

The Revival of Rome

by John F. Walvoord

The sermon explores the possibility of the revival of the ancient Roman Empire based on biblical prophecy and historical background, with the final stage being a world empire that will devour the whole earth.

Scripture: Revelation 13:1

Topics: "End Times", "Biblical Prophecy"

Description

John F. Walvoord preaches about the revival of the ancient Roman Empire, focusing on the Middle East as the center of world history and the future role it will play in world events. He discusses unfulfilled prophecies concerning the times of the Gentiles, the three future stages of the Roman Empire, the future ten-nation confederacy, and the coming Roman prince. Walvoord also delves into the world empire of Rome, the world religion of Rome, the worship of the world ruler, and the future world religious leader, emphasizing the significance of these events in relation to biblical prophecy and the second coming of Christ.

Transcript

The Middle East The Center Of World History

For careful students of history the possibility of revival of the ancient Roman Empire has long been considered plausible. The history of the world for the last 2,500 years has had its principal center of interest in Southern Europe, Northern Africa, and Western Asia. It is only in the last millennium that Northern Europe and Great Britain have become principal actors, and still more recent is the rise of power in the United States of America. While world population in Asia has always exceeded the population of the other continents, somehow they have not figured as largely in the major events of the last millennium.

The Middle East as the geographic hub of three major continents is by its location as well as its long history destined to play an important part in the future. Predictions are not wanting even from non-Christian writers that the Middle East would once again in the future be the center of world political and economic interest. In such a context the revival of the ancient Roman Empire does not seem to be as unlikely as would first appear.

Unfulfilled Prophecy Concerning The Times Of Gentiles

For the Biblical expositor, however, the principal reason for believing in the revival of the ancient Roman Empire is the fact that prophecies dealing with the latter part of this empire have not been fulfilled, in contrast to the specific and detailed fulfillment which occurred in connection with the first three empires -- Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece -- and the first stage of the fourth empire of Rome. Inasmuch as fulfillment of the first portion of this prophecy concerning the times of the Gentiles has been so minute, as illustrated for instance in Daniel 11:1-35, it is logical to assume that the latter portion of the prophecy will have a similar fulfillment. It is for this reason that careful expositors, who fully honor the Word of God as an infallible record and who assume therefore that prophecies of the future are just as authentic as records of history, have concluded that there is yet to appear on the stage of world history a revival of the ancient Roman Empire in the form anticipated in unfulfilled prophecy relating to the times of the Gentiles. The anticipated revival of Rome is related, first, to its geography, second, to indications of its political character, and, third, relationship of the political revival to the last form of apostate religion which will appear before the second advent of Christ.

Geographically the ancient Roman Empire at the height of its power extended from the Euphrates River to the east across Northern Africa and Southern Europe and included a portion of Great Britain. It is obviously not necessary in contemplating such a revival to require that all of this territory should be incorporated in the revived empire in its first stage. It is reasonable to assume, however, that the revived empire would include the ancient capital, Rome, and would be located in a portion of the territory once under Roman control.

Three Future Stages Of The Roman Empire

As far as it is possible to understand the prophetic foreview of this revived empire, it appears that geographically it will go through three stages. First, there will appear a confederacy of ten kingdoms within the ancient Roman Empire which will constitute the first phase of its revival. Second, there will appear a strong man who will consolidate these ten nations into a united kingdom and probably extend its borders in various directions. Third, there is the final stage of the Roman Empire when its power extends to the entire earth. The final or third stage may be in a state of partial disintegration at the time of the second coming of Christ as indicated by the very fact that there is warfare and rebellion against the Roman ruler.

The Future Ten-Nation Confederacy

The Scriptural background for these conclusions is found first in Daniel 2:41-43 where the feet-and-toes stage of the image is described. The Roman Empire, previously divided into eastern and western divisions as indicated by the legs of the image, in its last stage will be represented by the feet of the image, which is divided into ten kingdoms represented by the ten toes, assuming that the toes of the image correspond to the characteristics of man. Daniel chapter 2 does not specifically state that there are ten toes.

