

Empires 7, 8, and 9... on the way.

The last world Empire was Roman. The next may be Roman plus. The one following will be antichrist's. And finally, Christ's.

Where does all that information come from? A new "word" out there in the "prophetic" circles? Speculation, intelligent guessing?

No, it's all tucked away in Scripture waiting to be revealed in a massive way as the times become appropriate.

We reference Daniel the prophet and John the apostle to confirm all details. No other reference is needed. Mere men cannot come up with these scenarios. Men of our age are thinking doomsday. Just look at the movies coming out.

Some speculate the ultimate takeover will be by Muslims. Others, by Russians and an upsurge of Communism. A "Revived Roman Empire" has gotten a lot of press, too. The Global Warming folks tell us exactly how it will happen.

To all of which we must simply say, "Not so fast, not so fast."

There will indeed be an end to the present world system, followed by Christ's own brand of leadership, in turn followed by the unknowns of eternity. Of course, God's people will have 1000 years to learn about that eternal phase, so plans for it need not be revealed now.

My focus in this article is the next two kingdoms before Jesus sets up His own. Though not much is known about them, their coming is clearly specified for those who do a little extra digging.

The things of God are always hidden to those who do not seek for them or who blow them off as unimportant. Most often the folks who think Biblical facts are mere trivia spend much of their free time on things that truly are trivial and meaningless. And that is spelled s-p-o-r-t-s. Not play, which is a nice refreshment, especially for the young, but the big business gone bad that eats up so many hours of God's people's time.

But that is another subject that I imagine I must cover another day.

For now I am intrigued once more with the fact that two, not one, but *two* more world empires must surface on the earth before Jesus rules and reigns here.

Let's look at the pieces of the puzzle:

1. Daniel. Daniel, you recall, interprets for Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2) a dream the king has had about a huge statue. Daniel correctly identifies the parts of the statue as coming world Empires. Bible scholars are nearly unanimous in what those Empires were: First, Nebuchadnezzar's own Kingdom of Babylon, or Babylonia. This is to be followed by Medo-Persia. Next will come Greece. And finally , Rome.

Well, not finally finally. Rome develops into something else.

Rome is represented on the statue by two long legs, signifying it will be around a long time. It has been. As the historians will tell us, it was never defeated. It corrupted from within and its political power was handed over to Roman Catholic Popes. There, to a small but very real measure, it hides and resides to this day. A very insignificant power to be sure, but the last world Empire the world has known to this point.

That is not to say that men have not attempted to rule the world since those days. Hitler was on his way, Communism was on its way, Islam has had such aspirations more than once and has been thwarted so far by Western powers. It seems to be rising again.

Daniel sees the Roman Empire eventually broken into ten parts, as the toes on the two feet of the statue. Some see a further division pictured by the two feet, and have talked of the eastern and western portions of the Roman Empire.

But the feet and toes are part of another kingdom, a more end-time one, according to Daniel. And when we visit John's revelation, we see yet another aspect to the "times of the feet", or the end.

2. So let's look at John. In Revelation 17 is a key to some of these final mysteries. Earlier in his prophecy, we run into a beast with 7 heads and 10 horns. The ten

horns stands for the same entity as the ten toes in Daniel. Here is a final Kingdom, ruled by antichrist, and it has ten divisions or perhaps nations.

In chapter 17 we see a woman riding this beast. The woman is said to be "Babylon", so there is no need for further speculation about her identity. For, at the end of the same chapter "Babylon" is said to be the city that reigns over the kings of the earth. Clearly, John heard "Rome" when he heard that. We should too.

So Daniel and John agree that Rome is somehow a part of the end-time scene. Daniel has already said, though, that Rome was to follow Greece in world domination. That means that Rome must still be with us. Behold the Vatican and its tamed but real holdings throughout the cosmos.

John adds some other important details to the end-time Rome and the one who rules her.

In verse 8 of that 17th chapter, John is told that the beast, the antichrist, will ascend out of a bottomless pit. He is being restrained even now, we glean from Paul in II Thessalonians 2, awaiting his time to appear on the earth. So is the antichrist alive today? You bet! But not on the planet, rather, *in* the planet. In a pit, in the Enemy's territory, being restrained by an angel.

That's what Paul meant when he said, "He that restrains will continue to restrain until he is taken out of the way." It is unfortunate that Bible translators capitalized "He" to make readers believe that God is restraining the antichrist. Or that God the Holy Spirit is restraining evil in the world. This speculation was added to the interpretations of our day to make way for the pre-tribulation rapture theory. According to that relatively recent theory, the Holy Spirit, in the form of the church, will be removed from the Earth at the rapture, and evil will be allowed to have its day since we won't be here to stop it.

