

LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE COMING “FEDERATION OF NATIONS”

(Lecture 13:1-10)

A FEDERATION of Nations! How much is this phrase on the lips of politicians and persons interested in national affairs at the present time! It was far otherwise but a few years ago. When teachers of prophecy declared that the Word of God predicted just such a federation as men are now deeply interested in, they were met with ridicule. It was openly declared that they were dreamers, giving rein to foolish imaginations, and proclaiming something which could never be fulfilled. But the great war and new conditions have changed the viewpoint of these cavilers considerably in the last few years. Now there are those who hold the confederacy of nations as the one solution to the difficulties everywhere confronting statesmen, and many consider that it will be the panacea for all reconstruction perils. Just what will come out of it all, while the church still remains on earth, one would not attempt to prophesy. But after the church is gone, there will, indeed, be a great confederacy of the nations that have sprung out of the old Roman Empire, which will be Satanic in origin and character, and will, in fact, be the devil's last card, if I may borrow such an expression, ere he is obliged to own his complete defeat. It is of this the present portion treats.

In our last lecture we were noticing that the enmity of Satan will be turned against God's earthly people Israel in a special manner, after the church has been caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

In conclusion I said that we would see, to-night, just what form that enmity will take. And in properly placing what now comes before us, let me emphasize the necessity of keeping in mind the fact that, throughout all this portion of the Book of Revelation, we have in view a time of solemn and momentous import, after the first resurrection and translation of the saints at the rapture, and before the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory as the long-looked-for Messiah of Israel, who is to sit upon the throne of His father David, and the Son of Man, who is to reign over all the earth in righteousness. If there is confusion as to this, nothing will be clear.

It is not hard to imagine something of the condition in which this world will be found after all real Christians have been snatched away to be with the Lord; especially when we realize that many in high places - rulers, governors, and other political leaders, are at heart Christian men. Perhaps, I should hardly say "many," that is, compared with those who are unsaved and indifferent to the claims of Christ, they may be few indeed; for Scripture tells us that "**not many mighty, not many noble, are called.**"

You will remember that Lady Huntington, that earnest, devoted woman who lived in the days of Whitefield and the Wesleys, and who was such a help in spreading the gospel, used to say that she was just going to heaven by an "M." Had the word been "**Not any noble,**" there would have been no hope for her, but the "M" took her in.

But certainly there are some in high places who truly know the Lord, and would be caught away with the church at His coming. Their removal would be like the breaking of a dyke, permitting the rushing waters of anarchy and Bolshevism to sweep over every land. Think how evil will then be intensified. What frightful lengths unsaved men will go to in their efforts to bring about a millennium without Christ.

Whether carnal men realize it or not, the true Christians are the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Let every Christian suddenly be taken away from this scene, and you will have gross darkness covering the earth. With the preservative power of righteousness gone, the masses of men will be given up to corruption and violence.

Read the account of the days before the Flood, and you will have some sense of the chaotic condition that will prevail. Even now we see lawlessness spreading everywhere in the world, and it is only with the greatest difficulty that the vile thing called Sovietism is kept from gaining a foothold, even in this land of liberty. And back of all this is a Satanic effort to destroy all faith in God and His Word, and to substitute, in place of this, evil systems that can only result in eternal ruin to those who follow them.

In our day, though the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of God is here to lift up a standard against him.

The Word of God tells us that the mystery of lawlessness does already work, but during this dispensation there is one who hinders the full development of evil, that is, the Holy Ghost; but when He is taken out of the world, that is, when the Holy Spirit takes the church up to meet the Lord in the air, then the last hindrance to the power of evil will be gone; there will no longer be any restraint on the machinations of the devil.

In the heavens the saints will be presented before the judgment-seat of Christ, and, as we have seen, for the last time Satan will appear as the prosecuting attorney against them before God, as he has done for so many centuries, day and night. But he will be utterly cast out of heaven, and will come down to the earth, having great wrath, because he knoweth that his time is short. In Israel alone will he find a testimony for God in that day, and against that people he will turn all his malice, and will undertake to work for their ruin through human government, when it has utterly cast off God.