The corresponding revelation given in Daniel 7:7, 8 is to some extent more specific and has the advantage of the divine commentary in Daniel 7:17-27 which interprets the characteristics of the fourth beast. The final stage of the Roman Empire is clearly defined in the expression, "it had ten horns" (Daniel 7:7). This is interpreted in Daniel 7:24 as ten kings, "And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise."

There have been many attempts to identify these ten nations specifically, but the Scriptures do not give sufficient information. In the study of prophecy it is well on the one hand to take seriously what the Scriptures do reveal, and on the other hand to respect the silence of Scripture. The identity of the nations

has not been revealed and with this we may be content. The probability is, however, that the ten nations will include not only portions of Southern Europe and Northern Africa, but also some nations in Western Asia, inasmuch as the revived Roman Empire to some extent is viewed as including the three preceding empires which were largely Asiatic. As the Holy Land is the center of Biblical interest, it would only be natural for the empire to include this area, especially when it is taken into consideration that the Holy Land becomes a part of the area of influence of the Roman Empire as demonstrated in the covenant with Israel (Daniel 9:27) and in the later warfare described as being in this area (Ezekiel 38, 39; Daniel 11:40-45; Zechariah 14:1-3).

Although the identity of the ten nations cannot be determined, there has been much speculation concerning the materials which form the toes of the image described in Daniel 2:41-43 as being partly of iron and partly of pottery or dried clay. In the prophecy attention is called to the fact that iron does not mix with the clay and therefore that the feet of the image are the weakest portion of the entire structure. According to Daniel 2:41, 43, "the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay."

It is clear that inasmuch as the legs of iron represent the strength of the ancient Roman Empire further described in the "great iron teeth" of Daniel 7:7 the clay must in some sense be an area of political weakness. A common interpretation is that the clay is democracy in contrast to the absolute government of the Roman Empire. This, however, seems to be a superficial conclusion as the Roman Empire had during a portion of its history at least a form of democracy.

Another suggestion has been that the clay represents the people of Israel who by their religious and racial characteristics are not easily absorbed in a Gentile government and constitute a difficulty rather than a strength within the revived Roman Empire. This again, however, is conjecture and not without its difficulties.

Probably a safe interpretation is that the clay mixed with iron represents the diverse elements, whether they be racial, religious, or political, that are included in the confines of the revived Roman Empire and contribute to its ultimate downfall. This view may be supported by the fact that the Roman Empire when it does reach its world stage immediately begins to encounter difficulties that result in the final world conflict which is underway when Christ returns. Again it is difficult to be specific where the Word of God does not give us the precise interpretation of the symbolism involved in the clay. The revelation of the fourth empire in Daniel 7 does not mention this weakness.

The Coming Roman Prince

That the ten-nation confederacy is a Roman confederacy and a revival of the Roman Empire is brought out in the second stage of the development, not mentioned in Daniel 2, but is revealed in Daniel 7:8. Here according to the Scriptures, out of the ten horns or the original ten kings who formed the first phase of the Roman confederacy another little horn appears representing a ruler who conquers three of the kings and apparently secures the subjection of the others: "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).

As the prophecy indicates, the little horn is described as a man in that he has eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things such as a man would speak. In the interpretation of the vision in Daniel 7:24 he is described in the words, "Another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings." It is quite obvious that this character is a man who conquers three of the kings by war with the implication that the others submit to him. His blasphemous character is indicated in Daniel 7:25 and his destruction will occur at the second advent in Daniel 7:26, 27.

The fact that he is a Roman prince is a deduction from Daniel 9:26, 27. According to this Scripture in the chronology of Daniel's seventy-sevens of years, the Messiah was to be cut off in the interval between the sixty-ninth seven and the seventieth seven. This refers, of course, to the death of Christ. The prophecy continues, "And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary" (Daniel 9:26). The most sensible interpretation of this reference is that it concerns the destruction of Jerusalem under the Roman general Titus in a.d. 70 which also occurred in the interval between the sixty-ninth seven and the beginning of the seventieth seven.

