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WORLD LEADERS IN THE FINAL CRISES*

BY W. W. FEREDAY

I. The Western Despot

The prophetic Word is a lamp shining in a dark place, furnishing light to those who pay heed to it. The "dark place" referred to in 2 Peter 1:19 is the world as it now is, full of learning and skill, and boastful of its enlightenment, but destitute of the knowledge of God and His holy will. The prophetic Word opens to us a glorious vista of peace and blessing under the sway of the Lord Jesus after the judgments of God have cleared the scene of all that is evil in His sight. The prophetic Word was made more sure to the three disciples who were favoured to behold the glory of their Lord on the Holy Mount. For a brief moment they saw, what millions will yet see, the Son of Man in kingdom-majesty with saints in His company (Matt. 17). The Christian who neglects the study of prophecy cannot justly be called a Bible student at all, for prophecy is the principal topic in the sacred volume, beginning with God's word to the serpent in Gen. 3:13, and running through the Scriptures in histories, types, Psalms, and direct predictions, until the consummation is reached in the Apocalypse. He who is unversed in this great department of Divine truth is but poorly equipped for service and testimony in this poor tangled world of sin and sorrow. It is sweet to be able to "look beyond the long, dark night and hail the coming day". Our communion with God is thus deepened and strengthened, for we rejoice in His thoughts and purposes concerning Christ.

Prophecy has to do with the earth, of which Israel is God's administrative centre. The Christian and the church belong to heaven. Ever since the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit has been actively gathering out sinners from all the nations to form a Body and Bride for the glorified Christ. When this work is completed, the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven, and gather us up into

* This is the first of a series of four articles (written at our request) on the general topic indicated. Mr. Fereday's sixty-odd years of wide experience in the study and teaching of the Word, specially its Prophetic books, enable him to give valuable help on these difficult subjects. And, as he says in this article, no serious student of the Bible can ignore prophecy, specially as we watch present world-happenings both in the West and in the East. Such developments are paving the way for the very "Crises" dealt with.

the glory of the Father's House. Until this takes place, the fulfilment of prophecy is at a standstill, although men in their blindness are busily preparing the platform for its fulfilment. This should be clear to all observant eyes. The intrusion of Jews into Palestine, and their general recognition as a nation; also the clamour for a union of Western European nations are the two most significant signs of our times.

As "man's day" draws to a close the will of the flesh becomes more and more defiant of God, Satan urging men on for his own purposes. His quotations from Scripture to the Lord in the wilderness suggest that he is aware of what God has written, and he must feel that his own career of mischief is nearing its end. He would therefore oppose the purposes of God to the uttermost, making use of any instruments that come to his hand. After the departure of the Holy Spirit, and the removal of the Church, human affairs will become more chaotic than ever. The struggle for world-dominion will be fierce beyond all past experience. Four principal Satanic Agents stand out clearly from the Sacred page: (1) the Head of the Western Empire; (2) the Anti-Christ; (3) the King of the North, called the Assyrian in the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah; and (4) Gog, the head of the Russian combination of States.

Nothing is more clear in Scripture than the revival of the long defunct Roman Empire. Nebuchadnezzar was shown in the vision of the great image Gentile Imperialism as a whole (Dan. 2). His own position as the despot of the surrounding nations was due to Jehovah's rejection of unfaithful Israel. Leadership in the earth has passed from them into the hands of strangers until the Second Coming of Christ. Meantime, the Chaldean king must understand that God had set him in the place of power, and that he should act as His servant (Dan. 2:38). Gentiles being no more faithful to God than Israel, power passed rapidly through various hands. Four Empires are suggested in the metals of the image. Daniel was shown the same Powers as four wild beasts coming up out of the sea (Dan. 7). It is noteworthy that he allots but one verse each to Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece, the remainder of the chapter being occupied with the doings of the fourth Empire. This sufficiently proves that this Empire has an exceptional place in the ways of God. In Dan. 7:7, the Roman Beast is described as it was in days past until we come to the last

