

THE PROPHETIC WORD IN CRISIS DAYS

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by

Various Contributors

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CHAPTER NINE

THE PROPHETIC WORD AND EUROPE

J. VERNON MCGEE

Does the Word of God have anything to say about Europe?

The answer is a bold affirmative. In fact, Europe is the very key to world history as it is unfolding at this present hour. A preacher, speaking recently in Geneva stated, "I am convinced that the battleground of great ideas today is Europe." Europe has been and will continue to be a battleground in many other respects as well, and we shall see that this is in strict accord with the prophetic Scriptures.

The world has been accustomed for many centuries to thinking of Europe, not as an integral whole, but as a group of diversified nations. Wars among the European countries have strengthened this concept so that we have been much more keenly aware of the differences between France and Italy, Spain and Norway, than of the common interests among them.

The first glimmer of hope for uniting the European states came, interestingly enough, from the United States. Woodrow Wilson, at the end of World War I, tried to accomplish this through the League of Nations. He died with his dream unfulfilled, but his basic idea did not die with him.

It was not until the end of World War II, however, that widespread interest in this idea arose. *The U. S. News and World Report*, in the early 1950's, featured an interview with Paul Reynaud, then Vice-Premier of France, entitled, "Coming — A United States of Europe."

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Reynaud may have been engaging in speculation and wishful thinking, but it is not necessary for us to do so. The Bible clearly teaches that Europe will come back together again, as it was in the days of Rome.

The first prophecy of Europe's ultimate reunion is found in the writings of Daniel. This young Israelite was carried into captivity in Babylon 2,500 years ago, and it was during his enslavement that this remarkable revelation was given to him. Let us turn our attention to that familiar story and the prophecy connected with it.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king, one night dreamed of a multi-metallic image, which impressed him greatly. The next morning he commanded the wise men of his court to describe the dream and to interpret it. The Word says, **“The thing is gone from me”** (Daniel 2:5, 8), giving the impression that King Nebuchadnezzar could not recall his dream. This was not the case at all. He knew perfectly well what he had dreamed — but he knew that if the wise men could really give him a divine interpretation, they would also be able to tell him what the dream was in the first place.

This was a test of their validity, and what Nebuchadnezzar is saying was, in effect, *“The word from me is sure.”* That is, he said that the death penalty would be passed upon them if they could not tell the dream and its meaning; and he meant it. *“The word from me is sure.”* And you may be certain that it was!

Now Daniel, though he was a slave, had shown such promise that he had been counted among the wise men. However, the first he heard about the king's dream was from the captain of the guard who came to slay him! When he questioned Captain Arioch, Daniel learned what had happened, and immediately asked the king for a stay of execution, promising to reveal the interpretation of the dream. Though Nebuchadnezzar must have been skeptical, he did grant Daniel's plea, and the young Hebrew, with his faithful companions, went to God in prayer. In answer, God gave Daniel the same dream, and wisdom to understand it.

Daniel, in great humility, was brought before the king to interpret the dream. Disclaiming any human wisdom, he gave all the glory to the **“God in heaven that revealeth secrets”** (Daniel 2:28).

Nebuchadnezzar must have looked rather cynically at this young man (for Daniel was probably less than twenty years of age at this time), as he asked, **“Are you able to tell me this dream?”** And young Daniel began to tell the king:

“Thou, O king, sawest, and, behold, a great image. . . . This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay (Daniel 2:31-33).

By this time, the king had slipped to the edge of his throne, listening intently. Daniel went on to give the meaning of the dream: the head of gold referred to Babylon, the arms of silver to the Medo-Persian empire, the sides of brass to the Graeco-Macedonian empire, and the legs of iron to Rome.

This incident brought Daniel into great favor with the king and caused him to be elevated to a very high position, where we shall rejoin him shortly. First, though, let us pause to look more closely at the interpreted dream.

For one thing, we should note definitely that there is no reference to a fifth world empire. If, as many say, the Roman Empire died and there is to be a new, or revived, Roman Empire that would in fact constitute a fifth. Since only four are prophesied, we must conclude that Rome did not die. Rome lives on, and it lacks only one thing as we shall shortly see.

Now, Nebuchadnezzar was disturbed by the dream, but only until he received the interpretation of it. His place in the predicted history of the four great Gentile nations was a secure one, and he was well satisfied with it.

