

THE VISIONS OF DANIEL:  
THE GREAT IMAGE AND  
THE FOUR BEASTS

THE FIVE WORLD-WIDE KINGDOMS; THE FOURTH KINGDOM OF ROME AND THE  
LITTLE HORN; AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

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## Daniel and the Empire of Babylon

In 607/606 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquered the Empire of Assyria, and became the ruler of the world. This is when the Babylonian Empire truly began its worldwide domination. Within two years, in 604 BC, Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and began to take some of the princes of Judah captive to Babylon. Daniel, and three others who are named, were among these Jewish captives (Daniel was probably in his late teens or early twenties). This important event began the 70-year captivity of the kingdom of Judah, which we shall consider later in these studies.

Daniel was then trained for three years to become one of the wise men of Babylon serving in the king's court. He remained in this position throughout the 70 years of Babylon's rule, right on through to the reigns of Cyrus and Darius, the kings of Persia and Media. These details can be found in Daniel chapter 1.

Evidently during the time of Daniel's training, in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, the king had a dream. He was so disturbed by the dream that he threw out a challenge to all his astrologers, sacred scribes and magi to tell him not only the interpretation of the dream, but the dream itself! If they didn't succeed, then they were to be dismembered and their property confiscated. Of course, this was an impossible task for them to fulfill, unless they truly had divine help - which they didn't. So eventually, in his anger, Nebuchadnezzar calls for the execution of *all* the wise men of Babylon because he rightly saw them all as charlatans. But Daniel is able to bide them some time and then, after a time of prayer with his friends, God gives him the whole dream and its interpretation in a night vision.

In this, we see the truth unfolding that,

"To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds"

(Daniel 1:17)

Daniel was clearly called to be a prophet of God, a true seer and interpreter of dreams. His calling was quite unique, and in some respects, Daniel was similar to Joseph. They both were taken prisoner and led captive to a foreign land; they both faced death because of their faith, and were divinely rescued; they both were prophets who could interpret dreams; and God placed them in positions of great authority in the world empire of their day (cf. Genesis 37-50 for the story of Joseph).

We also have the testimony of Jesus himself to heed the words of 'Daniel the prophet' (Matthew 24:15). So no matter what criticism is thrown at the book of Daniel, it is most definitely a prophetic book, as well as an historical book, and it is an important, if not essential, part of the revelation of God's prophetic plan. Of course, one can only accept this by faith.

## The Dream of the Great Image

Let us begin to look at the account of this dream in Daniel chapter 2.

"The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?" Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come (literally 'in the latter days'). Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these:

"As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries (*literally 'secrets'*) showed you what is going to happen. As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.

"You looked, O king, and there before you **stood a large statue (or great image)**—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of **pure gold**, its chest and arms of **silver**, its belly and thighs of **bronze**, its legs of **iron**, its feet partly of **iron and** partly of **baked clay**. While you were watching, a **rock** was cut out, but not by human hands ("*...a stone severs itself, that is, not by hands*" - CV). It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. **But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.**"

(Daniel 2:26-35 NIV)

So there's the dream, but before we look at the interpretation, let me point out a few things. Note that there are 5 divisions of this great Image, and from head to toe the metals deteriorate or become less in value, eventually becoming clay:

- 1) Head of **Gold**
- 2) Chest and arms of **Silver** (arms probably crossed across the chest)
- 3) Belly and thighs of **Bronze** (or Copper)
- 4) Legs of **Iron**
- 5) Feet and toes of **Iron and Clay** (mixed together)

This is suggesting, in general terms, that the kingdoms of men are going downhill in the same way as the metals become less valuable, eventually becoming as clay, a fitting symbol of humanity at its end, just when the Son of Man will return from the heavens to take over the kingdoms of this world.

Then there is the Rock or Stone that literally severs itself without the help of human hands. This Living Stone then smashes into the feet of the image and then the whole

image crumbles and becomes like chaff in the wind. It is then replaced by the Rock becoming, as the CV puts it, "...a vast mountain range..." which fills the whole earth.

Also, Daniel had told the king that these things were about 'what shall be in the latter days.' It concerns the destiny of the kingdoms of men until the time when the Kingdom of God shall come, and the times of the Messiah shall arrive.

Some believe that Jesus later referred to this whole era of time symbolised in the Statue as 'the times of the nations' (often rendered *the Times of the Gentiles* cf. Luke 21:24). This could very well be the case, which would mean that the Times of the Gentiles were fulfilled by 70 AD, as some Preterists suggest. Nevertheless, I would say that this phrase 'the Times of the Nations' is ultimately speaking of the domination of the worldly kingdoms of men over the people of God, who are the true spiritual Israel of God. This began firstly when His people were represented in the earthly Jerusalem and ancient Israel of the Old Covenant, and now secondly, as they are represented in the New Jerusalem and the 'Church' under the New Covenant.

Be that as it may, I believe that Jesus was clearly using this phrase in a more specific sense to describe the eras (or times) of the nations (or gentiles), which were to begin later in the 1st century AD *after* the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. These 'Times' will continue until the Return of Christ at the end of this age. During these eras, Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the various kingdoms and nations of men, (including an unbelieving Israel, who are no longer the true people of God outside of Jesus the Messiah), until this age ends.

"They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

(Luke 21:24 NIV)

'The times of the nations' are intimately linked to 'the Complement of the Nations' (usually rendered 'the fullness of the Gentiles') mentioned by Paul.

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

(Romans 11:25 NIV)

That is to say, in the past, there were the 'Times of the Hebrews' (or the eras of Israel), when the remnant of grace were primarily (but not solely) from the nation of Israel. This period was characterised by the era of the Old Covenant. Yet now, since the ministries of Jesus and Peter and Paul, and the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, there are the 'Times of the Nations' during which time God is calling out a people for Himself primarily from amongst all the nations to be the 'complement of the nations.' This is characterised by the New Covenant. It is evident, though, that there are at least two ways of interpreting these words.

## The Four Kingdoms of Men

Now we come to the interpretation of the dream.

"This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold."

(Daniel 2:36-38 NIV)

God had given King Nebuchadnezzar, as the greatest ruler (and representative) of the kingdom of **Babylon**, worldwide authority. Now clearly Nebuchadnezzar didn't literally exercise that authority worldwide, as we would understand this today, because there were parts of the world, for example, China and the Far East, that were not literally under the sway of Babylon, but as far as the central parts of the then-known world were concerned, his kingdom ruled the majority of civilisation. This is especially true as it relates to God's land, Israel, and its capital city, Jerusalem. This worldwide authority was also passed on to the three kingdoms that followed Babylon, particularly as they expanded their actual boundaries of rule beyond that of Babylon.

As the head of gold, God is showing us that Nebuchadnezzar's absolute authority as sole ruler and king is the divine model for ideal rule. The problem is that humans are corrupt and cannot therefore continue to rule righteously, even if they start out that way with all good intentions. Yet one day the Son of God, who *is* the Living Stone, will fulfill this role perfectly as the Son of Mankind, the ultimate King of Kings.

After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours (*the silver* - CV). Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.

(Verse 39 NIV)

As can be verified from any good history book or encyclopaedia, and it is also made clearer later in Daniel, the second kingdom, represented by the silver, was **Media/Persia**, which took over from Babylon in 537/536 BC. This invasion of Babylon by the Medes and Persians, which occurred later during the reign of Belshazzar, is recorded in Daniel chapter 5.

After this power change, Daniel continued to hold a superior position in the new kingdom of Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian (see Daniel chapter 6). I think that one of the reasons why this kingdom is said to be inferior to Babylon is because there was more than one ruler (Darius and Cyrus) and they did not have absolute authority to do as they pleased, like Nebuchadnezzar had had before them (cf. Daniel 6:15-16).

It is worth mentioning here that before the death of Nebuchadnezzar and the later fall of Babylon, this king had had to learn a hard lesson in humility. Sadly, he evidently misunderstood the dream of the great Image because some years later he erected a gold image (no doubt representing himself) and forced his subjects to worship it (cf. Daniel chapter 3). As a consequence of this, through another dream, it

was prophesied that he would go insane for a period of seven years, becoming like an animal in the wilds. This is called lycanthropy, a mental illness in which the sufferer believes him/herself to be a wild animal of some sort. Anyhow, after this humiliating experience, Nebuchadnezzar became a believer in Yahweh as the One True God and Creator of all. You can read his own account of these events in Daniel chapter 4.

Going back to the original dream, the third kingdom, represented by the bronze/copper, was **Greece**, which, under Alexander the Great, conquered the Persian Empire in 331 BC. This is also made evident later in Daniel.

Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.

(Verse 40 NIV)

The fourth kingdom is not actually named in Daniel, but it is evident that the Roman Empire cannot be ignored in this regard. **Rome** is clearly the fourth kingdom of iron that totally swallowed up all the previous empires and had the greatest sway and influence over the world. This is the only kingdom where the metal, the iron, describes its character; that of violent, brute force that smashes and dominates everything. And take note that this fourth kingdom is viewed as being the last of these kingdoms before the establishing of the stone kingdom of heaven (the fifth kingdom, if you will).

After Alexander the Great died in 323 BC, the Greek Empire was divided between his four generals. Two of these kingdoms, the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, became the most dominant of the four, particularly in relation to Judah and Jerusalem. These things are also prophesied in quite some detail later in Daniel. In the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, the power of Rome became stronger until, in about 30 BC, under Octavian, it became a world power after fully subduing Egypt.

Rome appears later in the pages of the New Testament at the First Coming of Christ, so these four kingdoms take us to the time of the end that was the First Coming of Messiah. All of these kingdoms are successive, that is, they follow one another in chronological order, yet before the fifth kingdom of the Living Stone arrives, the fourth kingdom has had to go through some changes. There is one view, known as the Historicist position, which sees this fourth kingdom of Rome as continuing on even to the present day. <sup>1</sup>

### The Fourth Kingdom and its Final Phase

Rome was never wholly taken over by another empire, but instead it has continued to rule in the form of many European kingdoms (symbolised as ten toes), and especially through the channel of the Holy Roman Catholic Empire, Christendom, and its many branches. In recent centuries, the Protestant British Empire at its height ruled a quarter of the earth, a mighty force that has shaped the modern world. The power and Latin influence of Rome is still strong today, particularly throughout the Western nations and through the domination of the Indo-European English language. Even the European Union itself is intimately bound to a treaty called the Treaty of Rome. We shall be briefly tracing some of these similarities later.

So the legs of Iron (that is, Rome) takes us to the First Advent of Christ, which could rightly be called 'the last days' and 'the time of the end' - but this fourth kingdom didn't stop there! The teaching of Jesus and Paul in the NT reveals that the last days are being *extended* due to a secret era of grace that was kept hidden in the OT. Therefore, this fourth kingdom continues until the Second Advent of Christ. We shall take a look at this in a little more detail later.

Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay (*muddy clay* - CV). As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle (*...at the end, the kingdom shall be mighty, yet part of it shall be frail* - CV). And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

(Verses 41-43 NIV)

We need to realise here that the feet and the toes at the bottom of the Image are seen as belonging to the fourth kingdom of Iron, that is, Rome, yet the feet are singled out as being in a different form of **iron mixed with clay**. This is not the fifth kingdom itself (the mountain range is the fifth kingdom set up by the Living Stone) yet it is clearly a different form of the fourth (Roman) kingdom describing how it will be **at its end**.

The mention of 'muddy' or 'miry' clay in verses 41 and 43 may indicate that this is potter's clay that has been shaped but it is still soft and pliable. This brings to mind a number of scriptures, such as Jeremiah 18:1-6 and Isaiah 45:9, which refer to man as being clay in the Potter's hands. Anyhow, whether the clay is soft or hardened it is nevertheless referring to the weakness or frailty of the kingdom at its end. Five times in this text our attention is drawn to the fact that the final form of this kingdom will be a mixture of iron and clay. Therefore it will be a composite kingdom that will also be a divided kingdom because iron does not mix with clay.

Although the legs, feet and toes are all viewed as the fourth kingdom, it clearly takes a different form *at the end*. So as far as God is concerned, the Roman Empire still continues, though it has gone through many changes. This is the reason why it isn't named in Daniel as just being the Roman Empire. It is simply called the fourth kingdom. In the book of Revelation in the NT, the name of this 'Beast' empire is given in code - as 666. The number 666 = **Roman** in Hebrew and Greek gematria! More on this later in these studies.

We must bear in mind that all four of these kingdoms played an important role in God's plan for His people, and also the land of Israel. In the same way as this Roman Empire was ruling when Christ came the first time, so shall it be ruling when He returns, yet in a different form of 'iron and clay,' that is, the feet and toes of the Image.

