

THE FUTURE (8)

—H. L. Heijkoop

The Future of Western Europe*Does God reign over the Earth?*

When we read the Scriptures accurately we will notice a remarkable feature of God's dealings with the earth. We will see that in an alternating pattern God reveals Himself as God of the earth, occupying Himself directly with the government of the earth, and then He withdraws Himself as it were in the heavens as the God of the heavens while He influences the government of the earth only in an indirect manner.

In the garden of Eden we find the direct government of God. But after the fall we do not see this any longer. All is left up to the earth, to the fallen man. The generation of Cain rules. The generation of Seth is merely recorded as taking their place as successive witnesses giving expression to their faith through the names of their sons. We do not find any act of them that is intended to influence matters.

After the Flood the circumstances have changed again. God makes a covenant with the earth and gives direct instructions once more to Noah how he is to govern the earth. But when, once again, man ruins things, Noah becomes drunk, the mass of men shows its rebellion against God by building Babel, God has to scatter them and divide them into separate nations. Then we find again that God calls Abraham to walk as a stranger and to refrain from influencing the government of the land.

In Israel we see once more that God reveals His rights to this earth. He gives explicit instructions how the people ought to act. In Joshua 3:11 He adopts the Name "The Lord of all the earth" and in chapter 5:14 He Himself enters the battle as "Captain of the army of Jehovah." In 1 Chronicles 29:23 it is said that the "throne of Jehovah" is in Jerusalem.

Alas, also Israel forsook God. First God allows the ten tribes to be led into captivity because of their idolatry. Later, when not just Judah but also the descendants of David serve the idols, God gives them into the hands of their enemies in captivity. The glory of the Lord, which lived between the cherubim in the temple, leaves Jerusalem, as we can read in Ezekiel 1-11. And since the people that were closest to Him forsook Him, He gave the government to the people that had forsaken Him first, to Babel. This is clearly stated in Daniel 2:37,38.

God says to Nebuchadnezzar in verse 28 that He made known to him what should occur at the end of days. God did this through Nebuchadnezzar's well-known dream of the great image.

God gives the world Government to heathen Kings.

Nebuchadnezzar was the golden head. He had received the rule directly from the God of the heavens (v. 37). Here the idea is not the normal government as so many others had possessed before him, the government over the entire world is explicitly mentioned here. In his time and the time of the succeeding kingdoms there would not be an equal power on the earth.

The second kingdom (not the second king, v. 39) would rank lower than the Babylonian. It is portrayed by the breast and arms of silver. This kingdom did not receive its power directly from God, but was the successor of the Babylonian Empire. In chapter 5:28 etc. the name of this second kingdom is given as the Median-Persian Empire.

The third kingdom would be of copper and rule over the entire earth. Chapter 8:3-7 and 20,21 mention its name as well. It is the Greek Empire. And indeed this empire reached much beyond the boundaries of its predecessors. Alexander the Great ruled from Macedonia to the Indus and the Nile.

The fourth empire is described in great detail to show its terrible nature. It will "be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth everything, so shall it brake in pieces and bruise." The name of this empire is also mentioned in Scripture. Luke 2 tells us that there was an emperor in those days who ruled over the entire earth. The

Roman World Empire. Secular history confirms to us that those four empires followed one another just as Scripture had predicted in Daniel 2.

The Prophetic History of the Roman Empire

Although anyone acquainted with the history of the first empires would view with admiration the accuracy of God's predictions when reading the chapters 8, 10 and 11 of Daniel, we do not intend to dwell on this here, but rather restrict ourselves to the fourth empire.

The fourth empire is portrayed in the image by the legs of iron and the feet partly of iron and partly of clay. Just as the twofold character of the Median-Persian Empire was typified by the two arms attached to the breast and in chapter 7:5 by its raising up on one side, so the Roman Empire is characterized by a division, the West-Roman Empire and the East-Roman Empire.

Besides, the latter part of the Empire differs from the first part; whereas the legs were only iron, the feet are iron mixed with clay. A foreign element has come in, which according to verse 43 refers to men, it says there that they will mix with the seed of men. This, doubtless, refers to the great mass of people from North-Eastern Europe who forced themselves into the Roman Empire in the 4th and 5th century to be fused entirely with the original inhabitants.

Some details are found in the explanation that were not presented with the description of the image itself: it has toes. The latter part of the Empire will, therefore, reveal itself in the form of ten toes, although it will be one unity: the toes are connected to the feet.