However, Daniel was also disturbed, and the interpretation didn't comfort him one bit. He wondered how all this Gentile ascendancy would fit into God's program for Israel. And so, when Daniel was an old man, God gave to him this same dream again, but in a different figure. No longer were the nations represented by the metal image with all its beauty and outward glory; now they appeared as four carnivorous beasts. They were ferocious animals, and they certainly depict the bestial nature of these kingdoms.

We shall look only briefly at the first three of these, because we are primarily interested in the fourth.

The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: **“I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it”** (Daniel 7:4).

The first beast, a lion, represents Babylon, just as the head of gold represented Babylon.

In Nebuchadnezzar's day, civilization was concentrated in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, and the great Babylonian empire reached out from there, so that in that day it did, indeed, constitute a world empire. There was none to contest the rule of Nebuchadnezzar or those who followed him, until the Medo-Persian empire arose.

“And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh” (Daniel 7:5).

This second beast represents in a graphic way the Medo-Persian empire. As a great, lumbering bear, **“it raised up itself”** first on one side, then on the other.

That is, first the Median side predominated; then the Persian side became of primary importance. This kingdom extended farther than the Babylonian empire, reaching all the way to Pakistan, and almost, but not quite, to Europe. Xerxes attempted to cross the Hellespont and enter Greece, but he was stopped at Thermopolis. Many of us believe that God stopped him there.

“After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it” (Daniel 7:6).

The third beast, a leopard or panther, depicts the Graeco-Macedonian empire under Alexander the Great. As the two wings of the lion represented the mobility of the Babylonian army, so the four wings here indicate the striking speed of Alexander's forces. The bear had no wings, because the Medo-Persian army was noted for size, not for speed.

Alexander the Great was a military genius, and we should remember at least these two things about him.

First, he was the first one to move out into three continents — Europe, Asia, and Africa.

And second, it was he who scattered the Greek language over that wide area.

This was the language which would become *koine*, the common tongue of the Roman Empire, and the language in which the New Testament would be written. God saw to it that there would be a world language in order that the gospel might go out.

But despite Alexander's greatness, his life was a tragedy. He had conquered the world as a very young man, but he died a drunkard at the age of thirty-five.

The third beast has four heads, and it is at Alexander's death that we see them emerging.

His four generals, realizing that no one of them could rule the entire kingdom, divided it among themselves. Seleucus took Syria, Lysimachus ruled over what we know as Asia Minor, Cassander governed Macedonia, and Ptolemy took Egypt. Thus the great empire was divided, with subsequent wars among the four families. All remained strong, however, until the fourth beast appeared on the scene.

It is significant that Daniel gave special emphasis to the fourth metal in the image, and here again he emphasizes the fourth beast. He says more about the fourth beast than about the other three combined, and therefore it must be very important.

“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns” (Daniel 7:7).

This beast is at once seen to be strikingly different from the other three.

Each of the others was easily recognizable as a beast of prey which can be found in any good zoo today. But you will not find the fourth beast there! It is an unnatural, nondescript animal, a monstrosity, with iron teeth corresponding to the iron legs and feet of the image.

As there were only four kingdoms represented by the multi-metallic image, so there are only four beasts. God's Word puts the emphasis upon the fourth kingdom, so let us pay particular attention to it also.

The fourth beast **“was diverse from all the beasts that were before it.”** Was Rome different from the three world empires which preceded it?

A brief consideration will show us some very striking differences.

In the first place, every other empire was destroyed by another stronger kingdom. Can you tell me what kingdom destroyed the Roman Empire? You cannot, because no outside invader ever overcame Rome. We shall see shortly what did happen.

The very character of the Roman Empire reveals a second great difference from other kingdoms. Rome was noted for its strength and especially for its brutality. There were 120 million people in the Roman Empire, and one-half of them were slaves. Rome carried “peace” and good roads throughout the civilized world, all right, but at the price of taxation and slavery for the conquered peoples. Slaves were sold on the open market for as little as twenty-five cents, and in view of this it is not difficult to understand why capital punishment might be meted out for such minor offenses as spilling the soup or kicking the dog. Slaves were cheap, and slave lives were counted of little value.