The peculiar expression "the people of the prince that shall come" must be interpreted as referring to the Roman people for they were the ones who destroyed the city. It then follows that "the prince that shall come" is also Roman. Inasmuch as he is able to make the political covenant because of his political power, it follows that if he is Roman, then the empire also is Roman. This is, of course, confirmed by the very continuity of the fourth empire linking the last stage with the first stage which was obviously Roman.

As the destruction of Jerusalem came approximately forty years after the Messiah was cut off, it demonstrates clearly that the last seven years of Daniel 9:27 in which a covenant is made with the people of Israel must be subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, the chronology requires a time period between the sixty-ninth seven and the seventieth seven which has extended to the present day. The prophecy of Daniel 9:27 can only be fulfilled when the Roman prince appears who will make the covenant and when he is in a position of power to do so. It would therefore follow that the covenant will be signed only after the little horn of Daniel 7 has conquered the ten kings and has reached a place of political supremacy over them. The revival of Israel in the form of the Israeli nation in the twentieth century may be a preparation for the fulfillment of this prophecy and one of the indications that world history may be moving into its final stage.

The possibility of the formation of such a ten-nation confederacy headed by a dictator in the form of "the prince that shall come" has long been predicted by students of prophecy. Until the period following World War II, however, humanly speaking it seemed a remote possibility, although there had been forerunners of such an idea. As early as 1914, a committee was formed for the promotion of a European Federation which anticipated political, economic, and legal ties. The movement toward such a European Federation emerged after World War I in the League of Nations, an organization which failed, however, to gain sufficient support to endure.

With World War II, and its reminder to the nations of the world that war is not the best way to settle disputes, the United Nations was formed, thus embodying for the first time a world government in principle.

More significant, however, to the possibility of a revival Roman Empire was the emergence of the European Common Market. Under agreements between the principal nations of continental Europe, a gradual reduction in tariffs was achieved, allowing a free flow of goods from one country to another and

unhindered transfer of available labor. The resulting prosperity of Europe under this arrangement has brought forth many predictions of an ultimate United States of Europe which could eventually include not only Europe itself, but the Mediterranean world. Whether the Common Market in its present form is prophetically significant or not, it silences critics of the idea of a revived Roman Empire who had previously claimed that such a union was impossible because of the diverse political, economic, and racial factors which had separated the European nations for centuries. With the economic feasibility of such a union already demonstrated, it is a relatively short step to a common banking system and political ties which would bind various nations together while allowing them freedom on a larger scale than that afforded by the individual states of the United States of America.

How the ten-nation confederacy will arise is too early to predict. Many prophecies anticipate that nations will find themselves in distress and perplexity at the end of the age (cp. Luke 21:25, 26). The beast of Revelation 13:1 is said to come up out of the sea, a figure often used of the nations of the world as in Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 17:12, 13, where the rushing of the nations is compared to the rushing of mighty waters. The empire will be the child of its times, a result of political, economic, and military pressures.

The World Empire Of Rome

The final state of the revived Roman Empire politically is described as being an empire which embraces the entire world. This third stage in development is brought out specifically in Daniel 7:23 where the fourth beast is predicted to "devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces." This picture of world-wide dominion is confirmed by the companion prophecy found in Revelation 13. Here it is specifically said of the beast that "power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him" (Revelation 13:7, 8).

This final stage where the Roman Empire becomes a world empire is most naturally understood to coincide with the beginning of the great tribulation, a term referring to the last three and one-half years leading up to the second advent of Christ. The Scriptures do not directly explain how the Roman Empire becomes a world empire, but a plausible explanation may be found in the battle of Gog and Magog described in Ezekiel 38, 39.

Here is predicted the destruction of the northern kingdom which apparently challenged the Roman Empire by attacking Israel. With the northern kingdom destroyed there is no major political force standing in the way of the Roman Empire, and the world empire is achieved by proclamation. The apparent invincibility of the Roman ruler, supported as he is by Satanic power, is intimated in the question of Revelation 13:4, "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?"

The fact that this world empire begins at the mid-point in Daniel's last seven years leading up to the second advent is supported by Revelation 13:5 where it states that "power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." Inasmuch as the power of this character is broken by the second advent of Christ, it fixes the beginning of his world empire as exactly forty-two months prior to the second advent.