That is to say, this final kingdom will essentially be divided into **a succession of European Empires**, with the Western nations at its head; an outgrowth of the ancient Roman Empire. Nevertheless, according to Revelation 13, this 'Beast' Empire will be a composite Beast that will incorporate ALL the previous Eastern AND Western



kingdoms. We shall deal with that later when we look at the next vision of the Four Beasts.

We should not think of this as the feet and the toes being stretched until Christ comes, but as a prophecy of the ultimate division of the Roman Empire into various kingdoms and empires - and this condition then lasting until the end of this age. In fact, further details were revealed in the vision of the Beasts (both in Daniel and Revelation) that spoke of another kingdom (a little Horn) arising after the Roman Empire had been divided into smaller kingdoms, and this kingdom would also dominate the world for a specified period of time. As we shall see, this was fulfilled in Papal Rome. The book of Revelation fills in the rest of the details that are lacking in Daniel. In fact, the vision of Revelation helps decipher or unseal the visions of Daniel.

### What is the Iron and the Clay?

In the text above, we are basically told that this final kingdom will have the strength of iron in it as well as the weakness of clay; and that it will be a mixture, that is, it will not be truly unified as an Empire, even though it will appear so for a time. It is verse 43 that reveals what '*the strength*' and '*the weakness*' are in this kingdom. Most versions (e.g. KJV and Young's Literal Translation) base their renderings on the following, more literal, translation,

'...they will be mixing (or mingling themselves) with the seed of mankind. Yet they will not stick together, this one with that one, just as iron is not mixing with clay'  
(Daniel 2:43)

The equivalent in the NIV and others is this:

'...so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.' (NIV)

But this 'paraphrase' doesn't really tell us anything we don't already know - that the kingdom will be a mixture. It will appear united but the unity will not last. But this doesn't actually explain what the iron (the strength) and the clay (the weakness) actually represent, which is what Daniel is revealing here! The more literal rendering tells us that 'they' will become mixed with the seed of men. But who are 'they?'

We need to carefully note that in the previous verse we are introduced to the 'ten toes.' Verse 44 goes on to tell us that these toes are kings or kingdoms. (We shall see later that these ten toes are the equivalent of the 'ten horns' on the Beast in Daniel's later vision). So it would make sense to say that the iron strength of rulership, that is, 'they,' the ten kings, will become mixed with the general people of the world, that is, 'the seed of men,' the clay.

To put it another way, these divided kingdoms will have some power and strength in them (the iron) but they will also be weakened by the fact that they are composed of various nations mixed together, partially ruled by the people (i.e. democratic rule) as opposed to being an aristocracy or monarchy.

Simply put, the Roman Empire would eventually weaken and would be divided into many kingdoms (at least 10), some of them stronger than others. Now if anyone had

said in the 1st century AD that Rome, the eternal power, would fall and be divided into many smaller, primarily barbarian, kingdoms, they would've laughed at you, if not killed you for blasphemy against Rome and the Emperor! Yet it eventually happened, just as God said it would through His prophets.

There is another possible translation of the above verse, though very tentative, put forward by A. E. Knoch, which reads,

'...thus mixing *with wealth* is the *armed force of the mortal*. Yet *with wealth* it is not clinging, this one with that one, even as iron mixes not with clay.'  
(2:43 CV)

I am not convinced, though, that this translation is right in this instance. After reconsidering it, I fail to see how 'wealth' could honestly be the weakness, because wealth usually brings power, especially in relation to military might (the armed force of men). Yet if it were to read, '*...wealth* will be mixing with the seed of men...' then this also makes a lot of sense. Wealth is the power, and the seed of men is the weakness.

Wealth has always been the dominating force behind politics, government, business - in fact virtually every avenue of life. Even today, many wars, particularly involving the West and the East, are being fought over natural resources such as oil and other important commodities. This is a major driving force for the richer western nations that have a higher standard of living and therefore need a great deal more of these natural resources. It's all about money, power and control.

## A New Greco-Roman Empire

Even today, we can still see the influence of the ancient Greco-Roman Empire all around the world, particularly in the Western nations, through language, literature, the Greek and Latin branches of Christendom, in architecture, not to mention the influence of Greek and Roman mythology, which in turn was passed down from the previous Empires.

Western legislation is also based on the laws of ancient Rome. Rome was originally a democratic republic governed by the Senate, but slowly it became imperialistic under the rule of the Caesars. These traits can be seen in virtually every other empire that has arisen since the fall of ancient Rome, even down to more modern times - in the British Empire, and now a new American Empire! More will be said about these things later.

Some commentators and teachers have said that the 'ten kings' are ten Roman rulers or ten others that have arisen successively, one after the other. But the details in Daniel clearly reveal that the ten kingdoms were to be simultaneous, that is, they were to arise at the same time, ruling together at the same time in the aftermath of a divided Rome, as a result of a weakening of the fourth kingdom. The final verses of this text confirm this view.

**"In the time of those kings**, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed (*...that shall not, for the ages, come to harm - CV*), nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever (*...it shall be confirmed for the ages -*

CV). This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

"The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

(Daniel 2:44-45 NIV)

Now we are clearly told here that the ten toes of iron and clay are ten kings, and that "in the time of those kings" **the kingdom of God** will be established on the earth with power - and this fifth kingdom will not be harmed or given to another people for the ages to come. This supernatural kingdom will bring all the kingdoms of men to an end. And how will this occur? **By crushing the feet and the toes in one blow with the Living Stone from heaven, which in turn will cause the whole Image to collapse and become as dust.** This can only be prophesying the arrival of the kingdom of God in power and glory in the revealing of the Son of Man and Messiah, after which,

"The kingdom of the world became the kingdom of our Lord's and His Christ's. And He shall be reigning for the ages of the ages."

(Revelation 11:15 - CV)

This same event is being metaphorically portrayed in the vision of the Beasts as the arrival of the Son of Man and of the Ancient of Days, at which time, a judgment will take place and the beast kingdoms will be destroyed in the fire of God's justice.

## The Fifth Kingdom and the Messiah

Jesus refers to Himself as this Stone in the following text:

Jesus looked directly at them and asked, "Then what is the meaning of that which is written:

" 'The stone the builders rejected  
has become the capstone?"

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but **he on whom it falls will be crushed.**"

(Luke 20:17-18 NIV)

Peter also refers to Jesus as the Messianic Living Stone.

As you come to him, **the living Stone**—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him ... For in Scripture it says:

"See, I lay **a stone** in Zion,  
a chosen and precious cornerstone,  
and the one who trusts in him  
will never be put to shame." Now to you who believe, **this stone** is precious. But to those who do not believe,  
**"The stone** the builders rejected  
has become the capstone," and,  
**"A stone** that causes men to stumble  
and **a rock** that makes them fall."

(1 Peter 2:4-8 NIV)

Some believe, as I once did, that the fulfilment of this vision is still in the near future, when the Messianic kingdom of the heavens shall destroy all these earthly kingdoms (as all of these kingdoms have been absorbed within the final fourth kingdom of the iron and clay), terminating all of these kingdoms of the earth in one blow and ending *'the times of the nations'* for good. Then the kingdom of God will fill the whole earth as a huge mountain range in the New Creation.

In one sense, this is true, because there *is* a much greater fulfilment of these things at the Return of Christ, and this fits well within a Historicist/Amillennial framework. Some would even question (as I once did) how anyone could honestly believe that *all* of these things had already been fulfilled in the First Coming of Christ, or during the events of the 1st century, or anytime since then. One look at this sorry world will show beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Kingdom of God has not yet been fully manifested in this way, and Christ is not yet visibly ruling the kingdoms of this world for all to see. Right? Even the portion of the 'Lord's Prayer' that says "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" has not fully happened as yet. Right? Therefore, the Great Image has not yet been fully destroyed. Right?

Well, this line of reasoning appears to make good sense, but on reconsidering it all, I believe that it fails to understand the true intent of the prophecy. I believe there is good reason to accept the Preterist view of this as the primary interpretation. The vision is all about the official arrival of the kingdom of God within history, and its subsequent victory over the kingdoms of men. This spiritual kingdom of God first began at the coming of the promised Holy Spirit at the feast of Pentecost in 33 AD, and it was officially established with power and glory in 70 AD as a sign and testimony to Jesus Christ being the Messiah and Son of Man ruling from heaven.

Jesus himself had told his disciples that some of them would live to see the kingdom of God come with power, when the Son of Man comes into his kingdom (cf. Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27).

This occurred when the city of Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, which brought the Old Covenant age to an end with the full establishment of Christianity. And this spiritual kingdom continues to survive and thrive, as Jesus is ruling the universe from the spirit world through His Ecclesia or Church, as well as over the nations in general. Nevertheless, the greater, and fuller, manifestation of the kingdom is still, as yet, in the future.

Now it is true that in history the fourth kingdom of Rome still continued for another 400 years, but it is also a fact that Christianity conquered Rome well before the empire fell in 476 AD, though it could be argued that it was a somewhat 'corrupted' form of Christianity that influenced Constantine. Nevertheless, Christ's spiritual kingdom still prevails while all other kingdoms of men have fallen, and are falling, to dust! Rome was judged in the 1<sup>st</sup> century but it was just a matter of time before it fell.

Even the religion of Judaism continued in some form after 70 AD, but as far as God was concerned, Old Covenant Judaism had been superseded by New Covenant Christianity, for the Law and the Prophets had been fulfilled in Christ. The Living Stone had arrived on the world stage, hitting the great Image at its feet, causing the

whole statue to crumble. The Stone then proceeded to begin filling the whole earth like a huge mountain range.

Anyhow, to conclude this portion of our study, after giving this incredible revelation to king Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel and all the wise men of Babylon are saved from death, and Daniel is then promoted to Chief ruler of all the wise men, serving in the royal court. He also helps his friends get appointed as administrators in Babylon, and the four of them become the wisest and most knowledgeable men in the kingdom (Daniel 1:18-21; 2:48-49). This prefigures those of the Body of Christ who shall reign in the coming kingdom of God. Through it all, the God of Daniel is glorified as the Great God, the Great Revealer of Secrets...but there were more visions to come!

So let us now consider the vision of the Four Beasts, where these things were revealed in more detail, and let us see how these prophecies have been fulfilled.

### The Vision of the Four Beasts

A number of decades later, sometime after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, towards the end of Babylon's rule, in the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel himself had a dream full of visions. Here is the dream

Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great (or *vast*) sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.

"The first was like a lion (lit. *lioness*), and it had the wings of an eagle (or *vulture*). I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it.

"And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear (lit. *she-bear*). It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'

"After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard (lit. *leopardess*). And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had **four heads**, and it was given authority to rule.

"After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large **iron teeth**; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and **it had ten horns**.

"While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was **another horn**, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

"As I looked,  
"thrones were set in place,  
and the Ancient of Days (*or Transferrer of Days - CV*) took his seat.  
His clothing was as white as snow;  
the hair of his head was white like wool.

His throne was flaming with fire,  
and its wheels were all ablaze.

A river of fire was flowing,  
coming out from before him.  
Thousands upon thousands attended him;  
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.  
The court was seated,  
and the books were opened.

"Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him (*shall serve Him*). His dominion is an everlasting (*eonian*) dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed (*His kingdom shall not be confined - CV*).

(Daniel 7:2-14 NIV)

Daniel had a frightening dream where he saw **four beasts** or monstrous animals coming up from the vast sea. Some have supposed that this refers to the 'Great Sea,' the Mediterranean, but this is not the same phrase. This is the vast sea of the nations. The sea is often used in Scripture as a symbol of the mass of humanity in the form of the shifting nations and peoples (Isaiah 57:20; Revelation 17:15). Anyhow, these four kingdoms did not all arise out of the coastal areas of the Mediterranean Sea. That could only truly be said of Greece and Rome.

This vision, then, is revealing the true spirit of the four Empires of the nations that arose out of the sea of humanity. This is confirmed by the interpretation of the dream that Daniel is given.

I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise (*perish - CV*) from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it (*or safeguard it - CV*) forever—yes, for ever and ever (*unto the age--even unto the age of the ages - CV*).'

(7:16-18 NIV)

So here we have the four worldwide kingdoms that had been revealed in the previous vision of the Great Image, but whereas the Image appealed more to the pride of man in its appearance, the beasts are describing their true character. There is a principle in Scripture that every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16). In accordance with this, when God seeks to firmly establish the truth in a matter, He reveals it at least twice. This occurred with the two dreams given to Pharaoh, concerning the 7 years of plenty and the 7 years of famine, which Joseph interpreted (Genesis 41:32).