The context as well as the literal meaning of the words all point to an angel being the one who is doing the restraining, namely of the Man of Sin himself, a prisoner in the Pit at present. And when the Lord says "Release him", he will be released.

His coming to Earth will be through a series of miracles according to both Paul there, and John in our text.

John's angel goes on to explain the seven heads of the beast, or antichrist. Satan will have had seven eruptions or manifestations over the centuries before it is all over. In verse 10 we meet these seven kings, though their names are not mentioned.

In John's day, five of the kings had already fallen. Moving backward from Rome, we could surmise that they are some mighty man in Greece, one in Medo-Persia, one in Babylonia (in concert with Daniel), and before that, one in Assyria, and in Egypt. (Some would suggest also, the original Babylonian Empire, as Nebuchadnezzar's was "Neo-Babylon.")

Looking for single kings in each of those eras leads to speculation and guess work, and is therefore not exact. Some have thought that perhaps the hard-hearted Pharaoh of Egypt might be one candidate. Perhaps the Assyrian Emperor Sennacherib who conquered Israel. Or, Nebuchadnezzar who never did fully convert to the god of Israel as his only god. Xerxes or Haman could be possibilities in Persia. And of course there is the villain of Daniel, Antiochus Epiphanes.

Whoever they are, by John's day, they have fallen. But "one is." Rome is, in John's day. And several Emperors come to mind, as Nero, and Caligula, and Trajan. Many of them were truly anti-Christ.

That's six. Five before John, one in John's day. Now read carefully. "The other has not yet come." Number seven is not yet here. Guess what? He hasn't come even yet. There has not been another Empire beyond the Roman Empire. Papal Rome does not fill the bill of another Kingdom or King. It is still Rome, and continues the political status of the same Roman Empire, though very much in decline.

Besides that, John adds that when number seven comes, he will only continue a short time. Can't be Catholicism on the Vatican throne. It's been around a long time.

So Empire Number seven is the next thing that must happen on the world scene. Look for a world Empire that is against Jews, and against Jesus, against the true God and His purposes, as all the world empires have been. It will be headed by a man who represents the anti-Christian attitude of the world at that time. But not the antichrist. Not yet.

Surely a Russian, or some other Communist, or an Islamic Empire would fulfill this prophecy. All of them are decidedly anti, against, the Christ of the Bible, and against the Jews.

Whoever or whatever or wherever it is, this government will only last a short time. Perhaps this is the first half of the seven years that Daniel saw in his famous 70 week prophecy (Daniel 9). One period of seven years has not yet come to pass as it was supposed to, per that vision. Yet "3 and 1/2 years" is the period always cited by John and Daniel for the very final kingdom, that of antichrist. Not seven years.

So Empire and Emperor number seven comes, and goes. How does he go? And who replaces number seven to become number eight? Here the text is explicit and worthy of our attention. Through perhaps political intrigue, or assassination, or a power grab, a la Hitler, number eight seizes the kingdom from number seven and an even more sinister world unfolds before us.

This final leader before Jesus is none other than "the beast" or the antichrist, according to verse 11. The beast is the 8th, it comes out and says. Then it adds this chilling note: *The eighth is one of the seven!*

So though speculation is difficult, and not precise and exact, it is a man we are looking for, as well as an Empire. What the text is telling us is that someone who raised his ugly head once before, sitting on a mountain of power over the whole world, will rise to that power again. The antichrist that is coming is the once and future king of the earth.

Someone has an unfinished score to settle with Israel. Someone hates Jesus Christ and is in direct competition with him. Someone was trying to wipe out Israel and Israel's Messiah once before, but he didn't finish his work. Now he is certain he

will. He will be directly empowered by Satan, somewhat in the way that the father empowered the Son,

Someone who lived before and who lives again. The last kingdom before Jesus, is now in place, to last for three and one half years. Number eight.

Can we be any more specific? I believe there are three choices that make a lot of "sense". Human sense has proven wrong quite often, and the answer may be hidden more deeply than this, but given the fact, and this is non-negotiable - that antichrist is indeed a resurrected world leader, one who lived before and who will live again, here's where I have traced the evidence thus far, not given in order of preference by me:

1. Perhaps: The seventh ruler is assassinated, and rises from the dead within days, mimicking Christ, to become the eighth ruler when empowered by Satan.

Strengths:

- Revelation 13 talks about how one of the heads of the beast is wounded, and later talks about how the world marvels at the fact that this deadly wound is healed. Sounds like the very resurrection that the text suggests. There seems to be an immediacy here, though it is not definite.
- Another positive is the fact that he is an anti-Christ. Not just opposed to, but a copy of, an imitation of. He would be able to convince the world of his Messiah-ship by simply rising from the dead as did the real Christ.