The political character of this world empire is such, however, that it is not firmly established. This paves the way for rebellion of major sections of the world described as leading up to the battle of the great day of God almighty, a world conflict which is brought to an abrupt close by the second coming of Christ and destruction of the contending armies (Revelation 19:11-21).

The World Religion Of Rome

The geographic and political characteristics of the revived Roman Empire form the background for the religious character of the revival of Rome. According to prophetic Scriptures which describe the religious character of the period preceding the second advent of Christ, two major phases can be observed. The first is the apostate church described under the symbolism of the wicked woman of Revelation 17. The present theological apostasy which has engulfed so large a segment of the professing church will in that day, after the true church has been raptured, become a part of the world church movement and apparently will be successful in combining all the unsaved remnant of the professing church left behind at the rapture into a gigantic ecclesiastical organization of tremendous wealth, prestige, and political importance.

The Apostle John was introduced to this ecclesiastical organization symbolized by the woman in Revelation 17. He was invited by the angel, "Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Revelation 17:1, 2). John thus carried by the Spirit into the wilderness according to Revelation 17:3 beheld the woman who is described as sitting "upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns" (Revelation 17:3).

The beast thus described as blasphemous is unquestionably the same as that in Revelation 13:1 which has seven heads and ten horns and "the name of blasphemy." This beast is the revived Roman Empire in its political character as it will appear in the end of the age. The fact that the woman rides the beast indicates symbolically that the political and religious character of the Roman Empire work closely together with the woman in a dominant position and the beast as supporting the woman.

The traditional interpretation of this passage has identified the woman with the Roman Catholic Church. It should be observed, however, that this is a picture which is prophetically future and describes not the Roman church alone, but all Christendom combined under the Roman banner in that future day. It is most natural to assume that there would be an alliance between the Roman church, including all Christendom, and the revived Roman Empire. The description of the woman in Revelation 17:4 is in keeping with the religious trappings of ceremonial Romanism where the purple and the scarlet color accompanied by gold, precious stones, and pearls are all too common. As this alliance of the woman with the political power constitutes spiritual fornication, she is described as guilty of this abomination.

Most significant is the title written on her forehead described as a mystery, namely, babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. The religious impact of ancient Babylon upon subsequent religions, including Romanism, is all too evident to students of the history of religion. It was in Babylon that the idolatrous worship of nature first was developed into an extensive religious system which has been traced to Nimrod and his queen Semiramis (Genesis 10:8-10). From this stemmed many of the false religions which swept the ancient world including the worship of Baal and the custom of worshipping the queen of heaven and her supposedly miraculously born son (cp. Jeremiah 7:18; 44: 17-25). In ancient religions the queen of heaven and her worship is incorporated in the religions of the Greeks as Aphrodite, among the Romans as Venus, in Egypt as Isis, as Diana in Ephesus, and as Astarte in Syria.

From the standpoint of the history of Christianity, it is important to trace the influence of Babylon upon Rome especially. The cult of the woman and the child was expelled by the Medes and the Persians under Cyrus from Babylon in 539 b.c. as it was considered detrimental to the religious convictions of the

Medo-Persians. The priests and priestesses of the cult, therefore, fled to Pergamos in Asia Minor where they were welcomed. Later the center of their religion was transferred by Julius Caesar to Rome in an attempt to combine their false religion with his dictatorship and introduce a religious element into his government. It was by these steps that Babylon became identified with Rome religiously and justifies the term "mystery" meaning that it should be understood in its religious rather than its historical character. With the establishment of the western branch of the Roman church in Rome, the pagan influences of the cult which originated in Babylon soon became manifested in various rites and ceremonies of the Roman Church.