Another example of Roman brutality is seen in the circuses which the rulers staged for the amusement of the people. This was a nation which found torture and sadism entertaining. (What a pity that they had no television sets!)

“And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise” (Daniel 2:40).

- It was the Roman government which tried the Lord Jesus and nailed Him to the cross. He died on a Roman cross.
- It was Rome that began the great persecution of the Christians, many of whom died in the arenas before the cheering mobs.
- It was Rome that beheaded Paul because of his testimony for Jesus Christ.

It has been estimated that five million Christians sealed their faith and their testimony in martyrdom under the Roman rule.

Rome was corrupt. This is the key that unlocks the puzzle of “Who conquered Rome?”

Gibbon, himself an agnostic, wrote *“The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,”* probably the finest history that has ever been written. He says that the entrance of Christianity destroyed Rome, because Rome was morally corrupt and rotten.

No enemy from the outside destroyed Rome. Attila, the Hun, came to Rome with his hordes of barbarians. He walked into Rome, looked at the great buildings, and was so awed by it all that he took his armies and left. He was so impressed by that great civilization that he didn't even attempt to capture any booty.

No invader conquered Rome. But confronted by the impact of Christianity, a rotten Rome simply fell apart on the inside.

Now, did the Roman Empire die? No, friend — it only fell apart.

Perhaps an illustration from the nursery would be helpful:

Humpty-Dumpty sat on a wall;
Humpty-Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

That is an excellent picture of Rome. Many have tried to put it back together again, and that is what Woodrow Wilson and many after him have tried to do. But it is not time yet. God says it will come together, but only when the time is right, and only He knows exactly when that will be.

Now, we have made the assertion that Rome is in existence today. If this be so, in what form does it exist? In order to answer this question, we shall need to look at a little more history.

We have already mentioned the terrible persecution of Christians. This continued until about 300 A.D., and then there occurred a sudden and drastic change. The Emperor Constantine, supposedly converted to Christianity, issued an edict of toleration, so that no longer were Christians to be persecuted and martyred.

Instead, the church soon found itself elevated to a place of prominence.

And now we begin to see a striking contrast. During the three hundred years of tribulation, the church looked for and expected the "soon coming of Christ" momentarily. With a great sense of urgency, they literally evangelized the whole Roman world. But when the church got into a place of power and position, it began to build a kingdom down here on this earth, and in order to do this, it began to let the pagans in. In came the idolatrous customs and rituals, and before long came the elevation of the mass and the worship of the virgin and child, a distinctly pagan concept. They were busy building an earthly kingdom, and they were no longer looking for the Lord to come.

Then, in the eighth century, there came to the throne of the Germanic states a man by the name of Charlemagne. I am convinced that this man was a Christian, for he spent long hours reading the Scriptures, and evidenced a personal faith in Jesus Christ. He paid no attention to the Popes, choosing rather to follow the Word of God.

But a very strange thing happened to Charlemagne.

Pope Leo III, following an obscure and mysterious sequence of events, crowned Charlemagne King of the Holy Roman Empire. There is reason to believe that Charlemagne was not even aware that this was being planned, and that he made no arrangements for it himself. But he did have a desire to bring the Roman Empire back together again. However, he never succeeded in doing so.

Time magazine, at the beginning of 1959, carried this very interesting statement:

“When the history of the twentieth century is written, last week is likely to prove one of its watersheds. For in the seven days which span 1958 and 1959, Western Europe began to flex its economic muscles for the first time in a decade, and took its biggest step toward unity since the death of Charlemagne, 1145 years ago.”

The reference in *Time* was to an economic pact which has now been signed by all the major European countries, and which is another attempt to reunite Europe, economically, just as Charlemagne tried to “put it back together again” in 800 A.D.

History teaches us that three powers contested for authority over the Roman Empire, each hoping to put it back together. One was Islam, which attempted to take Europe; but after failing at the battle of Tours, this group abandoned the idea. The two remaining contenders for power were the king on the throne and the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. It was a tug-of-war between the political ruler and the religious ruler.

The church came the closest to controlling the empire, for it exercised tremendous influence over the political rulers. On one occasion King Henry IV of Germany, coming to bow to the authority of the Roman Church, was kept waiting barefoot in the snow for three days before Pope Gregory VII would see him!