You will recall how, in the book of Daniel, we are told that Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a great image, which, I think all will agree, sets forth “**the times of the Gentiles.**”

By this term is meant the period during which the Jews are scattered among the Gentiles, the times in which the nations hold authority over the land of Palestine. These Gentile times began with Nebuchadnezzar, the head of gold. He is so represented in the image. Following this comes the rule of the Medes and Persians, depicted by the silver breast and arms, and that, in turn, was succeeded by the Greco-Macedonian Empire, set forth by the brazen torso of the image.

The last world-empire is the kingdom of iron, the Roman. But Daniel goes on to show that the Roman Empire would take on a very peculiar form in the time of the end.

In the feet of the image you have an attempt to amalgamate that which cannot be amalgamated, iron and clay. It is a picture of man’s attempt to amalgamate the iron of imperialism with the potter’s clay of social democracy.

If you ask me where we are in the course of time, so far as represented in this image, I should say, unhesitatingly, that we have reached the feet of the image. We see, even now, the great nations of Europe making a tremendous attempt to amalgamate the iron and the clay. And the troubles of recent years have been, largely, the result of this.

Great national leaders are at their wits’ end, trying to save something of imperialism while still obliged to bow to the demands of the people for a government of a democratic character. But it is impossible to mix the two. The one must, of necessity, destroy the other.

And this Scripture, which we now have before us, makes it plain that, at last, the imperial power is going to triumph in measure.

Men will grow weary of the constant conflict, which has been so prolonged; for, whatever optimistic statesmen still may say, God’s word shows that the confusion will grow worse and worse. And we need not be surprised if, even before the Church is taken away, instead of raising armies “to make the world safe for democracy,” it may become necessary to conscript the young manhood of our nation in an attempt to save the world from democracy.

The people will soon attempt to take everything into their own hands, thus jeopardizing all property rights. This is a condition which cannot forever be tolerated, and out of it all will rise, eventually, after the Church has been caught up to meet the Lord, one man who will combine in himself the statesmanship of a Caesar, the military genius of a Napoleon, and the personal attractiveness of a Chesterfield.

This man will head a combination of ten powers, formed, as before mentioned, from the nations that have sprung out of the old Roman Empire. When they have cast off all allegiance to God and His Word, through this confederacy he will, for a time at least, dominate the world.

As already intimated, Daniel pictures this final phase of things by the ten toes of the image.

Of old, the Roman Empire was divided into the Eastern and Western parts, which is symbolized by the two legs of the great image, but united under one central authority until disintegration began.

In Daniel's 7th chapter you have the same thing pictured in a different way.

The man of God himself had a vision of the times of the Gentiles. He saw in them nothing beautiful or grand, but the four great empires were represented as four ravenous beasts, watching to spring one upon the other - beasts so dreadful that nothing on earth fully answers to the description of the wild creatures there depicted.

- The Babylonian Empire was symbolized by a lion with the wings of an eagle,- a hybrid, formed from a beast of the earth and fowls of the air.
- The Medo-Persian dominion appeared as a bear, lifting itself up on one side: it had between its teeth three ribs dripping with blood, representing probably the three chief cities of the Babylonian Empire which were sacked by the Medes and Persians under Cyrus.
- The Grecian, or Alexandrian Empire, was pictured as a leopard with four heads, and four wings of a fowl upon his back. The four heads, of course, set forth the fourfold division of this Greco-Macedonian Empire after Alexander's death.
- Finally, Daniel tells us that the fourth beast was dreadful and terrible, and had great iron teeth, and brake in pieces and devoured all that came in its way. He gives no exact description of it: he adds, however, that it had ten horns.

Now that last beast clearly answers to the iron legs of the image, the Roman power, and the ten horns to the ten toes, which set forth the last form in which it will appear.

I think there can be no doubt whatever that it is this last dreadful beast which is fully delineated for us in our present chapter.

It is the Roman power which was in existence when the Lord was born, and was responsible for His death upon the cross: for the Jews had no power at all unless it were ratified by Pilate, as representing Caesar. Therefore the Roman Empire, of which Pontius Pilate was the official representative, crucified the Lord of glory. It is true that Pilate simply gave the sentence which the Jews desired, and therefore they are held responsible for killing their Messiah; but the Roman procurator must face that clause, repeated over and over again through the centuries in the recitation of the Apostles' Creed: "He was crucified under Pontius Pilate." Pilate can never get away from that. It shall stand against his record forever.