So here also we have two distinct dreams revealing the same truth. The first vision of the Statue had been given to king Nebuchadnezzar, who at the time was an unbelieving idolater (though later he did become a believer in Yahweh); and the second dream of the Beasts was given to Daniel later in a different form, yet both of these visions are establishing the same truth. When the age of this world has been fulfilled, the true people of God, (that is, the saints of the Most High; the Body/Bride of Christ; the true Ecclesia of God, the spiritual Israel of God), shall receive the kingdom under the rulership of the Messiah, and they shall reign unto the age of all ages in the New Creation.

## The Four Kingdoms Again

Let's take a brief look at these four beasts/kingdoms. They are said to 'rise from the earth,' though the CV has '*perish* from the earth' instead. Both are true, because these four kingdoms arise from the earth, that is, they are worldly, terrestrial; yet they shall also perish from the earth to be replaced by the fifth kingdom, the supernatural kingdom of the heavens; the kingdom of the Messiah. Yet it makes more sense in the words of the vision to say they 'arose out of the sea' yet they will 'perish from the earth.'

The first beast is a **lioness** with vultures' wings. The wings are scraped off and the lioness stands up like a man and the heart of a man is given to it. This is describing the **Empire of Babylon** and its mighty, predatory nature as an eagle or vulture, in which it became the greatest Empire of the world at that time. The lion represents its power and majesty. Yet within a matter of decades, its greatest ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, (who represented the head of gold in the earlier vision) was humbled under the mighty hand of God, therefore the lion was given the heart of a man. Within 70 years, the whole Empire of Babylon was judged for its wickedness and was destroyed. Its wings had been scraped off as judgment for its sin and arrogance, and it was totally humbled - going from a mighty Lion to a mere man.

The second is a **she-bear** that is risen up on one side with three ribs in her mouth, and she is told to 'eat her fill of flesh.' This is describing the **Media/Persian Empire** and its violent conquests. The bear being raised on one side represents the Persian domination under king Cyrus, which became more powerful than Media. Some commentators have taken the three ribs to be symbolic of three major powers that this Empire conquered, which would include Babylon and Egypt, but nowhere in Daniel are we given any specific interpretation of the three ribs. It would be safe to say, though, that they symbolise the general 'prey' of their enemies.

The third is a **leopardess** with *four* wings on its back and *four* heads. It is given authority to rule. This is the **Greek Empire**, particularly under its first king, Alexander the Great. It is astounding how quickly Alexander conquered the world, hence the symbol of the leopard with four wings to represent the swiftness with which he conquered - north, south, east, and west. Within a decade, he was dead, and his kingdom was divided up between four of his generals, hence the four heads. Throughout these visions, heads are a symbol of headship and authority, hence, kingdoms and their kings. As we shall soon see, **horns** are also used in this manner to represent kingdoms or governments or powers.

Further details of the Median Persian Empire, and the Greek Empire and its four-fold division, are revealed in the vision in Daniel chapter 8, which we shall be looking at in the next study; and there are even more details given in Daniel's last vision in chapter 11, but we need to take one vision at a time.

The **fourth and final beast** is almost beyond description, with monstrous *iron* teeth and great strength, pulverising and stamping upon what is left (of the animals or the world). She is different from the others and has **ten horns**. This kingdom will be characterised by violent, brute force that doesn't really show much care for others, particularly those of other races. It stamps, smashes, pulverises, crushes and devours virtually everything in its path.

This is the 'un-named' fourth kingdom of **Rome**. It is un-named because, as we have seen, **this fourth kingdom can be viewed as going beyond the ancient Roman Empire alone to encompass all that follows till the end of this age**. It is also worth noting, as mentioned earlier, that this 'Beast' is not named in the vision of Revelation either, except in cryptic form as 666. Many early Christian commentators, including Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus, and also Isaac Newton and others of the Reformation period onward, were aware that the ancient Greek and Hebrew for 'Roman' or 'Latinos' came to 666, because every letter in these languages has a numerical value. This is called Gematria.

I am sure that the reason for concealing the name of this 'Beast' kingdom in cryptic form, which only those with wisdom and spiritual insight could decipher, was to prevent the Roman Empire from becoming even more arrogant by claiming a divine right to trample the world and persecute the people of God due to these prophecies. Things were already bad enough for the early Christians, without the Roman Emperors seeking self-fulfilling prophecies and making the persecutions even worse. Also, only those with spiritual ears to hear could understand the 'Roman' aspect being applied to the Church and the prophecies of the 'little horn' antichrist kingdom of Christendom that was to come later. Many of these 'church fathers' and commentators mentioned above also believed that a Christianised Rome would arise on the world stage as an antichrist power due to their understanding of these prophecies in Daniel and Revelation – and for some of them that was before papal Rome had emerged!

Now, returning to our vision in Daniel, notice the iron teeth of this fourth Beast, recalling the Iron kingdom of the earlier vision, stamping and pulverising the earth. This Beast is different from all the others, for not only is it virtually indescribable, looking like some kind of mutant animal, but it has ten horns on its head, which recalls the ten toes of the earlier vision.

### The Ten Horns and Another Horn

Daniel is told very clearly what these ten horns represent - they are kingdoms (that is, they represent kings or rulers and their kingdoms or empires). Horns are a symbol of power and strength in Scripture.

"He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. **The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom.**'"



(7:23-24a NIV)

This is exactly in line with what was revealed in the earlier vision of the Image. And these ten kings do not rule successively, one after the other; they all rule at the same time, in the latter part of the kingdom - though, of course, these kingdoms will continue to exist in various forms through succeeding generations until the end. This is something that was unheard of in the previous Empires: a ten-fold division. Yet that is how it would be in the latter stages of the final form of this fourth kingdom. The Roman Empire would seemingly collapse and then be divided into at least ten kingdoms. This is confirmed by what follows.<sup>2</sup>

While Daniel is looking at the ten horns, *another horn* comes up amongst the others, and three of the ten horns are felled to stumps before it! This horn has the eyes of a man and a mouth declaring monstrous things, and it makes war on the saints, that is, the holy people of God. Here is the explanation of this other horn.

I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

"He gave me this explanation: '... After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting (*eonian*) kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.'

(7:20-27 NIV)

(This last sentence should read more accurately "*Their kingdom is an eonian kingdom, and all other authorities shall serve and hearken to them.*" - CV)

A simple reading of this text reveals that once this ten-fold kingdom is in place, another kingdom will arise among them. *It is not one of the ten*, but it emerges amongst them, and in some way or another, it will be different from the others. This is probably referring to the fact that it would be a religious kingdom as well as a political one. But three of the ten kingdoms will not accept the leadership of this kingdom and he therefore defeats them somehow by humiliating them. The remaining kingdoms will acknowledge him without any open resistance. This proves that the ten kingdoms are all ruling at the same time, and, if you will, an eleventh kingdom rises up to rule over them all.

It will also become clearer, when we consider Daniel 8 and the vision of the Ram and the Goat, **that these 'kingdoms,' these 'horns,' are representing governmental powers or Empires, and their successive rulers - not necessarily just one individual!**

This is evident in the prophecies of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies in Daniel 8, and its fulfillment in their successive rulers over a period of two centuries. So in reference to the Little Horn kingdom that arises amongst the 10, this is not about one individual Antichrist, but many successive rulers of this kingdom/empire who are antichrist!

Now there is a good reason as to why there are 10 toes or 10 horns representing 10 kingdoms, and there is also a good reason as to why the 'little horn' kingdom is not actually described as the 11th horn in the text. This is because the number 10 is symbolic of worldwide completeness or fullness, and on average, you can't get more than 10 toes on two feet! So this is symbolising the complete rule of man during this age as a result of the division and 'fall' of the ancient Roman Empire. Yet out of these kingdoms arises another kingdom that becomes all-powerful, with blasphemous, and devastating, consequences.

This 'Horn' (that is, the ruler(s) of this kingdom) is then described as speaking out things against God, the Supreme, aiming to set Him aside so that he can rule in His place. He will wage war against the people of God, oppressing them and wearing them out, and he will attempt to alter the stated times concerning the prophetic Scriptures, and he will also attempt to change an edict or decree, or laws. Young's Literal Translation reads "*...and it hopeth to change seasons and law.*" The 'stated times' or 'seasons,' and the 'law,' refer to the words of God and our Lord Jesus in the Scriptures.

This Horn kingdom and its ruler will attempt to set itself up in place of God's Anointed One, the Messiah (or Christ), hence, it is an antichrist kingdom. He will attempt to counterfeit the kingdom of God, and he will be given absolute worldwide authority for a specified time. He will seek to change the words of the Living God and His laws. The saints will be given into his hands for a cryptic period of time stated as **'time, times and half a time.'**

### The Mystical Time Period

This time period, stated in verse 25, is the first specific one given in Daniel. It is written as *'a season, two seasons and the dividing of a season,'* also translated as *'a time, times and half a time.'* Taken literally, this is another way of writing **'three and a half years.'** This is confirmed elsewhere in Scripture in the vision of Revelation where this time period is recorded in days, as we shall see. **This is the only prophetic time period that is recorded in the New Testament.** There isn't any mention of a final seven-year period in the NT (referred to as Daniel's 70th Week) - only this three and a half year period, IF TAKEN LITERALLY. But the fact that this prophetic time period is subsequently stated only in the highly symbolic vision of Revelation is good reason to believe that, first and foremost, this is not to be taken literally.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the other time periods revealed in Daniel *have all had a more literal fulfillment within history in relation to Israel and Jerusalem, and the Old Covenant.* Yet it can be shown that this initial time period of *time, times and half a time* can be interpreted in 3 ways - and all are correct in their own way. Briefly stated, it has had a literal fulfillment in the Roman/Jewish War in 66-70 AD. Secondly, it has had a mystical fulfillment in relation to the Antichrist kingdom in accordance with the

day/year principle, where 1260 days becomes 1260 years. And thirdly, it is ultimately symbolising the entire present age that is called 'the last days.' There will be more on this as these studies progress.

Now the prophecy in Daniel says that after this mystical time period has run its course, the Horn kingdom will be judged by God Himself and stripped of its authority, and its kingdom shall subsequently be destroyed. The Kingdom of God will then be established throughout the earth under the authority of the true King and Lord, Messiah Jesus. The saints themselves will take over the kingdoms of men and *'all other authorities shall serve and hearken to them, and the kingdom will endure indefinitely for the ages to come.'*

The culmination of this prophecy is ultimately referring to the Return of Christ at the end of this age, although it is true to say that the kingdom of God began to be established at the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in 33 AD. Nevertheless, the ultimate fulfillment of these things is still yet to come in the near future. <sup>4</sup>

But who are 'the saints' in this prophecy? Some say they are Israel, while others say they are the Church - and the Bible teaches both of these truths! It is clearly evident that in the Old Testament era the saints were the people of Israel, but the New Testament teaches that since the coming of the Holy Spirit (in 33 AD) and the subsequent blessings that have been poured out on both Jew AND Gentile, **the saints are now the Church of God, the Joint-Body of Christ, whether Jew or Gentile.**

Therefore, those who belong to the Ecclesia (or church) of Christ are one and the same as the saints of God. Numerous times in the New Testament, followers of Christ are called saints, which means *holy ones* or *sanctified ones*; those who are *set apart* for God's use. So the oppression of the saints in this vision is referring to a great affliction that would come upon the true followers of Christ - and it would last for a specified period of time. In fact, this false Antichrist kingdom was to be given exactly the same amount of time, mystically speaking, to 'minister,' as the true Messiah, Jesus, was given when He came the first time - the cryptic **three and a half years!**

Now before we consider more on this issue of the Beast kingdom, let us firstly conclude Daniel's vision.

In verses 9-14, quoted earlier, Daniel sees a heavenly judgment scene, with the One on the throne known as the *'Transferrer of Days - CV,'* commonly rendered the *'Ancient of Days.'* He alone will transfer the kingdom to His people, the Ecclesia of God, through the Messiah, Who is called the *'Son of Mankind.'* His age-abiding jurisdiction (or dominion) will not pass away, as the previous kingdoms have done, and His kingdom shall not be confined (CV) or destroyed (NIV) like the others before it, but it shall reach to the limits of the earth and beyond - even to the far reaches of the universe!

Again, take note how this Judgment is closely associated with the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, followed by the destruction of the Beast kingdom and its 10 horns.

Jesus was referring to this portion of the vision when He was on trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin. In fact, it was when He applied this prophecy to Himself that His fate was sealed before the High Priest, and they all charged Him with blasphemy, for they knew very well that He was claiming to be God's Son, the Messiah. It's interesting to note that Jesus was saying that in some way or another 'you (the Jews of his day) will see' this heavenly coronation and coming of the Son of Man. (We shall consider this subject of the Coming of the Son of Man in later studies.)

But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

"He is worthy of death," they answered.