That which has been historically true will reach its maximum in the future period under the revived Roman Empire. The world church of that day, almost entirely devoid of any true Christian or Biblical elements, will be the final form of apostate Christendom. As such, it will persecute any who in that day in defiance of the church follow true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The persecutions of Christians in the past under the power and authority of the church will be eclipsed by this future world church described as this wicked woman "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

The political power in alliance with the religious power is described in Revelation 17:8-14 in a passage which has confounded expositors, but concerning which the main elements are clear. The beast representing the political power is described as that which "was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition" (Revelation 17:8). Later in the same verse the beast is described as "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is" [better translated, "that was, and is not, and shall be"] (Revelation 17:8). The beast is further described by the declaration of Revelation 17:9 that "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." The explanation continues in Revelation 17:10, "And there are seven kings."

Much has been written in the debate as to whether the seven mountains here describe the city of Rome often known as the city of seven hills. Many have concluded that this passage is declaring that the seat of authority for both the political and the ecclesiastical aspects of the revived Roman Empire will be the city of Rome. The passage is, however, by no means clearly a reference to the city of Rome, as the seven kings of verse 10 seem to be an exposition of what is meant by both the seven heads and the seven mountains. If the kings are the mountains and the heads, then they do not refer to the geographic situation of the city of Rome. Some nevertheless feel that the description is such that it includes both ideas.

The seven heads seem to refer to successive stages of the Roman Empire as personified in its principal rulers. In describing the seven kings in Revelation 17:10, the passage continues, "Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space." This is followed by the statement in Revelation 17:11, "And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." If the eighth beast is a person heading up a political government such as the revived Roman Empire, it would naturally follow that the seven heads which precede him are also men following in chronological order and symbolizing the principal steps in the history of the ancient Roman Empire.

It has been suggested that these five heads may refer to ancient Roman rulers who had an untimely end, but who in life were worshiped as gods. Among these could be Julius Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. Some have suggested that the expression "the one is" of Revelation 17:10 refers to Domitian, the last of the Caesars, and living at the time the Apostle John wrote this book. He was to be followed by a seventh who would be a forerunner to the eighth and final ruler who will appear in the period of the revived

Roman Empire prior to the second advent of Christ.

In contrast to the seven kings, which seems to refer to chronological succession of rulers, are the ten kings represented by the ten horns who reign at the same time as the eighth beast. These are described as minor rulers supporting the rule of the one who is over them. In the end they fight God and perish in the final battle of Revelation 19 (Revelation 17:13, 14; 19:17-21).

In Revelation 17:15 the narrative returns to consideration of the wicked woman who is described as sitting upon many waters in Revelation 17:1 which is here interpreted as "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." This introduces, however, the dramatic end of the world church. According to Revelation 17:16, 17, "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. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." Probably at the beginning of the last three and a half years (the great tribulation preceding the second coming of Christ), the super-church which up to this time has worked with the political powers to gain control over the entire world is then suddenly destroyed. The world church has served its purpose. It has helped to place the entire world in the hands of the world political ruler. Its wealth, prestige, and organization are now at his disposal and he uses them to support his world power.

The Worship Of The World Ruler

The last stage religiously of the times of the Gentiles will feature the worship of the world ruler. Concerning this, many Scriptures make a contribution. In Daniel 11:36-45 a description is given of the last days preceding the second advent of Christ. In this section described as "the time of the end" (Daniel 11:35), a king will appear who is described as an absolute monarch. Expositors have not been entirely agreed as to the particular identity of this king. Some have regarded him as a ruler in the Holy Land, possibly of Jewish background. A more likely interpretation, however, is that this king is none other than the prince that shall come of Daniel 9:26 and the same as the little horn of Daniel 7:3, who at the beginning of the great tribulation will take the role of world ruler.

The description of the king reveals him as an absolute ruler. According to Daniel 11:36, "The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done." The fact that he is described as an absolute ruler and that none is greater than he would seem to identify him clearly as the world ruler. He is also described as magnifying himself above God and taking the place of God which is also an accurate description of this world ruler during the time of the great tribulation. It would therefore seem unlikely that he would be a subordinate ruler who would not be in a position of power to accomplish either absolute political government or to demand that people would recognize him as God.

Much has been written on Daniel 11:37, 38 where the statement is made concerning him, "Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things."