The image would be destroyed by a stone cut off without hands which, after the destruction of the image, would become a large kingdom filling the entire earth. Verse 44 says that it will be a kingdom set up by the God of the heavens, never to be destroyed. This destruction of the image will occur in the days of "these kings." But who are "these kings"?

It cannot be in the time of the kings of the first three empires, since they have disappeared and have been absorbed into the Roman Empire. Consequently there must be several kings in the end time all belonging to the Roman Empire.

Here we have a strong indication that the toes, of which the previous verses speak, are a reference to kings. There is not anything else that could be an image of these kings.

Daniel 7 gives us further details. There we find the same four world empires portrayed in the four beasts. The fourth beast has again the same characteristics as the fourth kingdom in Daniel 2. "it was dreadful and terrible and exceeding strong and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the rest with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns."

The beast will be destroyed when the Ancient of days, Whose "raiment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool," will seat Himself on the throne. "His throne was flames of fire, and its wheels burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came forth from before Him; thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."

One like a son of man comes with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days. "And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion; which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

From Matthew 24:30 it is clear that this is the Lord Jesus Himself. The Lord says there Himself that He will come upon the clouds of the heavens, to take possession of His kingdom. And Revelation 1:7 says the same thing.

We see, therefore, that the Roman Empire will be destroyed by the Lord Jesus when He comes on the clouds of heaven to the earth. In that time the Roman Empire will appear with a tenfold character, whereby an allusion is made to ten kings.

This we saw in Daniel 2 and here in Daniel 7 it is confirmed, for the fourth beast has ten horns and in verse 24 we read that the ten horns are ten kings which will arise out of that kingdom.

Does the Roman Empire still exist?

No doubt this question will be raised by many, for from our history books we learn that the Roman Empire was destroyed some fifteen hundred years ago.

Many expounders of Scripture who do not keep strictly to the Word of God *alone* (those who do not let God's Word be the judge of history, but explain prophecy with history books) have looked for a way out. They are of the opinion that the eternal kingdom that would destroy the Roman Empire is to be identified with Christendom, through which the Roman Empire supposedly was annihilated.

If we read Daniel 2 and 7 carefully we will see that this idea cannot be true. In Daniel 2 the stone only becomes large *after* the image is destroyed, whereas Christendom was already large and ruling in the Roman Empire at the time it went down. Moreover, we read there that it will be destroyed after the clay has been mixed with the iron. However, the Teutonic tribes forcing their way into the Empire caused its disappearance.

Has the Lord Jesus already come on the clouds of heaven?

But (and this is more plain and therefore more forceful) who would dare to state that what is described in Daniel 7: 9-14 did already take place? The Lord Jesus has not yet come on the clouds of heaven for, according to Revelation 1:7, all eyes shall see Him. The throne of God has not yet been set for judgment and the books have as yet not been opened. And who would dare to argue that all peoples and nations and tongues serve Him? Or to maintain that all rulers honour and obey Him?

No one would dare to say that countries such as Russia, all of Asia, and Africa honour and obey Him. And who can muster the courage to state that America and western Europe honour and obey Him?

Yet verses 14 and 27 state that *all* dominions (i.e. all rulers), peoples, nations, and tongues will honour and obey Him. So all these things must yet be future. From this we can then deduct that the Roman Empire must be restored, for it must be present when the Lord Jesus returns to the earth.

How will the Roman Empire be restored?

In Revelation 13 and 17 we find the Roman Empire as well. In 13:1-2 we find, but there in reversed order, the same beasts as in Daniel 7. The Roman Empire has absorbed the other empires and John, who lives during the fourth empire, has to look back whereas Daniel looked forward.

The beast has ten horns and seven heads and on its horns ten diadems. A diadem is a sign of royalty. In chapter 17:12 it says that the ten horns represent ten kings. The seven heads are first of all an indication of the city of Rome (the city on the seven hills, cf. vs. 9 & 18), but they also refer to the seven forms of government that would successively exist (v. 10). At the time when Revelation was written the sixth form was present. Secular history teaches us that the following forms occurred: Kings, Consuls, Decipheriat, War tribunals, Dictators, Emperors. One of these forms of government would be wounded unto death according to chapter 13:3, but the deadly wound would heal. Chapter 17:8-11 says that the beast was, and is not, it shall arise out of the abyss and go into destruction. In the last part of verse 8 and in verse 10 it mentions twice again that it was, is not and shall be.