(Matthew 26:63-66 NIV)

Daniel subsequently sees the fourth beast kingdom being destroyed in fire, but concerning the remainder of the animals, we are told that *'their authority is caused to pass away, yet a lengthening of life is granted to them till the stated time and season'* (v12 CV). In other words, these previous kingdoms will be taken over by the fourth beast, so that their *authority* passes away, but they will nevertheless become a part of the fourth kingdom until the stated time of the end. That is, what goes before becomes absorbed into what subsequently follows. The Beast kingdom, in its final form, will be composite; a mixture; an amalgamation of all the previous Empires, especially Greece (the bronze/copper) and Rome (the iron).

### The Composite Nature of the Beast: The Greco-Roman Kingdoms

Firstly, take note of the fact that, in verse 19, Daniel adds that this fourth beast had **iron** teeth and **bronze** (or copper) claws.

"Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its **iron** teeth and **bronze** claws..."

(Daniel 7:19 NIV)

If you recall, in the earlier vision of the Image, the Greek Empire was represented in the **Bronze/Copper**, and the Roman Empire was represented in the **Iron**. So this is a clear reference to the fact that this fourth Beast, particularly in its final form, will be predominantly **a Greco-Roman Empire dominated by the West**. This is confirmed and expanded in the vision of Revelation.

At this point, it would be beneficial for us to take a look at some very important texts in the book of Revelation to show the connection between that vision and this one in the book of Daniel. So let's take a brief look at Revelation 13.

And it (*the Dragon*) was standing on the sand of the sea. And I perceived a **wild beast** ascending out of the sea, having **ten horns** and seven heads, and on its horns ten diadems, and on its heads blasphemous names. And the wild beast which I perceived was **like a leopardess**, and its feet were **as a bear's**, and its mouth as the mouth of **a lion**. And the dragon gives it its power and its throne and great authority.

(Revelation 13:1-2 CV)

Now take careful note here. The Apostle John sees the Dragon (Satan) standing on the seashore, and it causes a wild beast to arise out of the sea. Like the Dragon before it (described in Rev. 12:3), this Beast also has seven heads and **ten horns**. But whereas the Dragon has monarch's crowns on its seven heads, this Beast has them on its ten horns. And on its seven heads are blasphemous names. This composite Beast resembles a **leopardess**, a **bear** and a **lion**.

Do you see it? This is the Beast of Daniel's vision in its final composite form, being a mixture or amalgamation of all the previous kingdoms, both Eastern and Western. This is representing the ancient Roman Empire, in its Western and Eastern divisions, as well as the 10-fold division of the Empire at its 'fall' into many Western and Eastern kingdoms and Empires - which still continue to the present day.<sup>5</sup>

So the first Wild Beast in Revelation 13 is symbolically describing the ancient Roman Empire and its later divisions, as well as its revival in the form of the Holy Roman Empire, and they were to be predominantly characterised by a Western Greco-Roman culture and influence. Amazingly, almost every Empire that has arisen since the 5th century AD, whether Christian or Islamic or otherwise, has predominantly sought to claim the title and authority of the Roman or Greek Empires.

It is very evident to anyone who has a basic knowledge of the history of the Roman Empire, and of the subsequent Kingdoms and Empires that followed its demise, that these prophetic visions have been fulfilled in history. The ancient Roman Empire was ultimately 'wounded to death' and seemingly died in 476 AD when Rome fell to the Barbarian hordes. It was then divided into at least 10 kingdoms (symbolising its universal division into feuding kingdoms, nations and empires).

### The Little Horn Kingdom

Yet out of this division and chaos there arose another Beast, another Horn, an empire that eventually revived the image of Imperial Rome in the form of the Holy Roman Empire, and caused the whole world to worship 'the image of the Beast' - Papal Rome. This Horn/Beast kingdom and its ruler proceeded to persecute, and trample upon, the true people of God - the Christians who wouldn't bow the knee to Papal Rome to worship the image of Imperial Rome or take its name - for a mystical period of 1260 day/years (i.e. 'time, times, and half a time').

During its rise to power, this horn kingdom of Papal Rome uprooted and subdued three other kingdoms. Some commentators and historians view the initial 10 kingdoms as the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Alamanni, Suevi, Anglo-Saxons, Heruli, Lombards and Burgundians. The exact identification of these initial

kingdoms is not absolutely necessary, for there were at least 10 divisions of the Roman Empire after its fall.

Three of these kingdoms eventually opposed the Bishop of Rome (the Pope) and his decrees. They were the Heruli, the Vandals and the Ostrogoths. These three powers were eventually defeated by Rome by the time of the Emperor Justinian in the 6th century AD. In 538 AD, the Eastern Emperor Justinian had uprooted the Ostrogoths from Rome and it was at this juncture that he established the Bishop of Rome as the "Supreme High Priest" and sole Overseer of the whole Christian Church. This is when the little Horn of Papal Rome officially began its worldwide domination - after uprooting three of the other horns first.

Yet according to Revelation 17, the 10 kingdoms of a divided Roman Empire would eventually give their power and authority to the Beast of Rome and together they would unite against the true Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, but He will ultimately defeat them. The complete domination of the Holy Roman Empire is seen in these verses - and history reveals the truth of these words.

**"And the ten horns which you perceived are ten kings who obtained no kingdom as yet, but are obtaining authority as kings one hour with the wild beast. These have one opinion, and they are giving their power and authority to the wild beast. These will be battling with the Lambkin, and the Lambkin will be conquering them, seeing that It is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with It are called and chosen and faithful."**

(Revelation 17:12-14 CV)

Yet even the treachery and revolt of the nations against the domination of Papal Rome (the Harlot riding the Beast), which led to her demise, is prophesied also in Revelation 17, but that is for another study. For further information about these prophecies in regard to the Beast and Mystery Babylon, see *Who is Secret Babylon the Great?*

Returning to the vision in Daniel, other commentators see the prophecy about the three horns being uprooted as being fulfilled in the Papacy taking over the government (or Exarchate) of Ravenna, then the kingdom of the Lombards, subsequently followed by the Roman Senate itself. This occurred much later, from 755-800 AD. At the conclusion of this era, the Papacy officially formed the Holy Roman Empire by crowning Charlemagne Emperor of the Romans, thereby making an image to the Imperial Roman Empire, and ruling with religious and political power from the Vatican in Rome. The three 'horn kingdoms' subsequently became part of the Papal states.

Either way, it is very evident that these prophecies have been fulfilled in history. From the Historicist viewpoint, I personally accept the first interpretation, because these things occurred in fairly quick succession during the 5th-6th century AD, which included the fall of Rome and the division of the Empire, followed by the rise of the Papal Rome of Christendom and its subjugation of three other kingdoms.

Subsequently, the 'fatally wounded' Roman Empire was resurrected as the Holy Roman Empire, and Papal Rome ruled 'as God' over the whole world for over 1000

years, causing all to worship the Roman image, while it persecuted and murdered millions of innocent people, including the true saints of the Living God.

As a 'Lamb-like Beast' that had the mouth of the Dragon (that is, it claimed to represent Jesus Christ, but it really represented Satan), this 'Man of Sin' seated himself in the 'Temple of God,' the true Church of God, demonstrating with great power that he is God - while, in fact, it/he is Antichrist (i.e. a replacement Christ, one who rules in His stead by usurpation). Even the history of Roman Catholicism, going right back to Constantine himself, is full of instances of false miracles, signs and wonders in the midst of lawless deception, corruption and wickedness. It even claimed the authority of God Himself, like 'fire descending from heaven in the sight of all men' (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; Revelation 13:11-18).

I need to make it abundantly clear here, though, with great emphasis, **that I am not against Roman Catholics as individuals, and I am not against every element of Catholic Christianity.** Nevertheless, the historical empire of Catholicism has a lot to answer for, and, generally speaking, it has not represented the true teachings of Jesus Christ and his people very well at all (there again, even Protestant Christianity has had its problems).

Now with the above historical facts in mind, let us consider the following texts of Scripture from Daniel and Revelation, as well as the classic (though difficult) text from Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2, taking into account the symbolism of these visions and their Divine interpretation. Also, take careful note of the mystical time period that we considered earlier, which is stated in three different ways in Revelation.

"He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time."

(Daniel 7:23-25 NIV)

And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?"

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for **forty-two months**. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names

have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

He who has an ear, let him hear.

If anyone is to go into captivity,  
into captivity he will go.

If anyone is to be killed with the sword,  
with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. **He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.** He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth.

He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

(Revelation 13:1-18 NIV)

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for (that day will not come) until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 NIV)



The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for **1,260 days**... When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for **a time, times and half a time**, out of the serpent's reach.

(Revelation 12:6, 13-14 NIV)

"But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city **for 42 months**. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy **for 1,260 days**, clothed in sackcloth."

...Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them.

(Revelation 11:2-3, 7 NIV)

### A Brief Summary So Far

At this point, I just want you to notice the main details that are given here, which all tie in with each other, as well as the cryptic time period, which is stated in three different ways:

- a) Time, times and half a time (a season, seasons and half a season)
- b) 42 Months
- c) 1260 days

These are all referring to the exact same time period of the mystical **three and a half years**. During this time, we are told that the following things will occur:

- a) There will be a great persecution and affliction of the saints of God (the Woman and her seed, the true Church)
- b) A small remnant of the Woman will be divinely kept safe during this era of persecution so that she will not be destroyed
- c) There will be a trampling of the true Holy City of the heavenly Jerusalem, who are the true Christians (as well as a trampling of the earthly Jerusalem)
- d) Worldwide authority will be given to the Beast Empire
- e) There will be worldwide worship of the Beast Kingdom through a false messiah or Christ (that is, antichrist; a false religious system)
- f) And there will be false miracles and powers to substantiate the power of this kingdom and its rulers

g) The true saints of God are also represented as Two Witnesses (or Martyrs) speaking forth the truth, who eventually triumph over the Beast kingdom with resurrection power.

ALL of these things are said to occur within this mystical three and a half year period.

### Three Levels of Truth in Rightly Dividing the Word

Before we continue with these prophecies, I would like to explain something important, so bear with me here as I digress just a little. When it comes to understanding Scripture correctly, including prophecy, we must understand that there are three levels of truth - horizontally and vertically (the shape of the cross). Firstly, horizontally, in accordance with the ages of Time, there is

- a) **was** (for example, past antichrists and the likes of Antiochus IV Epiphanes)
- b) **is** (e.g. present antichrists)
- c) **is coming** or **will be** (future antichrists)

Put another way, this is the Past, the ongoing Present, and the Future. Jesus is He 'who **was**, and **is**, and **who is coming**, the Almighty' (Revelation 1:4, 8). This is the basic meaning of the personal Hebrew name for God - Yahweh or Jehovah (will-being-was). He encompasses ALL time.

Then vertically there are also three levels of truth:

- a) the natural or earthly (for example, a literal Antichrist in history)
- b) the supernatural or heavenly (e.g. the spirit of Antichrist, ultimately Satan)
- c) the figurative or allegorical (e.g. the Antichrist within the sinful flesh of man)

These levels of truth are also represented in the 3 heavens, as well as in Body, Soul and Spirit, amongst other things. This is not the time to expound any further on these deep truths, but hopefully I will be able to do so in future writings.

Therefore, *every* aspect of prophecy can be understood on these three levels, both horizontally and vertically - and ALL ARE TRUE.

In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul says the following to his fellow-worker, Timothy:

Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth. (CV)

So what did Paul mean by the phrase 'correctly cutting the word of truth.' The KJV reads 'rightly dividing the word...' while the NIV reads 'correctly handling the word...'

The real differences between these versions are the words *cutting*, *dividing* and *handling*. So is Paul just talking about handling or using the Bible correctly, or is he

saying something else? Well, of course a teacher of the Scriptures needs to handle the Word of God correctly or rightly, but how is that to be done? This is what Paul is revealing here - the how. The answer to this is that a good teacher is to be cutting or dividing the Word correctly. That is to say, the doctrines of Scripture, the truth revealed therein, are not to be all lumped in together. There are right divisions to be made, even though the whole Bible is a unified revelation of Truth.

The Greek word translated *correctly cutting* or *rightly dividing* is *orthotomeo*. It is essentially two words put together literally meaning to correctly cut something. One of the simplest and clearest examples of this cutting or dividing is the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The Old Testament needs to be understood in light of the New Covenant that has been established in Christ. The book of Hebrews makes this point very clearly. It is in this letter to the Hebrews, which I believe was probably written by Paul, that we have a similar description of the Word of God.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

(Hebrews 4:12 NIV)

The Word of God is likened to a two-edged sword that can divide **soul** and **spirit; joints (or connections) and marrow**. The soul describes the physical senses of man, and the spirit is the invisible Divine power that gives life. The joints or connections are the outward movements of man (like bone joints), and the marrow is the hidden source that gives life to man (like the blood-filled marrow of bones). The Word of God gives the light to be able to discern the difference between the two - fleshly or spiritual - and it judges accordingly. This is the main key to understanding what it means to correctly cut the Word of Truth. Let me put it like this:

On one level, there is that which is **soulish, fleshly, carnal, earthly, worldly**.