We have already seen in the 12th chapter, that the great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, represents Rome energized by Satan seeking to destroy the Man-child. Here, in chapter 13, we have Rome in the time of the end. The Empire revived, summoned from the sea of the nations by the devil himself, that is, Satan, the dragon. And it is he who summons the wild beast to rise up out of the waters, "**having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the names of blasphemy.**" This is imperial Rome revived, as the ten crowns declare.

After the death of the Lord Jesus Christ the Roman Empire continued in existence for something like 500 years, though divided into the Eastern and Western parts, which till the end of its history held together more or less loosely. It was finally destroyed by the invaders from the North and the East. But though the Empire as such was broken in pieces, nevertheless Roman principles prevailed throughout the great part of Europe and became the basis of the civilization which we now know.

Our American system of jurisprudence is founded upon that of Rome. In the recent world-war the Entente Allies, and America too, were all representatives of the old Roman Empire, with the exception, of course, of Japan, China, and other heathen nations.

On the other side we saw the very same powers joined together (the Goths, Vandals and Huns), who, in the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries, hurled themselves upon the Roman Empire and destroyed it. It was a most singular thing surely, and almost unexplainable for those who do not read their Bibles, that in the 20th century the same great divisions were maintained as in the closing days of Roman domination.

But we may see from this how readily that Roman Empire will be revived through a great international movement - a confederation, offensive and defensive, of all the Latin or Latinized nations.

One of the great agencies which shall have much to do in bringing this about will be the Roman Church, whose power is increasing continually, even in the very lands where the Reformation, at one time, would have made this impossible.

It was the boast of the Roman conquerors that they never destroyed a civilization, but absorbed into their own great commonwealth everything that was best of the various nations which they subjugated. And we cannot but be reminded of this as we read the second verse:

“And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.”

Observe how, in these few words, you have distinctly set forth the fact that the last phase of the Roman Empire will be linked up with all that has gone before. In Rome you have the leopard of Greece, the bear of Persia, and the lion of Babylon. Thus you have incorporated into this last great confederacy the chief elements of every civilization that has left a great mark upon the world. Everything that man has been able to build up, and has learned to value throughout the centuries, will be headed up in this final federation of nations.

For it is not Rome as existing in John's day merely which is in view, but Rome as it will exist in the closing days of the dispensation, as is plain from the 3rd verse, if rightly understood:

“And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.”

We shall find help in regard to the heads if we turn to chapter 17:8-13. There we are told that the same beast is in view:

“The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is (or, shall be). And here is the mind which hath wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come: and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.”

Now, in those brief words, you have a synopsis of the whole history of the Roman Empire.

For something like 900 years it was the greatest earthly power men had to reckon with. But a time came when it could be truly said **“the beast is not.”** It had been destroyed; its imperial head had been wounded to death. No man, for centuries, unenlightened by the Word of God, would have been bold enough to have predicted the return of imperial power to that fallen dominion; but Scripture had declared that it should come to pass; and while statesmen and carnal theorists have rejected what seemed to them a ridiculous assumption, students of prophecy, guided by the Spirit of God, have for nearly a century taught that the nations into which the Roman Empire had been divided should again come together under one head; and he would be a bold man to-day who would deny the likelihood of this very thing.

But when statesmen talk of a coming world federation, how little they realize who it is who is going to bring this about. The Beast is to ascend out of the abyss; for it is Satanic power that will bring into existence what is here pictured. It will be the devil’s last effort to make men believe that they do not need God’s Christ, that they can have peace and security while the Prince of Peace is rejected. But God will blow upon all their plans, for He has said, **“I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until He shall come whose right it is.”**

But now notice two interpretations of the seven heads.

We are told they are seven mountains, upon which the woman sitteth, and they **“are seven kings, five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.”**

The seven mountains have generally been taken as meaning the seven hills upon which the imperial city is built. I am inclined to think this is correct, even though some would refuse the idea from the fact that the hills themselves are not in any sense mountainous in character; but the very fact that it was the delight of the Romans to speak of their capital as the seven-hilled city, would, naturally, bring this city to mind to anyone who read John’s description.