In exercising this vast power, the Roman Church was attempting to reunite the Roman Empire. But instead of succeeding, it brought on the Dark Ages in Europe.

In more recent years, other men have tried to put the empire back together. Napoleon is a notable example. Rising from obscurity to fame in an incredibly short time, he considered himself a man of destiny, — and indeed he seemed to be. The day came when there was no one to prevent his taking over the entire Roman Empire and ruling it. But God stopped him, and He did it with the weakest thing in the world — a snowflake!

Napoleon was marching on Warsaw when winter caught up with him. His generals advised setting up winter camp and making the assault on Warsaw when spring came. But Napoleon, flushed with victory, determined to conquer Warsaw immediately and winter there. He laughed as he brushed the first few snowflakes from his face, and pushed on ahead. But soon the melting snow softened the ground. Artillery bogged down in the mud, and in the heavy snowfall the cavalry came stumbling over the artillery until all were in a tangle of confusion and Napoleon was hopelessly defeated. He never really recovered from this, and he was actually doomed at Warsaw before he ever got to Waterloo.

He was to say later, “Though they are scattered there are in Europe more than thirty million Frenchmen, fifteen million Spaniards, fifteen million Italians and thirty million Germans. I should like to have made each of these peoples a single united nation.”

Had he done so, he would have been well on his way toward putting together the old Roman Empire. But it was not yet God's time for that.

In this century, several men have attempted to do it. Mussolini was one. Hitler was another. They even tried to do it by joining forces. But they did not succeed.

President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill tried to get it back together, through the Atlantic Charter, with its Four Freedoms. But it still wasn't God's time, and they failed.

And men today are attempting to do the same thing, and achieve peace in the world by sitting at conference tables. But God's Word says,

“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isaiah 57:20, 21).

God says that godless men can never make a permanent peace on this earth. Men must first make peace with God in their hearts. For men are sinners and in rebellion against God, and until they become reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, they cannot have peace.

Now, let us move to the New Testament, to the book of Revelation, and let John pick up the story, for he will tell us a little more about the same ten-horned beast which Daniel saw.

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast [Satan] rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy” (Revelation 13:1).

John was puzzled by this beast, so God gave him a clear interpretation.

“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” (Revelation 17:12)

Now, John wrote this six hundred years after Daniel's time. John was living in the Roman Empire — in fact, it was a Roman emperor who had exiled John to the island of Patmos, where he received the Revelation. And even at that time, John was told that these ten kings had **“received no kingdom as yet.”** That is, in his day they had not come into existence.

The ten toes, the ten horns, the ten kings and the ten kingdoms were yet future when John wrote. But they were coming, and they are still coming, though they have not appeared as yet. The question very logically arises. What ten kingdoms, or countries, are these? We do know that within the boundaries of the old Roman Empire lie Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Switzerland, part of Germany, Turkey and North Africa.

To say that these will constitute the reunited Roman Empire would be sheer speculation.

Undoubtedly at least some of them will be included. But to be very frank and exact, we do not know what will comprise Rome in the last days. God has not told us that, so we will be wiser to concentrate our energies on understanding what He has told us!

Now there follows another very interesting development.

If we look back at Daniel's account, we shall see the emergence of an outstanding leader among these ten nations.

“I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man and a mouth speaking great things” (Daniel 7:8).

“And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first and he shall subdue three kings” (Daniel 7:24).

Here we have the one element presently missing from the Roman Empire, — a leader strong enough to rule it. We have already mentioned several men who have attempted to fill the position, but all of them failed. And today, Europe is looking for a man to put the empire back together again. One source wrote recently.

“Adults may disapprove, but today young Western Europeans from twenty-five on down represent something new and promising on the cross-patch old face of the continent. Growing up in the aftermath of World War II, they have scant interest in the traditional rivalries that fueled it. They are subtly but surely moving toward a common European mentality.”

What the youth of Europe is seeking is a man, — a man big enough to put the Roman Empire back together. Some present-day leaders are trying to be that man. Conrad Adenauer, for instance, has done a remarkable job in West Germany. He says NATO must succeed, and it is he, probably more than anyone else, who has been responsible for the Common Market in Europe today.