On another level of truth there is that which is **spiritual** and **heavenly**.

Then, as I've explained above, there is the horizontal level of Time, in which God has been, and is, progressively revealing His Plan to His servants through His written Word. This Divine Plan is being worked out through various Ages, which are long periods or divisions of time (Eons); and Administrations, which are various subdivisions within the Ages, in which God is revealing His righteous principles, and His character, as Father of His household. This is especially evident in the establishing of the covenants - particularly the contrast between the Old and the New Covenants. This also requires 'correct cutting' of the Word. And all of this can only be done properly under the guidance of the Spirit of God and of Christ dwelling within.

We need to realise that, in relation to this, God is dealing with us *all* in immaturity first, while seeking to bring us to maturity as sons of God. This outworking of His Plan occurs through Time, whether it be in long time, dealing with humanity over long generations; or in shorter time, dealing with an individual's life span or a particular generation. We are drawing near to the beginning of a New Age in which the mature Sons of God, the Body/Bride of Christ, will co-rule with Christ over the

earth in immortal bodies. These are the Firstfruits of a New Humanity. I strongly believe that the remainder of humanity will eventually be brought to maturity over the final ages of time in accordance with the justice, and mercy, of God (within a figurative 'lake of fire'). This is the ultimate purpose of the kingdom of God.

Now when we apply this 'cutting' principle to God's prophetic Plan, we see that the following exists:

a) There is an Israel according to the flesh (which is as Ishmael and Esau),

And

b) There is an Israel according to the Spirit (which is as Isaac and Israel)

Also

a) There is an earthly Jerusalem (that presently is in bondage, and we should pray for the peace of this Jerusalem),

And

b) There is a heavenly Jerusalem (which is free and already at peace)

And

a) There has been an earthly Temple of God,

And

b) There is also a heavenly Temple (both celestial AND figurative)

The truth is this: that BOTH a) and b) exist on two different levels of truth. Paul makes it clear in Romans 9-11 that there is an Israel according to the flesh, and that certain prophecies can apply to them, so that many Jews will yet be grafted back into their own olive tree. Yet he also reveals that there now exists a remnant chosen by grace who are already the true spiritual, heavenly Israel of God – i.e. God's chosen people (also Galatians 3:26- 4:7, 21-31; 6:14-16). BOTH exist at the same time and are fulfilling the purposes of God.

Only the heavenly, celestial Israel, though, is the Bride and Body of Christ. These are the Sons of God, the Overcomers, who have a greater destiny than earthly Israel ever did - to rule as kings and priests over the whole earth. Yet eventually, during the ages to come, everyone and everything will be brought in to the New Creation through Christ Jesus.

Yet even now, before the coming manifestation of the Kingdom of God in its fullness, the principle given in 1 Corinthians 15:46 is in force:

**THE SOULISH FIRST THEN THE SPIRITUAL**

Hopefully, more will be said on these things as these studies progress. If we keep these spiritual principles in mind then we will avoid needless narrow dogmatism that seeks to interpret these things on ONLY ONE LEVEL! We will be able to view the truth from all angles, and to see clearly from all sides of the Mountain of Truth.

Now let us return to our subject of the Beast kingdom of the Roman Empire and its 10-fold division.

Throughout these past centuries, since the fall of ancient Rome, and right up to the present day, the '10 kingdoms' of the divided Roman Empire have continued to fight one another, causing various western and eastern Empires to emerge on the world stage, seeking to (and often to actually) rule the world as ancient Rome once did. And the remnants of these kingdoms still exist today, especially those dominated by Greco-Roman culture.

So before we consider 2 Thessalonians 2 in greater detail, let us take a very brief journey through history so that we can see a little more clearly the continuing influence of the major Empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and particularly Rome, upon the world, especially as they became embodied in the religions and empires of Christendom and Islam.

### The European Colonies, Islam, and the British Empire

The ancient Roman Empire was never actually totally conquered by another nation, as such. There are many factors that contributed to its demise, but primarily it slowly disintegrated from within due to division and corruption, and was also gradually chipped away at from without through wars with the 'Barbarian nations.' But in another sense, this Empire has continued in a different form. This change began in the Fourth Century AD, when, under the Emperor Constantine, the Roman Empire became a Christianised Empire and it began spreading its powerful influence throughout Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

Shortly after, the Empire became divided into East (based at Constantinople) and West (Papal Rome), but this only served to expand the influence of **Greece** and **Rome** throughout the world. The influence of the Greek language and culture was already predominant throughout the Empire, but now the Latin tongue was becoming more widely used, particularly by the Catholic priests. The power of the Roman Church and also the Byzantine Empire (and the Greek Orthodox Church) greatly influenced the nations of Europe and the Near East.

But during the Seventh Century, a new power emerged in the East in the form of the religion of **Islam**, based on the 'revelations' of the self-proclaimed prophet Mohammed. Immediately it began to expand its power and influence around the East, even breaking into some of the Western countries, subsequently leading to the eventual demise of the Byzantine Empire.

The Islamic Empire became one of the greatest Empires of the East, firstly through the Arab Empire and then through the Turkish Empire, dominating major parts of the world for many centuries, from the 8th century through to the 19th century AD. Its presence and influence is still strongly felt today, though sadly it is often in the form of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. Nevertheless, the Islamic nations have had a

large part to play in the history of civilisation, especially in the Middle East - and this still continues to some extent today.

As the centuries rolled by, the power and wealth of Christendom in the West continued to increase. Even with the subsequent rise of the Protestant Church during the 14th & 15th Centuries, the power of the Roman Church held sway over much of Europe. The influence of the Greek and Latin languages was becoming increasingly evident through the change in other European languages such as English, which contains many words that originated from Greek and Latin. (English is essentially a European language that has now become the predominant tongue throughout the modern world, and it is the foremost language for global communication).

Also, many prominent buildings throughout Europe and the East were being designed on the basis of Greek and Roman architecture, and the influence of Greek and Roman art and philosophy was also very evident - not to mention the religious aspect, which became a powerful influence within the new religion of Christianity.

### The Era of Explorers

It was during this later era (around the 15<sup>th</sup> Century) that certain European nations were becoming extremely powerful, such as England, France, Portugal and Spain. They began to expand their power and influence around the globe by establishing colonies in various places. The most powerful of these nations was what became **Great Britain**. At its height, the British Empire ruled from one-fifth to one quarter of the world, extending its influence to all four corners of the earth. Even the 'world clock,' known as Greenwich Mean Time, was established in London, by which all time zones are measured.

But the most significant string of events was the establishing of European colonies in North and South America. Spain and Portugal conquered most of South and Central America, which even today is known as Latin America, due to the influence of Catholicism. During this era, such famous explorers as John Cabot and Christopher Columbus made their voyages to the New World. Much of North America, particularly along the East Coast, was conquered primarily by the British and the French, although Britain eventually became the dominant Empire in these territories.

The thirteen American colonies were originally under British rule until the War of Independence or the American Revolution of 1775-1783, which subsequently resulted in the establishment of the **United States of America**. Numerous other countries were also colonised by Great Britain, including Canada, Australia, South Africa and India. Although most of these countries have since regained their independence, yet even now many of these ex-colonial nations remain within the Commonwealth of Nations, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, West Indies and India.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, partially as a result of the two World Wars, the British Empire began to wane and subsequently the USA emerged as the most powerful and richest nation on the earth, although ironically Great Britain (or the UK) has remained one of the foremost European allies of the United States. Furthermore, the whole of Europe is now attempting to unite as the **European Union**, a federation of a United States of Europe. With the 'fall' of Communism, even western Russia and

some of the former Soviet European countries are now a part of the greater Europe. This somewhat loose amalgamation of the USA and Britain, and its commonwealth allies, Canada and Australia, along with most of Europe, is bringing at least the West into an era of peace and safety on a scale never really seen before. How long this will last though, only time will tell.

Moreover, the United Nations, which has member nations from throughout the world, is seeking to unite the world (as the name suggests), so as to expand these borders of peace and safety to much of the world. Nevertheless, the UN appears to be heavily influenced (some would say controlled) by one of its initial founders, the USA, with its headquarters in New York.

## Roman Empire versus USA and the West

With all of the above in mind, let us now briefly compare some of the characteristics of the ancient Roman Empire with the USA, the UN, and its Western allies. We shall find that a surprising picture emerges, which confirms the fact that the influence and spirit of ancient Rome is still very much alive and well today!

### **Roman Empire: Military Power**

This Empire was known for its military might and the enforcing of the 'Pax Romana,' the Roman Peace, by establishing and controlling provinces (or colonies), which often included the paying of tribute to Rome as the occupying power for its protection and 'beneficent' sway over the people. Army recruits were often taken from various countries around the Empire and stationed in the provinces. Territorial expansion was often accomplished through initiating wars and attacking weaker nations. Israel (or Palestine) was an important province that was a challenge for the Roman governors to deal with. Many cities throughout the provinces became the homes of governing officials who ruled the various countries and sought to quash any sign of rebellion.

### **USA and the West**

Military might in the air, and on the land and sea, is the great boast of the US and British forces. The UN Peacekeeping Force and NATO is establishing its military presence around the world as the basis for a global Police Force. Europe is also attempting to establish its own 'reactionary' force. The USA and Britain particularly, along with the UN, has recently been enforcing its military might in the fight against 'terrorist' regimes. 'Blockades' and 'economic sanctions' are forcing certain countries to bow the knee to their power, although it is claimed that this is all done in the name of 'peace.'

The USA and Britain are especially involved with the State of Israel and the problems of 'peace' in the Middle East - and Israel's military might is also a powerful force amongst the world's armies. The establishment of a World Court provides 'governmental justice' over the nations, bringing 'inhumane dictators' to account for their crimes. But the question could be asked, 'Who judges the Western powers that preside over this court?'

### **Roman Empire: World Trade Centre**

Rome was the World Trade Centre for world commerce. It controlled much of the world's produce. There were two major currencies throughout the Empire, the Greek and Roman currencies.

### **USA and the West**

The USA is the World Trade Centre for world commerce and banking. There is also the World Bank and the Global Monetary System that aims to dominate the world through two major currencies, the US dollar and the newly established Euro, via an electronic banking system. The USA and Europe predominantly has the monopoly on technology and commerce, and is largely at the head of scientific and medical research, though some of the eastern countries, such as Japan and China, are also gaining much influence and power in these areas.

### **Roman Empire: Religious**

Religious tolerance was very much encouraged throughout the Empire, as religion was an integral part of life. Ancient 'paganism' and mythology, rooted in the 'Babylonian' mysteries, was the predominant religion. Religious holidays were also an important part of Roman life.

### **USA and the West**

Christianity in the West, particularly in its 'New Age' form in the US and Europe, has become greatly 'paganised' and religious tolerance is being greatly encouraged through a program for World Religious Unity. The Mother and Child cult of the ancient idolatrous mysteries could be said to have its greatest influence through the Roman Catholic Church, which also encourages 'ecumenical' unity. Religious holidays and ritual are an important part of life, although somewhat disguised by materialism.

### **Roman Empire: The Games**

Leisure activities were an important part of life. This included sporting events at stadiums, hippodromes, arenas and circuses, and the Greek and Roman games, and there was also drama at the theatre. These events were often accompanied by grand processions and marches, which also occurred on other important days as well. There was also an emphasis on dinner parties, and wild orgies became a regular thing as time went by. These activities helped to cement the Empire together with common, familiar pleasures, although the corruption eventually got the better of them.

### **USA and the West**

The USA and Europe leads the world in leisure activities, from Hollywood movies and television, to major sporting events in stadiums and arenas. There is also the music business, theatre and shows, parties, clubs and even orgies, where the immorality is increasing. There is also an emphasis on processions and marches at certain events and on certain holidays. Through advertising and mass expansion of business corporations and leisure activities, the world is being 'westernised,' helping



the nations to hold together through common interests. Even the Church has its own McDonalds-type 'franchises' that spreads their particular brand of 'evangelical-charismatic-rock/pop' worship services and activities worldwide.

## The Flag

Incidentally, the flag of the European Union (which is presently blue with 12 yellow five-pointed stars in a circle) is very similar to one of the original flags of the American Union, part of which had a blue background with 13 white five-pointed stars in a circle, representing the 13 colonies (known as the 'Betsy Ross' flag).