The expression that he shall not regard "the God of his fathers" has been interpreted by some as indicating a Jewish background. The characteristic Hebrew, however, for this expression in the entire Old Testament is the "Jehovah of his fathers" rather than the "Elohim of his fathers" as it is here. The term

Jehovah is used only of the God of Israel, but the term Elohim is used both of the God of Israel and of heathen gods, and it also lends itself to translation as a term which is plural. The better translation is, "He shall not regard the gods of his fathers." This means that he will disregard whatever religion his forefathers followed. He also disregards "the desire of women" referring to the desire of women to be the mother of the Messiah. He puts aside the Messianic hope of a Saviour and Deliverer for Israel. Then to make it plain Daniel continues to record the message of the angel that this character will not regard any god, but shall consider himself above all deities. The world ruler who heads the revived Roman Empire will require the entire world to worship him.

In Daniel 11:38 he is described as worshiping "the God of forces." This is better understood as "the God of fortresses" or symbolically the worship of the power of military might. This indicates that this ruler, on the one hand, requires all to worship him as God, and, on the other hand, has respect only for military might. By this means he puts aside any recognition of the true God, any consideration of the supernatural sovereignty of God, and relying on satanic power attributes to himself all the prerogative of both God and supreme ruler of the entire world.

The description thus given in Daniel 11 is supported by New Testament additional revelation. According to II Thessalonians 2:3, 4 in the future day of the Lord there will appear a lawless one or "man of sin" who will be "the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." This passage prophesies that the world ruler who attributes to himself the prerogatives of deity, having desecrated the temple set aside for Jewish worship under the covenant of Daniel 9:27, probably through the form of an idol will demand that people worship him. The universal worship of the world ruler is stated explicitly in Revelation 13:8, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him."

The Future World Religious Leader

The future world ruler is supported in his efforts to gain the worship of the entire world by the second beast of Revelation 13:11-18 who originated as the supreme religious head of the world church and when this was destroyed is perpetuated in power as a supporting personage in the efforts of the beast to gain the worship of the entire world.

According to Revelation 13:11-15 he has remarkable powers attributed to Satan. He causes fire to come down from heaven and performs other miracles including an apparent ability to simulate life, or breath, in the idol of the world ruler to deceive men into thinking that the image has life. The expression in Revelation 13:15, "And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast," is better translated, "And he hath power to give breath unto the image of the beast." The appeal to universal recognition of the beast as God, supported as he is by the second beast or the false prophet, is enforced by the edict that all shall be put to death who do not worship the image. Economic pressure is also put upon the entire world in that all receive the mark of the beast, namely, some token indicating that they are a worshiper of the beast as an identifying symbol to permit them to buy and sell.

The satanic power of this period exceeds that of any previous time and men are put in complete bondage to the worship of the beast except for those who in that day, in spite of the difficulties and even martyrdom, do come to Christ in salvation and resist the pressures to worship the world ruler. In this way the supreme power of the final world ruler and the empire which he creates is used by Satan to enslave the souls of men and bring upon the world deception of a religious character which will blind the eyes of the great

majority of the world to the true facts concerning Jesus Christ.

The extreme deceptive character of this total program centering as it does in the world ruler is pictured graphically in II Thessalonians 2:8-12 where he is described as working with satanic power, deceiving those who would not receive the love of the truth. The Scriptures solemnly conclude, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2:11, 12).

When the great opportunity in this present age of grace of receiving Christ as Saviour, accompanied as it is by the convicting work of the Spirit, is spurned it leads into this period during which satanic deception will reach new heights and the great mass of the world's population will blindly follow their leader to their doom. The political and spiritual warfare attributed to the beast in Daniel 7:21, 25 will have its literal fulfillment.

These great prophecies predicting the rise of the ten-nation confederacy headed by a Roman ruler who ultimately will gain control over this entire world are the major prophetic program of the period between the rapture and Christ's second coming to the earth. Into this context fit many other prophetic Scriptures such as the great battle of Ezekiel 38 and 39 and the final conflict in which the king of the south, kings of the east, and the king of the north are engaged in deadly struggle with the head of the Roman Empire at the very time that Christ returns in power and glory. Because of its strategic importance in the sequence of the events of the end time, the great battle of Ezekiel 38 and 39 will next be considered.

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