Here then is the solution of this riddle. The Roman Empire was there, is not there but will eventually rise out of the abyss and go into destruction. In its sixth form of government it received a deadly wound. Everyone thought that it would not heal. But the deadly wound will heal. Under the rule of an emperor it seemingly went down, as an imperial power it will be restored. The same head that according to chapter 13:3 received the deadly wound will be restored, but in chapter 17:10 it is called the seventh form. After this comes an eighth form which will be the final form of the Empire.

What will the Roman Empire look like?

In Daniel 2 and 7 as well as in Revelation 13 and 17 we saw that the Roman Empire will have ten kings, portrayed by the ten toes and the ten horns. Revelation 17:12 says that these ten kings have not as yet received a kingdom, but that they will receive power as kings together with the beast. The last form of the Roman Empire will therefore be one of ten kingdoms so closely linked that they will form one great powerful empire. Chapter 17:13 says: "These have one mind, and give their power and authority to the beast."

Daniel 7:8 etc. adds a few details to this. There it shows that an eleventh king will rise up who will subdue three kings and usurp their power. This eleventh horn has "Eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." "He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most high places and think to change seasons and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time" (v. 25).

Then verse 11 continues that the entire beast will be killed for what was spoken by the one horn, and verse 26 identifies him with the entire Empire. This eleventh horn is the actual authority in the restored Roman Empire, it will have the title of emperor; as we saw, the other kings will have one mind and give their power and authority to him.

What will be the Boundaries of the Restored Roman Empire?

The old Roman Empire consisted for a long time out of all western Europe, with the exception of Ireland and Scotland. Besides that, North Africa and the western part of Asia belonged to it. The eastern boundaries in large lines were: the Rhine, the Danube, and the Euphrates. However, when it finally succumbed it was no longer as extensive. All territories in Africa, Asia and virtually the entire Balkan had seceded and were joined into a separate state, the Byzantine Empire, with Byzantium (Constantinople or Istanbul) as capital and centre. In history books it is frequently referred to as the East-Roman Empire, although it was entirely separate from Rome. The so called West-Roman Empire, of which the old city of Rome was the capital and centre, was practically limited to western Europe when it was finally destroyed. Evidently, prophecy in God's Word is only concerned with the restoration of this empire to the latter extent.

We note for instance that Israel will not be a part of this restored empire, for it will enter into a covenant with it (Dan. 9:26,27). Neither will Egypt or Asia Minor form part of it, according to Daniel 11:40 and other verses. Yet all these countries belonged at one time to the Roman Empire but, as mentioned, they formed later the East-Roman Empire. Therefore we must conclude that only the West-Roman Empire will be restored.

We cannot say of course that the boundaries will become identical to the former ones but, by and large, they must contain the same countries. Germany remained Germany even after the boundary changes which followed two world wars. In the same way the Roman Empire will be restored with, perhaps, somewhat modified boundaries. But in any event countries such as: England, France, Spain and Italy will form the nucleus of it. Yes, Italy will have the lead, and the head of Italy will also be the head of these united states and will be known as Emperor.

What will be the Religious Character of this Empire?

As we might have noticed it are specifically the so-called Christian countries of western Europe that together form the Restored Roman Empire. Apparently therefore, it will, especially in the first years, have a religious character. In Revelation 17 we read that the beast is controlled by the great whore. And in the chapter dealing with name Christendom we have seen that this woman typifies Thyatira, the Roman church.

However, the Word of God shows us the true nature of the Empire. It is portrayed in the image of the beast, a creature without knowledge of God and insight in His thoughts. In chapter 17:8 it says that it rises out of the abyss and goes into destruction, and in chapter 13:2 we read that it receives its power from the dragon, the devil (ch. 12:9). "And the dragon gave to it his power, and his throne, and great authority."

It will reveal hatred to God and blasphemy. "And there was given to it a mouth, speaking great things and blasphemies ... against God to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, and those who have their tabernacle in the heaven" (Rev. 13:5,6).

Finally it will also cast off the last form of Christianity and destroy the whore that governed it (ch. 17:16). Then it will demand that all worship will be given to itself (ch. 13:12). And at the end the united power of western Europe will prepare itself to go to battle against the Lord Jesus when He comes out of heaven to establish His kingdom in glory (ch. 17:14).

Western Europe's last war

At one time the Roman Empire and the religious leadership of the world jointly murdered the Lord. "Let us kill Him (the Heir) and possess His inheritance" (Math. 21:38).

Once again the Lord will come from heaven to take possession of His kingdom. And once again the Roman Empire in conjunction with the head of the religious world, will make efforts to kill Him. Revelation 19, from verse 19 onward, gives

a description of this battle. But at that time the Son of Man does not come as "a Lamb prepared for the slaughter." Now He comes as the Word of God. "And out of His mouth goes a sharp two-edged sword, that with it He might smite the nations." "And His eyes are a flame of fire" (Rev. 19:15,12).