Another point of interest is that Capitol Hill in Washington DC, the seat of law and government in the USA, is named after Capitoline Hill, which is apparently the highest hill of the Seven Hills of Rome. It is the democratic system of government, represented by Capitol Hill, that rules the USA, and it has a great influence over the nations of the world in these days. It has even begun to enforce its democratic rule in some of the countries of the Middle East. Democracy, the rule of the people, had its true birth in ancient Greece and Rome where the people were originally governed by representatives in a Senate.

There is much more that could be added to this list, but these similarities are sufficient to show that the spirit of the 10-fold division of the fourth kingdom of Rome is still with us. And we must bear in mind that the USA is essentially a **European** nation, founded by white, western people having migrated from Europe.

## A Modern Reflection of the Ten Horns?

Here are a few more thoughts concerning more modern developments in the world that could have a bearing on our subject of the 10-fold kingdoms of Rome. The Group of 8 (or G8) are a very influential club and they greatly affect global government - in fact, they *are* global government! This group is composed of the leaders of the most powerful and richest nations on the planet - and they are primarily Western Democratic nations. At present, the following nations are represented by their Presidents or Prime Ministers - **USA, Canada, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Japan and Russia**. As of this writing (2006), Russia is just completing the process of becoming an official member, making it the G8.

The European Union or EU is also represented, though it is not counted among the eight nations, because the EU is made up of, at present, 25 member states. The President of the European Commission represents the executive body of the EU at every G8 summit, while the President of the European Council represents the member states (and this Presidency is on a rotation). So even now there are actually ten leaders in this group, which can be seen in recent photos of the G8 leaders at their yearly summit meetings! Nevertheless, there is already the possibility that China and India may also become members of the G8, making it officially the G10; and it is also possible that in the future the EU could be represented by only one leader, the President of the EU or the EC.

I'm not saying that the G8 will actually fulfil the 10-horned Beast prophecy, as these are just some thoughts really, besides, it is very evident that the prophecy of the 10-horned Beast has already been fulfilled in history. Nevertheless, there is no

doubt that the world and the earth, and particularly the Christian Church, are experiencing a birthing process (one is fleshly, the other is spiritual) that will speed up in these days until the Kingdom of God is established in all its fullness at Christ's Return. I would conclude from this that, in many respects, there is a reflection of prophetic cycles occurring that are a kind of mirror image of past fulfillments. These are sober, yet exciting, times.

For further information about the prophecies of Revelation in regard to the Beasts and Mystery Babylon, particularly from a Historicist viewpoint, see *Who is Secret Babylon the Great?*

## 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12: The Man of Lawlessness Unveiled

Now let's consider more closely what Paul had to say about the last days and the rise of the man of lawlessness.

"No one should be deluding you by any method, for, should not the apostasy be coming first **and the man of lawlessness be unveiled, the son of destruction, who is opposing and lifting himself up over everyone termed a god or an object of veneration, so that he is seated in the temple of God, demonstrating that he himself is God?** Do you not remember that, still being with you, I told you these things?"

(2 Thessalonians 2:3-5 CV)

"This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully...

...Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire...

...As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, **until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom...**

...He (*the horn*) will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. **The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.** But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever."

(Daniel 7:8, 11, 21-22, 25-26 NIV)

In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, in relation to the last days and the coming Day of the Lord, Paul is confirming the prophecy of Daniel chapter 7, which, as we have seen, revealed that the Roman Empire would eventually fall and become divided into many kingdoms (at least 10), after which, another kingdom would arise to dominate the world. This kingdom would persecute the saints of God, while having the pretence of doing God's work!

Paul prophesies further that this kingdom would be Christian, for its ruler would seat himself in God's Temple, the Church, and become Antichrist, that is, a man of lawlessness seeking to replace Christ and God – either in word or action or both! These things would be preceded by an Apostasy or Rebellion (a falling away) from the truth of the teachings of Jesus and His Apostles contained in the New Testament. Jesus Himself had taught that there would be a false Church masquerading as the true, with a mixture of truth and error (for example, the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds). The teaching of the Apostles expounded further into these things.

This 'man of lawlessness' would exalt himself to the place of God, with great boasting, which is the greatest of all abominations and blasphemies, seeking to change the times and laws of God, and he would seat himself in the temple of God, the Church, taking the place of Christ Himself, hence an antichrist.

Many believe that this 'temple of God' is to be taken literally as referring to a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, which, it is supposed, will be desecrated by a future antichrist. However, this popular belief is a fairly new idea, and this was not the way that most of the early church fathers and commentators interpreted this text. In addition to this, we have the clear fulfilment of these things in history; in just the same way as Daniel, Jesus, Paul and John prophesied them. Why look any further? Anyhow, Paul never uses this phrase 'temple of God' in a literal sense in any of his letters.

In the NT, the Greek word *naos*, translated *temple*, is used both of the literal temple building in Jerusalem, that is, the house of God, AND it is used figuratively of believers, both individually and corporately. Be that as it may, the wording and context of this passage strongly suggests that Paul is referring to the figurative temple of God, the Christian Church, for that is how he uses this phrase in his letters. This doesn't rule out the possibility that Paul meant the physical temple, which was still standing at the time he wrote this, but if he did mean the actual physical temple in Jerusalem, he would've been referring to Herod's temple in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

The clear teaching of the NT reveals that the physical temple that once stood in Jerusalem has now been replaced by a figurative, spiritual temple of God - the people of God in Christ Jesus. And nowhere in the NT does it state that the literal temple in Jerusalem shall be rebuilt. Any Christian who focuses on, or wishes to support, the rebuilding of the literal temple in Jerusalem is unwittingly deceived and in apostasy.

Here are some key texts that speak of the figurative temple of God. This is the temple that God now recognises.

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

(1 Corinthians 3:16-17 NIV)

What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? **For we are the temple of the living God.** As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

(2 Corinthians 6:16 NIV)

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him **the whole building** is joined together and rises to become **a holy temple in the Lord**. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

(Ephesians 2:19-22 NIV)

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

(1 Peter 2:4-5 NIV)

## The Antichrist Revealed

Now for those who wish to see the truth that the succeeding rulers of Papal Rome do actually fulfil the prophecies quoted above - of the Little Horn/Antichrist/Man of Sin seating himself in the temple of God proclaiming that he is God, etc - to the letter, here is just one quote from a medieval pope.

"All the earth is my diocese, and I am the ordinary [the one who ordains or gives authority] of all men, having the authority of the King of all kings upon subjects. I am all in all and above all, so that God Himself and I, the vicar of God, have but one consistory, and I am able to do almost all that God can do. In all that I list my will is to stand for reason, **for I am able by the law to dispense above the law, and of wrong to make justice in correcting laws and changing them** . . . .

"Wherefore, if those things that I do be said not to be done of men, but of God, what can you make me but God? Again, if prelates of the Church be called and counted of Constantine [the pope, not the emperor by that name] for gods, I then, being above prelates, seem by this reason to be above all gods.

"Wherefore, **no marvel if it be in my power to change times and times, to alter and abrogate laws, to dispense with all things, yea, with the precepts of Christ**; for where Christ biddeth Peter put up his sword, and admonishes His disciples not to use any outward force in revenging themselves, do not I, Pope Nicolas [using another past pope's decree as a precedent to prove his authority] writing to the bishops of France, exhort them to draw out their material swords? And whereas Christ was present Himself at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, do not I, Pope Martin, in my distinction, inhibit the spiritual clergy to be present at marriage feasts, and also to marry? Moreover, where Christ biddeth us lend without hope of gain, do not I, Pope Martin, give dispensation to do the same? What should I speak of murder, making it to be no murder or homicide to slay them that be excommunicated?

"Likewise against the law of nature, item against the apostles, also against the canons of the apostles, I can and do dispense; for where they in their canon command a priest for fornication to be deposed, I through the authority of

Sylvester, do alter the rigour of their constitution, considering the minds and bodies also of men to be weaker than they were then" (Guinness, pp. 30, 31).

(Taken from *The Seven Churches* by Dr Stephen Jones pp. 51-52)

(For further evidence of these things, there are a few external links in the section *The Great Prophetic Plan Revealed* that provide further documentary evidence of Papal Decrees, etc.)

Let us consider this interpretation in light of Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2.

## The Apostasy

If we understand Paul to mean here that the 'Day of the Lord' is the Second Advent of Christ [rather than the Day of Jerusalem's judgment in the 1<sup>st</sup> century cf. note 6 below], then he was revealing that there were two things that needed to occur before that Day could arrive.

"Now we are asking you, brethren, for the sake of the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to Him, that you be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be alarmed, either through spirit, or through word, or through an epistle as through us, as **that the Day of the Lord is present**. No one should be deluding you by any method, for, should not the apostasy be coming first **and the man of lawlessness be unveiled...**"

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 CV)

Notice, firstly, that this has to do with 'the presence (or coming) of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling (or gathering) to Him.' Paul had already given details about the resurrection and gathering together of the saints at Christ's return in his first letter to them (1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:11). He had also made it clear that this 'coming' was one and the same as 'the Day of the Lord.' He confirms this in the above text.

These believers had been told, through various means, that 'the Day of the Lord is present' and Paul was concerned for them because they were obviously extremely alarmed and troubled by this for one reason or another, evidently thinking that they'd missed out on something. So Paul clearly tells them "DON'T LET ANYONE DELUDE YOU BY ANY METHOD!"

Jesus had already warned His followers that false teachers, false christs, and false prophets would arise proclaiming that the Messiah or Christ had come, but they were not to believe them or go running after them! For when the Day of the Lord comes, there will be no mistaking it!

"For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.

So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' **do not believe it**. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."

(Matthew 24:24-27 NIV)

So Paul was just confirming Jesus' own words. And it must be noted here that there isn't any mention of a 'secret Rapture' (along the lines of the more recent popular theory of Dispensationalism) in connection with the Day of the Lord. The last thing that this supernatural transformation and gathering of believers is going to be is a secret! The great Resurrection Day is part of the ultimate Day of the Lord itself - the resurrection and transformation at the last day! It is not a separate event that occurs sometime earlier, in secret!

Then Paul clearly reveals that the Day of the Lord will not arrive until these two things occur first:

1) The apostasy,

And

2) The revealing of the man of lawlessness

The Greek word translated 'apostasy' here is *apostasia*. It means to depart from something; to leave; to fall away. Some versions translate it as *rebellion* or *falling away*. It is used in Acts 21:21 where Paul is accused of teaching the Jews 'apostasy from Moses.' So it clearly refers to a religious departure from that which was once held as truth, and in both cases it carries the negative thought of rebellion from revealed truth. It could also carry the meaning of a political rebellion as well as a religious one.

In the above text, Paul calls it THE Apostasy as he uses the definite article. So not only is 'the secret power of lawlessness already working' (2 Thess. 2:7), which means that there was already apostasy in the Church in the 1st century for Paul to say this, yet, nevertheless, it would continue to grow into THE APOSTASY of the last days.

Now you can't 'fall away' or 'depart' from something unless you were already there, so Paul was saying that Christendom or the Church at large will fall away from the truth of the New Testament in some form or another, and this would ultimately pave the way for the unveiling or revealing of the Man of Sin, the Antichrist - who would actually become the sole ruler of the Church!

All of this would occur through much deception and seduction, for this apostasy is caused by a subtle, counterfeit spirit, a secret power that is spiritual and religious in nature. This secret power likes to appear as though it is the truth, as though it were a lamb, just as Satan's servants are transfigured into ministers of righteousness, and Satan himself can appear as an angel of light (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15) - but the reality before God is that it is a dragon, a wolf in sheep's clothing, a dark sinister force that ensnares people, seeking to counterfeit the true God and His Son.

In virtually every apostolic letter in the New Testament there are prophetic references to, and warnings of, this growing apostasy. All of these prophetic details were evidently fulfilled in the Christian Gnostic movements of the early centuries, as well as in the later rise of the Roman Catholic Church, which became the Empire of

Christendom. So the Apostasy has already occurred - and it is still with us in many forms today!

Lawlessness is sin; that which is not in accord with God's righteousness and truth. It follows the laws and traditions of men instead of Christ. It is a religious spirit that covers up the truth in a very clever, seductive manner. In light of this, these words of Jesus are very revealing and, indeed, very shocking.

"Not everyone saying to Me 'Lord! Lord!' will be entering into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who is doing the will of My Father Who is in the heavens. **Many** will be declaring to Me in that day, 'Lord! Lord! Was it not in Your name that we prophesy, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name do many powerful deeds?' And then shall I be avowing to them that 'I never knew you! Depart from Me, workers of lawlessness!'