Weaknesses:

- According to Paul, there was a "restraining order" already issued against someone who was waiting for his time to be revealed. *This was as early as the first century.* II Thessalonians 2:7 and following tells us that this whole mystery was already in play 2000 years ago. Only when the restraining (angel) is taken away can the man of sin be revealed. When he comes it will be with great power.
- If the seventh and eighth ruler are the very same man, albeit the latter is Satan-filled, which one is it that comes from the bottomless pit, and why

would he be there anyway? The coming from the pit seems to suggest that he has been there quite some time, as Paul suggests.

2. *The Assyrian connection.* You may have heard of and read a book by this name. The contention of it is that the antichrist is the resurrected ruler of the ancient Assyrian Empire, Sennacherib.

Strengths:

- The text specifically mentions that someone who died by the sword becomes antichrist when raised. While it is possible that ruler seven is killed in this way, the Old Testament book of Kings specifically states that Sennacherib was killed by his *sword-wielding* sons! This was a man who was proudly opposed to the Israelites, and would fit the caricature of an Old Testament "anti-Christ."
- Micah 5 is one of several passages that mentions "the Assyrian." Singular. Not the Assyrians, but one individual. The context of some of the passages (in Isaiah and Micah in particular) could easily point to Sennacherib and his devastations in the days of the prophets. But Micah 5 places "the Assyrian" in the context of the coming Messiah, who "will deliver us" from him! Is there indeed an Assyrian with whom Jesus and His people must deal in our future?

Weaknesses.

- If kings and kingdoms rise together, we must remember that one will search high and low for Assyria today, and not find it, though many Assyrians are still with us, and proudly so. Would God have to resurrect the entire Assyrian kingdom in order for Sennacherib to return to power? Yet, does not the prophet speak of a time when Egypt, Assyria, and Israel will be on friendly terms, and a blessing to God? (Isaiah 19:23-25)
- Also it must be noted that by the time of Daniel, when he foretold the coming man of sin and where he would originate, Assyria was already off the map. "Out of one of them," that is, out of the lineage and nation of one of the four generals of Alexander the Great, in their latter day form, will

come antichrist. Assyria could not be a part of that group as it had already yielded to history by the time the prophecy was given. Still, the area covered by the four generals' domains could include ancient Assyria.

3. From Greece, Antiochus Epiphanes.

Strengths:

- The final "King of the North", in Daniel's final prophecy, is identified historically as Antiochus Epiphanes, the "bad guy" of the Hannukah story. How he hated Israel is documented well. His domain was a large one, and he wanted it to be larger but was thwarted by emerging Rome. The intriguing thing about this choice is the way the Spirit of God builds the history of the wars of succession in Daniel 10-12, and finally leads the reader to conclude he is dealing with the historical Epiphanes, when all of a sudden that same reader *is in the end times* dealing with the one whom we know to be the Bible's man of sin. Could it be that antichrist has been hiding in plain sight in your Bible for these thousands of years.

Weaknesses:

- Epiphanes, as far as we know, died of an awful disease, not from the sword.
- And, when the antichrist clearly appears in Daniel, he is called only the "King", not the King of the North. In fact the King of the North is also mentioned in the text, as one who comes against "the King". Still, this could easily be explained by the passage of time. Of course there is a new King of Syria in the last days, but that does not keep antichrist from appearing and wanting it all. It stands to reason that he is not King of the North or South when he returns, only the King.

Perhaps there is a better choice with no weaknesses in his bio. Maybe we need to study the hard Pharaoh of Moses' day who also would have a score to settle if he returned to Earth. What about Nebuchadnezzar who died a pagan King, even after all his proclamations of devotion to the God of Israel?

Let us hold fast to the facts we have and keep building. God's people should be in the know about things that are to come. This is why the Lord took so much time and effort to give us a complete revelation.

What do we know for sure then?

- There will be 8 outstanding world kingdoms, headed by 8 outstanding men.
- And the eighth one is really one of the first seven.
- That leaves us with only a handful of possible choices for antichrist, and we need not get distracted by every prophecy of every religion and every potential world leader of all of modern history.
- I strongly suggest we put away the newspapers and perhaps even the history books, and see what other clues God has given us right in the Bible, as to which man will be coming to the forefront of human history before Jesus sets up His final Kingdom.

As for that Millennial Kingdom, number nine, the entry of Jesus in glory and vengeful power is well documented in Scripture, and that is all we need. His Kingdom will be set up and never brought down. The first 1000 years of it will be here on Earth...

...After that, Heaven knows.