Another outstanding leader of our day is Charles De Gaulle, who feels that he is called to restore the grandeur and the glory that once belonged to France, and to help Europe get back together.

May I give you a very strange quotation, from an English source, concerning De Gaulle. De Gaulle himself believed and believes that he has had supernatural visions, supporting his decisions. Indeed, one close member of his personal staff left the general's service because these visions disturbed him. Recently De Gaulle sent for this aide at 3:00 a.m. to tell him that his (De Gaulle's) policy for France was right. The aide asked to be relieved of his position the next day and has since been arrested. De Gaulle is more and more a mystic.

Now, neither of these men is big enough to put Europe back together again, and I'm very glad of that, because when the man comes who can do it he will be Antichrist. And he cannot appear so long as the true Church is in the world. But already, the European mentality is ready for him, and you may be assured that he is coming. He will be the instrument of Satan.

“And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?”

“And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” (Revelation 13:4-7).

The Antichrist or the Beast will become a world dictator for forty-two months — and I believe these are forty-two literal months, the last half of the Great Tribulation period.

He will be able to overcome the tribulation saints who attempt to resist him, because for three and a half years, God is going to take His hands off and let Satan have his way on this earth. That is what Satan wants, and if he were not given this freedom, he would say to God, throughout eternity, “You never gave me a chance.” So, in order to be logical and just, God will give Satan his chance, and the experiment will prove, once and for all, that any rebellion against God must come to nought.

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

Many men will come out for Christ during the great tribulation period, and they will be martyred, for Christians will not be tolerated during that time. There will be no fence-straddling in that day. Men will either worship the Beast or worship Christ, — and to choose Christ will mean certain death.

We are moving toward that day even now, and I am of the opinion that one of the reasons God is permitting communism to arise and succeed as it has succeeded is to let a hypocritical America know that we must either stand up for Christ, or we are going to be against Him. We say that we are a Christian nation, and we are not. We say that we believe in God, and we dishonor Him. God may be trying to remind us that **“He that is not with me is against me”** (Matthew 12:30).

Now will you look at what John reports next?

“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (Revelation 17:3).

This woman is the religious system which goes into the great tribulation period, and which will include Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and all other religions of the world. Antichrist will use this apostate religious system for a while.

“And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication” (Revelation 17:4).

This church will have committed fornication with the kings of the earth. That is, the church and state will be allied together and the church will love it.

The woman is further identified as **“that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth”** (Revelation 17:18). This is Rome, if you please. Antichrist will begin in Rome, and will eventually move the seat of his government to ancient Babylon. But before he does, the woman, the church, will be riding the Beast and sharing his glory. And he will use her tremendous organization and her many followers to help him come to power. But then notice what happens.

“And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire” (Revelation 17:16).

The apostate church will be destroyed by Antichrist in order that he may be exalted. And the nations of the earth will assist him in destroying her, for he will be a world dictator. Notice, please:

“These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (Revelation 17:13).

That will be the day when man, natural man, inherits the earth. And we are moving in that direction right now. The day is coming when one man will be able to sit at one desk, push one button and destroy all of mankind. Who will that man be? He will be Antichrist himself. And when he is sitting there, with his finger on the button, what will the nations of the world do? They will do exactly what he wants them to do! He will be an absolute dictator, and those will be the most frightful forty-two months this world has ever seen.

There is a hint of irony in all we have seen, so far as the United States of America is concerned. For, as we have mentioned, the original impetus for reuniting Europe in our day came from America. And yet it seems a reasonable impossibility for Europe ever to gain ascendancy as the leading world power unless and until the United States loses that position. As long as U.S. dollars continue to dominate the economic scene, and American power remains “in the saddle,” Rome cannot reappear on the scene as a world empire. Apparently the wedding of European states, for which American leaders have argued and labored, could very well be the funeral of our own country.

Have we painted a gloomy picture? The unrestrained reign of apostasy and its final judgment are not pleasant to contemplate, but God has seen fit to let us glimpse these coming events in order that you and I might recognize the urgency of the hour in which we live. **“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”** (II Corinthians 6:2). To the unbeliever, God extends His grace, the offer of eternal life through Jesus Christ, His Son — now. To the child of God comes afresh the challenge to declare **“the gospel of Christ . . . the power of God unto salvation”** (Romans 1:16) — till He come.

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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