(Matthew 7:21-23 CV)

These words of Jesus always amaze me when I read them or think of them. The 'many' whom He is talking about are Christians - MANY CHRISTIANS (i.e. the majority) - who call Him 'Lord.' They have prophesied, done miracles and cast out demons in His name, yet when they are judged HE WILL CALL THEM 'WORKERS OF LAWLESSNESS!' They have ultimately followed the spirit of the Man of Lawlessness in one form or another instead of Christ! They have not done the will of the Father (although they blindly thought they had), and therefore they will not enter the kingdom and receive age-abiding life. These are really sobering words!

## Constantine, and False Signs and Wonders

Now continuing with Paul concerning the man of lawlessness,

"...whose presence is in accord with the operation of Satan, **with all power and signs and false miracles and with every seduction of injustice among those who are perishing**, because they do not receive the love of the truth for their salvation. And therefore God will be sending them an operation of deception (*or strong delusion*), for them to believe the falsehood, that all may be judged who do not believe the truth, but delight in injustice."

(Verses 9-12 CV)

Now take careful note here of what Paul is saying. He says that the working of Satan will be *manifested* or *unveiled* or *revealed* (Greek: *apokalupto*) through the *presence* (Greek: *parousia*) of this Man of Lawlessness (or Sin). He uses the same Greek words that are used of the **Unveiling** and **Presence** of Christ Jesus at His Return. He also uses the same Greek terms for 'power,' 'signs' and 'miracles' that are 'demonstrated' by God through Christ, yet here they are attributed to Satan.

He says that God will send a powerful delusion in the form of the Man of Sin whereby the power and seduction of Satan will operate over the mass of mankind so that they 'will worship the Beast' (in the words of Revelation). They will be given darkness and lies, because they refuse to love the truth and be saved, and instead they will delight in unrighteous behaviour. Paul reveals that the reason for this great delusion is to cause a separation between those who accept the truth and those who

do not, between those who are genuine (the Wheat) and those who are false (the Darnel or Weeds). Those who are impostors will be judged accordingly.

At the end of the prophesied era, the lawless one will be defeated by the power of Christ's words, and he will finally be destroyed at the coming of Christ.

"...whom the Lord Jesus will despatch with the spirit of His mouth and will discard by the advent of His presence..."

(2 Thessalonians 2:8 CV)

From the Historicist viewpoint, I believe it is evident that this Apostasy truly began when the Roman ruler Constantine had a 'vision' that led to his victory at the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 AD. This victory made him the Roman Emperor of the Western Empire, and it also led to his conversion to Christianity. In the following year, 313, Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, known as The Act of Toleration, which officially stopped the persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire, which had been Rome's official policy up to that time. This led to a new era of Christian freedom that changed the course of history - and it also led to the Apostasy and the emergence of the Man of Sin seating himself in the Temple of God.

Constantine's actions are not to be under-estimated in history. He went on to unite the fractured Roman Empire to become the sole Emperor of the Roman Empire in 324 AD. In the following year, 325, the famous Church Council of Nicaea took place under Constantine's leadership, and he later moved the seat of the Empire to Byzantium in the East, which he renamed Constantinople. This act then opened the way for the Bishop of Rome to begin his rise to power as the Pope. By 380 AD, Emperor Theodosius had made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, prohibiting paganism in the process, although, ironically, the new Christianity was already a mixture of 'Babylonian' paganism couched in Christian terminology!

As a fulfilment of Paul's words, Constantine was very familiar with 'visions, signs and miracles' that he regularly received from his heavenly advisors. This caused him to view himself as a new Moses, as one who was divinely called to be on the same level as the Apostles of Christ. The Church historian, Eusebius, confirms this.

The late Dr Ernest L Martin wrote,

"...Constantine had not only conquered all secular opposition to his rule...he had effectively taken over control of the Christian Church as well. With his visions, dreams and signs Constantine positioned himself within the Christian community as the overall 'bishop'...(he) established...what became known as *Caesaro-papism* (Caesar is Pope)..."

...In effect, what Constantine established in the fourth century was a politico-religious empire based on philosophical and theological principles that were completely contrary to the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures and the early teachings dispensed by the original apostles. This is what Eusebius was able to observe without the slightest difficulty and why he explained this fact in his *Oration of Eusebius*...(he) told...what the real character of Constantine was like and that he was actually being motivated by the spirit of divination."

(From *Secrets of Golgotha* pp 235-236).



Due to the subsequent fall of the Western Empire by 476 AD, the Bishop of Rome proceeded to fill this power vacuum, and by 538 AD, the Eastern Emperor Justinian had uprooted the Ostrogoths from Rome and had established the Bishop of Rome as the "Supreme High Priest" and sole Overseer of the whole Christian Church. The whole history of Christendom since that time has been full of examples of deception, corruption and lawlessness, along with "**...all power and signs and false miracles and with every seduction of injustice...**" Its history is largely one of a 'dragon masquerading as a lamb' (cf. Revelation 13:11-18).

## The Antichrist

Now let's briefly look at the term '**the Antichrist.**' The apostle John uses this word in two of his letters. In the following verses he states that the antichrist is coming (with the definite article), although he also confirms that even in the 1st century there were already many antichrists.

Dear children, this is the last hour; and **as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come.** This is how we know it is the last hour... Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

(1 John 2:18, 22-23 NIV)

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

(1 John 4:1-3 NIV)

Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. **Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.**

(2 John 7 NIV)

The Greek word *antichristos* means 'instead-of anointed.' It refers to someone who attempts to *replace* the true Messiah or Christ, and is therefore a false Messiah or Anointed One. It carries the thought of a usurper, rather than one who is openly against God, although a Christ-usurper is ultimately against the true Christ. There are many antichrists in these last days, and there were many antichrists in the 1st century, and at the time John wrote these words, **there was still the coming of the ultimate Antichrist**, of whom Jesus, John, Paul and Daniel had spoken.

John was only confirming Jesus' words.

"Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many...and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people...At that time if anyone says to you,

'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For **false Christs** and **false prophets** will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time."

(Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 23-25 NIV)

Many of these things were fulfilled in the 1st century AD, particularly leading up to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, and according to the Jewish historian, Josephus, there were false prophets and false messiahs, as well as '*great signs and miracles*' that took place before the destruction of the temple. We shall look at these things in more detail in the studies on the Olivet Discourse.

Jesus was evidently referring to these false prophets and messiahs, whom many of the Jews would accept, when He said to the Jewish leaders of His day,

I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, **you will accept him**.

(John 5:43 NIV)

There is not a contradiction here with what Jesus said in Matthew 24 above. Those who are false prophets and false anointed ones ultimately come in their own name because they have not truly been sent by God; yet they also use the name of the Messiah, God's Son, to falsely proclaim their lies. That is, there are many who pretend to be 'anointed sons of God' or 'little Christ's' but they are, in fact, impostors. Only the Lord knows those who truly belong to Him - these are truly His little flock who bear the fruit of the Spirit and seek to walk in truth.

Numerous antichrists have continued to plague mankind up to the present day, resulting in the deception of many. John describes **the antichrist spirit** as that which denies that the historical Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah and Son of God, come in the flesh as a human being, and therefore this worldly spirit of deception denies the truth of the Father and His Son. Yet notice that it is a RELIGIOUS SPIRIT that seeks to replace the true Anointed One of God. The truth is, most Religions and Faiths, according to this definition, are antichrists!

And even though the Popes of Rome have claimed to represent God and His Son, Jesus Christ, as well as claiming to represent the true Christian Church and the kingdom of God on earth, they are, in fact, by their actions and statements, continually denying God and the true place of Jesus. The Pope of Christendom is, in fact, a Usurper-Christ - hence, the Antichrist. This was particularly true in the past, yet even the more modern popes still claim the same divine titles and position. The branches of the papal tree are still nourished by the same roots.

This interpretation of the Man of Lawlessness, the Antichrist, and the second Beast is how numerous Christian believers and Church fathers of the past have viewed these things - from Irenaeus to Jerome, and by many of the Reformers - and numerous thousands were tortured and murdered for taking their stand against this Antichrist Beast of Rome. May we never forget these things, for her sins are piled up to heaven, and she will receive the just judgments of God when the true Christ returns.

For further study of these things, see *The Great Deception* and *The True Revival versus The Apostasy*.

## The Restrainer

Do you not remember that, still being with you, I told you these things? And now you are aware what is detaining, for him to be unveiled in his own era. For the secret of lawlessness is already operating. **Only when the present detainer may be coming to be out of the midst, then will be unveiled the lawless one** (whom the Lord Jesus will despatch with the spirit of His mouth and will discard by the advent of His presence)...

(2 Thessalonians 2:5-8 CV)

Now as we come to the end of this study, you may be asking, "What about the Restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2?" For many years, I was influenced by the popular interpretation of dispensational Futurism that says that the Restrainer (or Detainer; that is, something that holds back) in the above text is the Holy Spirit, which will subsequently depart at the Pre-Tribulation Rapture allowing the Antichrist to be revealed. The truth of the matter, I believe, is far simpler, though, without having to resort to fanciful interpretations.

We must remember that Paul was revealing truth that was in perfect alignment with the prophecy of Daniel 7, as we have seen, as well as running parallel to the Olivet Discourse of Jesus. He knew that the Thessalonian believers were well aware of what was holding back the revealing or unveiling of the Man of Lawlessness, because he had previously told them so when he was with them! He then goes on to deliberately hide the identity of this Restrainer for good reason. The Restrainer was the pagan Roman Empire!

In accordance with Daniel 7, Paul was describing this restraining force as something and someone preventing the revealing of the little Horn kingdom (papal Rome) and the Man of Lawlessness. As long as the pagan Roman Empire and its Caesar (the fourth Beast kingdom) was dominating the world, the little Horn kingdom of the false religious 'Christian' Empire of papal Rome and its ruler could not emerge on the world stage!

The secret power of lawlessness was already operating in the 1st century Church through various false teachers and prophets and 'antichrists,' but this false religious power could not come to full fruition in the Man of Sin seating himself in the temple of God, the Church, until the pagan Roman Empire had been divided into at least ten smaller kingdoms. Then the horn kingdom of papal Rome could be fully revealed.

**"Only when the present detainer may be coming to be out of the midst, then will be unveiled the lawless one"**

The wording "coming to be out of the midst" is describing a gradual process rather than an immediate withdrawal. And this is precisely what happened in history! The time came when this process occurred, and the restraining force of pagan Rome fell - and the Man of Lawlessness and his kingdom, the Rome of Christendom, was unveiled to the whole world. Many of the Church fathers, including those in the early centuries, as well as most of the Reformers, viewed these prophecies in just this way

- and history has proved the correctness of this interpretation, and above all, it proves that the Bible can be trusted when handled correctly, for it is the written Word of the living God!

Adam Clarke in his renowned Commentary also puts forward this interpretation and he lists a number of church fathers that believed that the Roman Empire was the Restrainer. His Commentary is available online. <sup>7</sup>

Now the reason why Paul was inspired not to mention Rome in this letter is quite obvious given the historical context. If he had done so, he would've been accused of rousing a revolt against Caesar, and this would've resulted in even more persecution for the Christians, and an even earlier death for Paul. So with the wisdom of God, he refrained from revealing this 'restrainer' openly.

And if he had meant to say that the Holy Spirit was the Restrainer, then why didn't he just say so! There isn't any good reason whatsoever as to why Paul wouldn't have said so plainly.

Hence, there is a strong case to believe that all of these things have already been fulfilled in history - apart from the details of the ultimate Day of the Lord, the Return of Jesus Christ, known as the Second Advent. That Day is evidently very near now!

As you may have realised already, the details of the First Coming of Christ concerning his death have been overlooked so far in these two visions in Daniel, because His coming as the Lamb of God was not the focus of these prophecies. The Sacrifice of Christ, and the details surrounding His First Coming, is the subject of the amazing prophecy of the Seventy Sevens in Daniel chapter 9, which we shall be looking at in a later study. Most of the prophetic visions in the book of Daniel have to do with the subject of the kingdoms of men and the nation of Israel leading up to the establishing of the kingdom of God in power at the coming of the Son of Man, the arrival of the Anointed Prince. So far, there hasn't been any mention of the Messiah's death, only his awesome victory over the kingdoms of men.

### A Few Facts about The Messiah and His Mission

Before we close this particular study, which is laying a foundation for the studies that follow, I just want to briefly give an outline of what the Hebrew prophets revealed in the Old Testament about the Messiah and His mission. This will help us to grasp the subject of prophecy a little easier and to understand the bigger picture. This is particularly for those who are not too familiar with the prophecies about the Messiah. The following is basically the message of the Gospel, the Good News about Christ, and an overview of God's plan, through Him, for this earth and for all mankind.