As to the second interpretation, a king is the familiar symbol for a form of government. Livy, the Roman historian, shows us that Rome had passed through five very distinct forms of government prior to John's day. The sixth, which was in existence in John's time, was the imperial. That was the form which was destroyed, and I am persuaded that this was the head wounded to death, of our chapter. But that deadly wound is to be healed, for the imperial form is to be restored, but under altogether different conditions, making it distinctly the seventh.

For ten nations, all banding themselves together, will elect one of their number as the head of the confederacy. This man is distinctly called "**the Beast.**"

It reminds us of Louis XIV, who said, "I am the State."

This Beast will continue to exercise authority, as the elected head, for but a short time, when he will throw off all restraint (as did Napoleon, elected as first consul, and later declaring himself emperor), thus bringing about the eighth form, which is of the seventh.

So spectacular will be his *coup d'état* that men will be thrilled with admiration at his masterly genius; and, accepting the principle that nothing but an imperial form of government can give them settled and continuous peace, they will readily acknowledge his pretensions, and in doing so will worship the dragon which gave power unto the Beast, and do homage to the Beast himself, saying, "**Who is like unto the Beast; who is able to make war with him?**"

I think God has given us a wonderful illustration of this very thing in the history of Napoleon Bonaparte, as mentioned above. Think of this Corsican, low born, utterly insignificant, first coming into notice as a Second Lieutenant in the revolutionary army. Suddenly, after the bloody reign of terror, emerging from his former obscure place, and becoming the central figure of the world in that day. Elected by an overwhelming majority as First Consul of France, proclaiming himself Imperator, dazzling all France and the world for a time, and ending his course on the isle of St. Helena.

A greater than Napoleon shall yet arise out of the chaotic conditions which will prevail in Europe, after the church has been taken home.

He will be a man of marvelous appearance and transcendent ability, wholly given up to Satan. He will be the great civil leader of the last days - the man who will have the final word in all matters, religious as well. All the civilized earth will wonder after him, do homage to him and his hidden master, the devil. In his pride and his folly he will speak great and blasphemous things against God. He will doubtless consider himself the man of destiny whom no power, human or divine, can overthrow. But the God whom he denies has limited his sway, for power will be given him only "**to continue forty and two months**"; that is, for three and a half years, the last half of Daniel's 70th week, he will be in authority over the prophetic earth. During that time he will open his mouth in blasphemy against God, and blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, and all that dwell in heaven, namely, the saints who will have been caught up at the rapture. With saints on earth, the faithful in God's restored Israel, he will make war and overcome them, power being given him over all countries, and tongues, and nations.

This then is the manner in which the dragon will attempt the destruction of the remnant of the woman's seed. His effort will be to completely root out everything that is of God in the earth; and in order to do this he will have a trusty lieutenant dwelling in the land of Palestine itself, who will uphold him in all his nefarious plans, but of this assistant I cannot speak to-night. We will be occupied with him in our next lecture.

There can be no question, I think, that the days of the Beast are the days referred to by our Lord Jesus Christ, when He says that if it were possible the very elect would be deceived. But, thank God, He will preserve His own, even in that dreadful day, so we learn from verse 8 that none will be deceived by him, nor do homage to him, but **“those whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.”**

How solemn the challenge of the 9th and 10th verses of our 13th chapter in this connection:

“If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”

These will be the days of the Great Tribulation, which, in all its intensity, will be directed against Israel. But the Lord will be watching over His little flock, and, scattered as they will be among the heathen, He will be to them a little sanctuary in every place that they may wander.

Only those who have exchanged the heavenly hope for an earthly one will be deceived by this great leader. He is the coming man for whom the world is waiting.

Mistaken and blinded statesmen will hail him as the head of the nations, the one who will solve the problems - social, political and economic - that are now disturbing the world. How blessed to be warned by God Himself of all these things beforehand, that we may walk apart from everything that savors of that day of reproach and blasphemy. And when it actually comes, who can question the value of this present Scripture for the guidance and consolation of God's earthly people Israel, who otherwise might well be in despair at the apparent defeat of righteousness and the triumph of iniquity.

But **“the triumphing of the wicked is short,”** and **“the man of the earth”** will be destroyed in due time, while faith will have its reward when the Lord appears from heaven to take vengeance on all who dare lift up their bloody hands against His afflicted people.

“Here is the patience and faith of the saints.”

~ end of chapter 14 ~

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