clause, which passes over 1500 years and describes what will be true at the end. "It had ten horns". From amongst these the prophet saw an eleventh horn shoot up, blasphemous and tyrannical. Six hundred years after Daniel's day, John in Patmos beheld the same Beast rising up out of the sea (Rev. 13). What Daniel beheld was his *first* appearance; what John beheld was his *re-appearance*. After many centuries of submergence it will come up a second time, and complete its history as divinely predicted. It will be a confederation of nations under one Head. The politicians of our time advocate a Western Union in the interests of peace and security; but failing to look to God, and yielding to the urging of Satan (although unconsciously), they will set up the most cruel and wicked thing earth has ever seen. No such combination is possible without a super-man to control it; this man the Devil will supply when God is pleased to permit it. This is why the Beast out of the sea is said in Rev. 17:8 to "ascend out of the bottomless pit". To the "lake of fire" he will be banished without experiencing death and resurrection, when the King of kings comes forth in power to deal with those who usurp His Sovereign rights (Rev. 19:20). The statement in Rev. 13:7 that "power was given him over all kingdoms and tongues and nations" must not be read cursorily. It has limitations. There will be two great combinations of powers opposed to the Western; over these the Western Despot certainly will not rule. There is what some students of prophecy call "the prophetic earth" which covers all the territories embraced in the four Empires shown in Daniel 2 and 7. World-wide dominion was Divinely committed to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:38), but he was never able to make it good. The successors of Babylon (Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome) also were unable to make good the grant to the "head of gold". India and Ethiopia are expressly mentioned in Esther 1:1, as outside the range of the four great Empires. World-dominion is destined for Christ, and Daniel was shown in vision the Son of Man being invested by the Ancient of Days with the rights of the universal Kingdom (Dan. 7:13, 14).

In Rev. 17 the Beast with the ten horns is seen with the harlot Babylon riding on its back. A dark suggestion is here. The harlot represents the Papal "Church" with all that it will gather into itself in the last days. Rev. 17 shows us, therefore, the "Church" guiding the State. A period of supremacy for this awful parody (all true saints being previously removed to

heaven) is thus indicated, which may be the result of Papal cooperation in the formation of the Western Union. Ecclesiastical Rome's dread of Communism will induce her to encourage Western Union. But the great Despot and his ten kings will not endure ecclesiastical arrogance very long, hence Rev. 17:16, 17, show her stripped, plundered, and destroyed. This is the end of Popery, by far the most corrupt and cruel system which has ever disgraced the earth. Its destroyers are God's executioners, "for God has put it in their hearts to fulfil His will", although they have no sense of this themselves.

It has pleased God to give us in His Word abundance of teaching concerning the time of the end, and it is His will that all His saints shall understand, and so be able to walk intelligently and confidently in a world of difficulty and perplexity; but He would not have us over-occupied with Beasts and horns, but with Christ who is our immediate Hope. We shall see Him as the Bridegroom before the nations and their rulers see Him as King of kings, and Lord of lords. We shall be with Him as "the armies of heaven" on that great day.

It should be added that in the Roman Empire and its Head will be judged all the evil of Gentile Imperialism from the days of Nebuchadnezzar downwards. The Stone (Christ in Kingdom-power), which fell upon the feet of the image, destroyed the whole image. In Rev. 13:2, the Beast out of the sea has all the characteristics of its predecessors. It was leopard-like in form, its feet were those of a bear, and its mouth was that of a lion: Daniel 7:4-6 shows us Greece, Medo-Persia, and Babylon under these animal-figures. The last of the Divinely foreseen four World Powers will combine all the bad features of those which preceded it, and, as their final representative, is doomed to destruction.

SOUND ADVICE!

"Do your utmost to let God see that you at least are a sound workman with no need to be ashamed of the way you handle the word of the Truth".

(2 Tim. 2: 15. *Moffat's trans.*)