Through the writings of the prophets, a picture emerges of a Messiah/Saviour figure who would become the King of Israel. In fact, throughout the Old Testament there are numerous prophecies that give specific details of the Messiah's birth, His character, His mission, His death, and most importantly of all, His resurrection to immortality! One of the main reasons for revealing all of these details ahead of time was so that when the Messiah finally appears, He can be identified beyond any doubt. And as we shall see in further studies, a timetable for the Messiah's coming

was revealed through the prophet Daniel. **So there shouldn't be any doubt as to the identity of the Messiah.**

One very important fact is that He would be an Israelite, of the tribe of Judah, of the house of King David. But when these details are pieced together, there appears to be two contradictory portraits of the Messiah, or even two Messiah's! So let us take a brief look at these two portraits.

**Portrait 1** - He will be a warrior King descended from the line of King David of Judah, who shall appear with great glory and power to judge unbelieving Israel and the whole world. He will save an Israelite remnant and a remnant from the rest of the nations, and will establish the Kingdom of God on the earth. He is known as Mashiach Ben David - Messiah son of David

**Portrait 2** - He will be of humble beginnings, ministering to the people in relative quietness and humility. His main characteristic is that of a servant. He will die a sacrificial death for the transgressions of Israel, and for the sins of the whole world. Yet miraculously, He will rise from the dead, as the ultimate proof of His Messiahship, and He will eventually save all of humanity from death. He is known as Mashiach Ben Yosef - Messiah son of Joseph.

What is also common to both of these portraits is the fact that somehow He will be, in a unique sense, the Son of God. He will be the ultimate Administrator and Subjector of humanity. He will enter this world as a human, and yet also be of heavenly origin. He will be the ultimate Channel to reveal His Father to ALL creation.

## Joshua/Jesus of Nazareth

Now about 2 BC <sup>8</sup> a child was born in Israel who changed the history of the world. The events surrounding His birth, life, and more importantly His death, cannot be ignored. His name was **Joshua of Nazareth** or more commonly known as **Jesus**. The name Joshua or **Yeshua** is from the Hebrew, and the name Jesus or Iesus is from the Greek. Both of these names mean '*Yahweh - Saviour.*' The four historical accounts in the New Testament, namely **Matthew, Mark, Luke and John** - commonly called the Gospels - give us the necessary details to prove conclusively to the discerning, that this Yeshua of Nazareth is indeed the promised Messiah or Christ.

The word **Messiah** is from the Hebrew *mashiach*, and **Christ** is from the Greek *christos*. They both mean *Anointed*, and this is a title which is a figurative expression for the presence and power of God's Spirit, which was often symbolised in the anointing of oil given to prophets, priests and kings. The Messiah is the ultimate Prophet, Chief Priest and King of Israel and the world.

But Israel, as a whole, rejected Him, even though the Jewish and Roman authorities could not find a legitimate reason for His trial and subsequent death penalty. This was because Jesus had done nothing wrong, which even Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator, admitted (Matthew 27:23-24). One reason for their rejection was due to a major mistake by the Jewish scribes and teachers of the law in understanding the Messianic prophecies. They did not see that the portraits spoke of

**one** man, who would appear **twice** within human history, in **two** different roles. This is the only logical explanation when all of the prophetic details are pieced together.

Those who had grasped something of this truth then made the mistake of looking for the Messiah/King, and not the Messiah/Servant. The Messiah/King portrait was more appealing to the flesh, and the Jews viewed this role in a more carnal militaristic manner rather than spiritually, and apparently this was also one of the reasons why Judas Iscariot made his huge mistake of betraying Jesus, which he evidently realised too late (Matthew 27:4-5). But it was the Messiah/Servant portrait that was to be fulfilled first, subsequently followed by the Glories of the Messiah/King portrait.

Yet even this rejection had been predicted in Scripture, as the Apostle Peter made abundantly clear to the Jews of his day.

"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this...

...Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. **But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer.** Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and **that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.** He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

(Acts 3:13-15, 17-21 NIV)

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. **But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.**

(Acts 2:22-24 NIV)

It was God's plan and purpose that Jesus should die, by crucifixion, so that He could pay the correspondent ransom price for the cause of humanity's mortality and subsequent sin; that is, in simple terms, Christ paid the price for Adam's sin. This original sin of Adam, our first ancestor, initially brought death and further sin to the whole race, so that we are all missing the mark of God's perfection due to inherent death. Adam brought death to the whole race, and eventually, Christ shall bring life to the whole race. THIS IS THE GOOD NEWS!

As God's unique Son, Jesus had been conceived by the power of God's Spirit. This resulted in Him being a human without the corrupting influence of death in His flesh, which is naturally passed on by every male. **That is why the Messiah could not have a human father.** He could not be tainted with sin and death passed on

through the male generations - although He had a human mother. This is why He was able to live a perfect life, pleasing to His Father, without making one mistake - that is, to sin.

Jesus was so full of the anointed life of God, He was able to conquer sickness and even raise the dead, and He also showed His authority and power over nature. His unique authority also gave Him power over spiritual forces of darkness. All of these were prophesied signs of the Messiah's kingdom authority, and in this way He gave the people a foretaste of the powers of the coming kingdom.

Yet Jesus willingly laid down His life, to die the awful, humiliating death of a criminal, so as to reveal the Father's heart of love for ALL creation.

## The Resurrection

The resurrection was the crowning event that proved beyond all doubt that Yeshua was, and is, indeed the Messiah. Without the resurrection, the remaining messianic prophecies, which Jesus clearly attached to Himself, could not be fulfilled. There isn't any prophecy in Scripture that has yet failed. And we shall not be disappointed as to the rest either. Many have tried to disprove the resurrection story of Jesus, but ironically, to their own amazement, they have ended up believing it!

Many others, including academics, have also arrived at the startling conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth did actually occur as the Bible says it did! And many in the 1st century AD were witnesses of Christ's resurrection - particularly the apostles. We either believe their testimony, and the testimony of the Scriptures, or call them - and God - liars!

The resurrection is the only satisfactory answer to the problem of death. Death is an unrelenting enemy, taking everyone to a place of complete nothingness. No matter how much we try to avoid it or dress it up in beautiful language, it remains as a dark enemy. Many belief systems, including Christendom, try to teach us the pleasant 'fact' that death is really life in another sphere. But nothing will alter the devastating truth that **death is death!** When we sleep, we are experiencing something of what death is like - but without the dreams, and without waking up!

This is why there *has* to be a resurrection, an eventual waking up to the reality of what our life has been about. All wrongs will need to be put right. The truth about our existence and the original purpose for humanity will need to be revealed to us ALL.

The belief in human reincarnation is not satisfactory, because it ultimately denies the unique identity and experience of each one of us as a human. This belief also teaches that humans can be 'recycled' by becoming other humans or even animals! But this leads to confusion and an amalgamation of the distinct order of each species. Scripture doesn't proclaim reincarnation, but resurrection, although it is true to say that the present cycle of living matter within nature, the wheel of life, is clearly a fact. All the elements return to their original form through corruption and death, and are then 'recycled.' But to transfer this fact to the spiritual sphere, I believe, is a mistake.

There is only one who has ever claimed that He would conquer death - Joshua of Nazareth. So as proof of His Messiahship, God raised Him from the dead as a sign that His sacrifice had been accepted, and that death and sin - along with the spiritual archenemy of God, Satan himself - have been overpowered and subdued. Christ Jesus is the ultimate Victor and Champion of the universe. At present though, this fact is hidden from the majority of humanity, but one day it shall be revealed to ALL.

But why aren't we seeing any effects of this yet? Well, the Bible reveals that there will be *three* stages in the process of death being abolished. The first stage of humanity's resurrection shall be completed in the near future (Christ's resurrection is included in the first stage). Until then, only One has immortality - Christ Jesus. He may now be hidden from humanity's sight, living in the spiritual dimension, which Scripture calls the Celestials or Heavenlies, but someday soon He shall return, and the truth contained within the Bible will be validated.

It is no accident that from the earliest times, humanity has been fascinated with the stars and 'outer space.' Their greatest mistake though has been that of worshipping the celestial bodies themselves, rather than to look beyond them to what they represent. There are 'aliens' but they are certainly not terrestrial in any form! They are spiritual, not fleshly, and they are intimately involved with the actions and course of humanity. That is the greatest 'conspiracy theory' of them all!

But the resurrection is a hard thing for the soulish, fleshly mind to accept, but when simply believed by the spiritual mind that knows the power of God, it is not hard to accept at all. If God created all things, and He is the Life Force within all living things, then resurrection to immortality is not a problem!

Through Christ's death and resurrection, ALL of creation shall one day be freed from its slavery to corruption and death. For the Israel of God, in a special sense, He is the sacrificial Lamb of God that takes away their sins and transgressions. For the rest of humanity, He is the One who has reversed the consequences of Adam's initial disobedience (which brought death to ALL humanity) by bringing justification to ALL, which will eventually give immortality to ALL humanity at the end of the ages, when God's plan is complete. **This is the ultimate Good News!**

There are many articles on this site that consider these things in quite some detail. For a further overview of these things, see *The Destiny of the Israel of God*.

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope (*expectation*) that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope (*expectation*) we were saved.

(Romans 8:19-24 NIV)



## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> When this article was first written, I accepted the Historicist view as being the most likely interpretation of those aspects of these prophecies that were dealing with the Roman Empire and its subsequent history after the establishment of Christianity in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Even though I would presently hold to the largely Preterist view of these texts, which interprets these prophecies as having been fulfilled in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, there is still the issue of the Iron kingdom of Rome lasting many centuries beyond 70 AD, along with the fact that Rome eventually became Christianised and took on the form of Papal Rome. Therefore, on another level, I believe these prophecies concerning Rome can have an extended application that goes beyond the 1<sup>st</sup> century. See my follow-up article *Another Look At The Ten Horns And The Little Horn of Daniel 7* for further details on the Preterist view.

<sup>2</sup> For details on the Preterist view of the 10 horns and the little horn, which I would now accept as the *primary* interpretation of these texts, see my follow-up article *Another Look At The Ten Horns And The Little Horn of Daniel 7*. Nevertheless, I also accept the largely Historicist view of understanding these texts about the fourth Beast of Rome, which is expounded in this article, but as a secondary application. I firmly believe that there are at least two ways of interpreting these texts about the horns on two levels of prophetic truth, especially when the book of Revelation is added alongside.

<sup>3</sup> I firmly believe that a correct exegetical understanding of Daniel 9 will reveal that the 70th Week has already been fulfilled in the First Coming of Christ, which will be shown in a later study on The Seventy Weeks. And if this is truly the case, then the dispensational futurist view of a seven-year period still yet to come commonly called The Great Tribulation is totally wrong.

<sup>4</sup> See notes 1 & 2 above.

<sup>5</sup> As noted above, these 10 horns, and the little horn that follows, can also be interpreted in light of 1<sup>st</sup> century events in relation to the Roman Empire and its 10 senatorial provinces, along with a specific ruling Caesar (either Nero or Vespasian). See my follow-up article *Another Look At The Ten Horns And The Little Horn of Daniel 7* for further details on the Preterist view.

<sup>6</sup> The Preterist view applies this text to the events of the 1<sup>st</sup> century leading up to 70 AD, and therefore views the 'temple of God' as being Herod's temple. This view does make a lot of sense in the 1<sup>st</sup> century context where the judgment of the Day of the Lord was about to come upon Jerusalem and Israel, especially when understood in the light of Jesus' Olivet Discourse. Paul does appear to be describing the 'abomination of desolation,' which was prophesied by Jesus that would herald the final destruction of the temple. I plan to expound on these things in future articles.

This view is expounded by Dr Ken Gentry Jr. in his book *Perilous Times*, Chapter 4 - The Man of Lawlessness (Covenant Media Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Since writing this article, I have found this view expounded by a number of bible teachers and scholars. One example is Ralph Woodrow in his book *Great Prophecies of The Bible*, (RW Evangelistic Association, Inc, 1971, 1989). He considers this subject in Part Four: The Antichrist where he also supplies a number of quotes and references concerning those church fathers and Reformers that held to the view of the Restrainer being the Roman Empire and the Antichrist/Man of Sin being the Papacy.

<sup>8</sup> Although the dating of Jesus' birth often appears highly speculative, with dates varying from 1 to 12 BC (!), I think a strong and balanced case can be made for accepting the 2 BC

date as the correct one. See Dr. Stephen E. Jones, *When REALLY was Jesus Born?* (a booklet available via his website God's Kingdom Ministries); Ernest L. Martin, *The Star That Astonished The World*, (ASK Publications, 1996); & Prof. Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology, Revised Edition* (1998, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.).

I also accept the year of Christ's death and resurrection as 33 AD as opposed to the other most probable alternative of 30 AD. See Prof. Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology, Revised Edition* (1998, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.) & Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of The Life of Christ*, (1977, Zondervan).

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