The mighty armies of western Europe under their able leaders will direct their weaponry against Him. But "He that dwells in the heavens will laugh, The Lord will mock them" (Ps. 2). The leaders are taken and "alive cast into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone; and the rest were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which goes out of His mouth."

That is the end of Christian western Europe. It is destroyed! Because it tries a second time to murder the Son of God.

Where will that Battle take place?

Zechariah 14 gives us the answer to that question in verses 2, 3 and 4. "And I will assemble all the nations against Jerusalem to battle." "And Jehovah will go forth and fight with those nations... and His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem towards the east."

To be cont'd

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q-1. What is wrong with the Christian who does repeatedly what he pledges not to do? How does he set about stopping it altogether?

A-1. First, let us see: does God ask you for a pledge anywhere in His Word? No! God has a good reason not to do so. You can only give a pledge if you are capable and have the strength to keep it, but in us there is no strength (Rom. 7:18). The man in Romans 7 found that out! So what is wrong? A Christian should never pledge, because God does not ask him to do so and he has no strength to keep his pledge.

To find an answer to the second part of this first question you should read Romans 8:29b to see what God has in mind for us, and 2 Corinthians 3:18 to see how God's Spirit brings it about in our lives. Later we hope to say more about this, now we commend you to God and the Word of His grace (Acts 20:32).

MORE QUESTIONS

Q-2. How does one know that he has received the Holy Spirit? (Eph. 1:13).

Q-3. Is it right for a Christian to help a fellow student during examination? (2 Co. 8:21).

The above questions came in. In the Lord's will we hope to answer them in following issues. If at all possible we will send a personal reply to those that send in questions, so that they will not have to wait too long before receiving an answer. Please pray with us that we may receive wisdom to answer always according to the mind of God.

—John van Dijk

GUIDES TO SPIRITUAL HEALTH — FOOD

—G. W. Steidl

Whoever told a baby he needs milk? As he's born, he squawks and cries and does all in his limited power to get at the source of supply. This is natural — and so fulfilling to a young mother (except at 2 a.m. after a late night).

Who needs to tell a new Christian to read the Bible? As he's born again, he begins reading it and applying it to his life. He presses more mature believers to explain it, and finds real joy in feeding upon it. This is spiritual — and so pleasing to God (at all times).

But babies and young Christians both grow up. The time comes when other things become more important than eating. A mother discovers that her baby's mouth is 95% tongue and has a built-in food ejection system. A young Christian experiences times when the Bible no longer exhilarates him more like green beans than chocolate éclairs — and finds that to continue reading it regularly requires discipline. He is shocked to find doubts arising in his mind, 'Does God really speak through this book?'

To just such people the apostle Peter wrote, "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby; if so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. 2:2-3 KJV). Remember the simple desire of the baby for milk? Ask God to give you afresh this same attitude towards His Word. Recognize that this alone will provide the necessary spiritual food for health and growth. Recall the sweet taste when you first experienced that the Lord is gracious. It is your wonderful Lord of Whom the Book speaks from cover to cover.

Good health, physically or spiritually, results from good eating habits.

Without fuss or fanfare a child graduates from milk, to pabulum, to solid foods and meat. To continue on a purely milk diet would be disastrous; on the other hand, a balanced diet does not completely eliminate the simple fare, but combines all types of food.

The problems of many Christians can be attributed to an unbalanced spiritual diet. Some never go beyond the simple milk of God's Word and remain spiritual babes. They glibly say, 'This one thing I know' and forget that God wants to teach them additional things. Others become so wrapped up in deep doctrines that they cease to enjoy the simplicity of God's salvation. Their teaching becomes clear as ice and just as cold. Still others are trying to survive on a "once-weekly Sunday morning feast" and wonder why their spiritual silhouette resembles a scarecrow.

The Bible uses several figures of speech to depict spiritual food: Milk (1 Pet. 2:2-3), Bread from heaven (Jn. 6:32), Strong meat (Heb. 5:14 KJV). The simple milk in the Gospels and many Psalms, etc., must be supplemented with the bread of solid Bible teaching and eventually the strong meat of books like Ezekiel and Revelation.

Motivated by a healthy appetite, kept in proper balance and approached with a humble attitude, our feasting upon God's Word will result in steady growth. "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever, Amen" (2 Pet. 3:18).