overturn' the affairs of nations, no matter how powerful they appear to be!

So it shall be in the end times. The events prophesied in Revelation 6 through to the beginning of chapter 20 span but little over seven years. I say a 'little over seven years' for I believe that the earlier part of the scene in chapter 17, when the verse 3 states: "I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns", is a short time prior to his elevation to his full power. The 'Antichrist' is here in a place of subservience to the 'Scarlet woman'. He is carrying her. She is later destroyed by the forces of the 'Beast'. "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire," verse 16.

It is then that the 'Antichrist' will begin his seven years of evil dominance, the latter half of which will be taken up with that period known commonly as 'the great tribulation' when he will strut the stage of the territory of the old Roman World, declaring himself to be Good, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8, and directing his hatred particularly toward the Jews and those who profess the name of Christ.

Dear Christian, please consider these matters, pray over God's Word where the end times are spoken of and



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'watch' even at the Saviour has commanded us to do.

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," Matthew 24:42.

Ivan Foster.

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(The 69th anniversary of the formation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster).