

THE FOURTH KINGDOM (Chapter 11:14-22)

The fourteenth verse of the eleventh chapter of Daniel, as we have seen, introduces a new power. Gabriel, in narrating the events connected with the history of Greece, brought that empire down to the time when the southern division was in the hands of a child, Ptolemy Epiphanes, and when two men, Philip of Macedon and Antiochus of Syria, although jealous of each other, were willing to unite their strength in order to subdue Egypt. From a political point of view a general weakness prevailed in the once mighty empire of Alexander. Without noticing the details, the angel of prophecy speaks of the first appearance of the fourth kingdom as it comes in contact with the divisions of the third kingdom, Greece. This fourth kingdom is thus introduced: "The violent opposers of thy people shall exalt themselves that the vision may stand." (Spurrell.) SDP 200.1

Since every word is divinely given, there is a significance in the very introduction of what is about to become the mightiest kingdom of the earth, and at the same time the greatest enemy which the people of God ever had to meet. Daniel had seen this kingdom before. In the vision of the seventh chapter, Rome was represented as a beast too terrible to name. Its characteristics were to devour, to stamp in pieces, and to break. During a part of its history it should speak great words against the Most High; it should wear out the saints of God, and think even to change his laws. So troubled was the prophet over the view in his first vision that he sought for a special explanation of this fourth kingdom. SDP 200.2

In his next vision the fourth kingdom was again shown under the symbol of a little horn, which sprang from one of the divisions of Alexander's kingdom. In this view Rome was presented in no milder form than in the previous vision. It was as a king with a "fierce countenance," "understanding dark sentences," having mighty power—a power even more than human. It was to be a scheming, underhanded government, and its most cruel practices were seen to be against God's chosen people. Yea, against Christ, the Prince of princes, the Prince of the covenant, this power should stand up. Gabriel spoke of the robbers who should exalt themselves to establish the vision—that is, to fulfill the description just given. SDP 201.1

Putting all these thoughts together, it will be seen that Rome, the fourth kingdom, the successor of Greece, would be noted for the decisive policy which it maintained. Each nation in the prophetic chain had some strong feature, and its history is recorded as an object lesson to the world, as in the days of its life it had been an object lesson to the watching multitudes of other worlds. Babylon was an example of Satan's power to establish a *religion* which counterfeited the heavenly worship. The result was the basest form of idolatry, a fornication which makes her the personification, among Bible writers, of all vileness. Medo-Persia was a type of Oriental despotism. "The law of the Medes and Persians changeth not;" this was a proverb among the nations. But it was with the kings of this nation that Gabriel and Michael wrought; it was the heads of this despotism who were kept in check by the power of the King of kings. SDP 201.2

Greece was altogether different from the preceding two, and instead of gaining recognition because of the form of religion or government, she gained control of the world by the power of her intellect. With her education and philosophy she gained a foothold which no other nation ever held. When Babylon was overthrown and Medo-Persia was no more, Greece lived on in the *minds* of men. SDP 202.1

But the fourth kingdom was “diverse from all the others.” As represented to John, Rome, the beast of Revelation 13:2, combined the characteristics of the leopard, the bear, and the lion. There was united the false system of the religion of ancient Babylon, the governmental tyranny of Medo-Persia, and the mixture of good and evil in the intellectual culture of Greece. When the religion and educational system, or intellectual statutes, and the governmental history of a nation is given, there remains little else worth relating. So in the one nation, Rome, is embodied the strength of all previous nations. What wonder that it was a terrible and dreadful nation, and that except the time of its supremacy should be shortened there should be none left to witness for the truth! It is to this power that we are introduced in the fourteenth verse of Daniel 11. SDP 202.2

It was in the year 201 B. C. that the child, Ptolemy Epiphanes, fell heir to the throne of Egypt, and the kings of Macedon and Syria planned his overthrow and the division of his empire. It was then that Rome arose to prominence before the prophet's eye. But Rome had already been in existence for years, and during those years had been accumulating strength to enable her to enter the arena with a bound when the proper time should come. The traditional history of Rome dates as far back as the middle of the eighth century before Christ. That was before the days of Nebuchadnezzar and the glories of Babylon. In the days when Isaiah began to prophesy then Rome was founded. It was said to be the home of a band of robbers and outlaws, and one of the first acts was the theft of the women of a neighbouring city as wives for these early settlers. So if Romans are called the children of robbers, the character cannot be denied. The Romans were a stalwart, sturdy race, and from the first began the development of a strong central government. In this undertaking men were aided by the prince of this world, the devil himself; for the dragon, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, gave the fourth beast “his power and his seat, and great authority.” SDP 202.3

The force of all history is lost unless the student recognizes each nation as an actor in the great plan of redemption—one of the participants in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. As the plans of the arch-enemy had failed to carry in the history of Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece, he now attempted with redoubled vigor to thwart the plans of God. He chose for this purpose the seven-hilled city. His plans were deep laid, and the structure that he reared was builded on a firm foundation. Like a lighthouse off some rocky coast, the great planner hoped it would stand the mighty dashings of the waves of truth. It was his last, his supreme effort, for it is this kingdom in one of its manifestations which stands until the end of time. SDP 203.1

In its earliest days Rome was ruled by kings, but it was impossible for a Western king to imitate the customs of the Oriental monarchies. Greek governments spanned the gulf between early despotism and the liberality of more modern Western nations. There were two classes of men in Rome, and they demanded representation in the government. At the end of two hundred and fifty years the kings were dethroned, and the rule of consuls substituted. This provided that two consuls from the wealthy class, the patricians, should hold the reins of government. For the next two centuries there was a struggle between patricians and plebeians for equal rights. The principles of republicanism were struggling for birth. Gradually the patricians lost power, until at last the government rested in the hands of the people—that is, citizens of Rome. But there were conquered cities, especially in the peninsula of Italy. “Roman dominion in Italy was a dominion of a city over cities.” Finally rights of citizenship were granted to most of these. SDP 204.1

God's government is a representative government, and while he sits as King of kings, he bears sway by common consent, and his subjects from all the worlds have

representatives in the councils of heaven. Satan, as prince of this world, was a representative in those days in that council. In Rome he attempted to counterfeit that phase of the divine government. SDP 204.2

It was as a republic that Rome began her career as a conquering nation. Her constitution was the result of a gradual growth of two centuries. Having her authority recognized throughout Italy, of which Rome was the centre, she began acquiring territory by force of arms. Carthage, a rival city on the south of the Mediterranean, was the first point of attack, and for one hundred years Rome fought for supremacy. It was a bitter struggle, which could end in nothing less than the annihilation of one of the contending parties. Ridpath aptly expresses the policy of the government when he says, "They [the Romans] took what they could and then took the remainder." SDP 204.3

During the years when Rome hovered over Carthage, like an eagle ready to descend upon its prey, she was also carrying on wars of aggression in other directions. Both the West and the East were invaded. Spain was made a subjected province; all the citizens were taxed; the silver and gold mines, the wealth of that country, were confiscated as state property, and no city was allowed to fortify itself without the consent of Rome. This was so-called republicanism-the equal rights of men-as understood and practiced by Rome. SDP 205.1

The inhabitants of Corsica and Sardinia were sold in the slave markets of Rome, and so numerous were these slaves, says Livy that "Sardinians for sale" became a proverbial expression for anything cheap. This also was Roman republicanism! Macedonia and Greece were in a state of turmoil, and Rome interfered. After conferences and wars, independence was proclaimed to all Greeks. This was one of the policy schemes by which the republic worked, but liberty lasted for only a brief space. A few years later all those Macedonians who were able to govern themselves were carried to Rome, while those left were inexperienced men who soon played into the hands of the Roman senate. One hundred and fifty thousand Greeks were sold as slaves, and the treasures taken paid all expenses contracted during the war. So high was the tribute exacted from subjected provinces that it relieved Roman citizens of all taxes for future wars. This was independence as granted subjected provinces by the republic of Rome! SDP 205.2

The family of Antiochus was still bearing sway in the Eastern world. It was Antiochus IV who proposed to unite with Philip V of Macedon against the young king of Egypt when Rome interfered. But mild interference was never enough for Rome, although she sometimes assumed to play that role for a time. Antiochus the Great in the single battle of Magnesia (B. C. 190) lost all his conquests in Asia Minor. He was obliged to pay three thousand talents, and an annual subsidy of one thousand talents, for twelve years. SDP 206.1

Rome controlled Egypt because the education of the heir to the throne was in the hand of a Roman senator, and a Roman army stood ready to defend the country against all attacks from the north or east. Roman power thus encircled the Mediterranean. SDP 206.2

The liberty granted to conquered nations was a myth. Rome was a republic only in name. It was as impossible for Rome to grant liberty to her dependencies as it would be for Satan himself to manifest the attributes of God. Any nation, it matters not what its pretensions, nor the wording of its constitution, nor the will of some of its people, that departs from the principles of liberty of conscience, will find it impossible to maintain a

republic other than in name. This is true also in individual experience, and liberty is known only when Christ is enthroned in the heart. SDP 206.3

There are always certain other results which accompany wars of conquest. For instance, this policy demands a large army. In the early days of Rome the army was made up of men who left the plow and the shop for the defense of their country, and when war was over, returned to their homes and their trades; but as war became a regular business, generals found it to their advantage to keep their soldiers in readiness. "The soldiery were not so much servants of the state as attached to the person of a successful general, whom they regarded as their patron." The way was thus open for military despotism, and Rome experienced that form of government more than once. SDP 207.1

The senate, supposed to represent the people, became a corporation greedy for gain and enriched by the spoils of war. Senatorial favorites received rich provinces to govern, and bribery was almost universally practiced. "The power of the purse" was in the hands of the senate alone. To their influence may be added the constant and steady growth of the cities, and the decline of the rural population, a practice always ruinous to republicanism, and one always encouraged by a false system of education and religion. SDP 207.2

Tradition made the Romans the descendants of the god of war, Mars, the Bruiser, and they were true to the character. Said the inspired penman, "It shall break in pieces and bruise." Christ came to Rome as the Prince of peace, the binder up of wounds, the healer of the broken-hearted. SDP 207.3

The religion of Rome was secondary to its government. That is, the state was the one all-absorbing institution. A man in Rome was great, not because of any character he bore, or deed he may have done, but for the simple fact that he was a Roman citizen. Name took the place of character. Here is seen the reverse of truth. With God it is character which gives the name; with Rome it was name independent of character. SDP 208.1

Although religion was subservient to the state, yet the form of religion in Rome played an important part in its history, especially in the second or papal phase. Since the papacy was a continuation of paganism, it is necessary to notice its leading features. There were no sweet singers as David the Bethlehemite; the nature study of the Greeks was also lacking. There were gods many and lords many, but a stern nature characterized all worship. Man was deified and canonized. The very name Augustus, which was applied to a long line of emperors, meant *divine*. SDP 208.2

In the Roman temples a body of priests performed the sacred rites, but they were appointed by the state. The highest religious officer during the life of paganism was the Pontifex Maximus, the pope of paganism, and he was a civil officer. The religious hierarchy, consisting of priests, augurs, vestals and Pontifex Maximus, paved the way for the papal hierarchy of later days, just as the transition from republicanism to imperialism opened the gate for papal supremacy. SDP 208.3

In literature and education Rome borrowed largely from Greece, so that the intellectual supremacy of that nation must be traced to Greece, although the man of learning was often a slave sold in the markets of his captors. SDP 209.1

It was, however, the education which prevailed in Greece, and which was copied by Rome, that trained a class of citizens for warfare, from tyranny, and for the papacy. SDP 209.2

Roman law is extolled as the basis of all civil law to-day. It was developed gradually as before stated, and the wheat of truth was mingled with the tares of error. It was good and evil, like the tree of which Adam partook in the garden. This is seen in latter-day applications of those laws. The Greek worship of mind or reason, applied to Roman love of law, made the lawyer of Rome the forefather of that class of reasoners who to-day sway the world by argument rather than by the rule of justice. SDP 209.3

Satan has but one plan-that is the development of sin; God has but one-the unfolding of truth and love. All history is an object lesson, showing how God thwarts the thousand ways by which the devil's plans are unfolding, and national history is but individual experience on a large scale. SDP 209.4

Students very often read the story of nations, forgetting that they have before them a picture of their own lives. National history, rather than individual experience, is given in prophecy, because it is like a magnified view thrown on the canvas, revealing details that would be overlooked in the study of one man. It should be remembered that when principles are referred to, such as republicanism, Protestantism, monarchy, papacy, liberty, or oppression, each has an application in man dealing with man, in church members' dealings with one another, and in nation with nation. SDP 209.5

With these facts in mind, the prophecies of Daniel concerning Rome may be understood. It seems that Gabriel called attention to the fourth kingdom, not at the beginning of its existence, but at the time when all the principles previously set forth were well developed, and in just the stage to grow rapidly when the proper environments should be offered. The republic was in reality dead, although its corpse was yet unburied, and men were unwilling to acknowledge that life had really departed. During the transition period between the republic and the full-fledged empire of verse 20, a number of actors took a prominent part. It was a time of severe contest between men to see who could best serve the purpose of the controller of affairs who stood behind the throne of earthly monarchs. As the republic lost power, a corporation composed of Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus took the reins of government. Crassus controlled the money, Pompey had the army, and Caesar was the master mind. SDP 210.1

The Roman army, with Pompey as leader, swept through Asia Minor and Syria, and the entire kingdom of the Seleucidae fell at his feet. Antioch and every fortified station of the Eastern Empire crumbled as he advanced. Pompey, called upon to decide between rulers of the Jews, entered Jerusalem, and, as in times past, the knowledge of the God of Israel was made known to the nation which was leading the world. Pompey, however, acted very differently from Alexander. He entered the city by force after a siege of three months; the walls were demolished and the Jews put under tribute to the Roman government. Rome now stood "in the glorious land which by his hand shall be consumed." This was in B. C. 63. SDP 210.2

The wisdom of God in choosing Palestine as the home of the Jews is recognized more and more as history progresses. There was no mistake in the location, and there was no lowering of the standard set for that nation. In the days of Roman supremacy, as in the days of Solomon, it was the divine will that Israel should be the light of the world. They were intrusted with the sacred oracles of truth, and each nation was brought to them as to a fountain of living water. Had the Hebrew race been true to its appointed duty, the history of the whole world would read entirely different. Rome came to Jerusalem-came because sent of God, but the well was a cracked and leaky cistern, and the soul-thirst of the nation

could not be quenched. As a result, Rome enslaved the Jews: the power of life which repels the enemy was *lacking*. SDP 211.1

It was during the rule of the first triumvirate that Egypt, the kingdom of the south, was again entered by Rome. The Roman senate in whose charge Cleopatra and her brother, Ptolemy Dionysius, had been placed by their father, had requested Pompey to visit Egypt to settle difficulties. Pompey, however, was slain while crossing to the land in a small boat. Caesar entered Alexandria shortly after and espoused the cause of Cleopatra who had been obliged to flee from the capital. Caesar was victorious over the ruling faction in Alexandria, and before leaving the city, enthroned Cleopatra and graced his triumph in Rome with Arsinoë, a representative of the royal family of the Ptolomies. History states that Caesar spent some nine months in Egypt, which was unusual for this general, as his rapid movements from place to place were one secret of his success. SDP 211.2

Caesar as a general stood in a position to accomplish for the fourth kingdom what Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, and Alexander had done for the former three, but we have no record that he even acknowledged God as a ruler of nations. He was fascinated and corrupted by the queen of Egypt. The seventeenth verse, while describing a particular event in history, also symbolizes the corrupting influence of Egypt whenever the north came in touch with the south. Egypt was a blight to men and nations alike, from the days of Abraham to Caesar, and its influence still lives, a type of sin and bondage. SDP 212.1

Leaving Egypt, Caesar passed along the coast of Palestine and Asia Minor, receiving the submission of all peoples with such rapidity that he sent the famous dispatch to Rome, "I came, I saw, I conquered" (*Veni, Vidi, Vici*). He returned to Rome, where he altered laws, strengthened the senate, settled disturbances in the army, and later brought western Africa, which had revolted, into submission. SDP 212.2

Caesar was an organizer as well as a warrior, and displayed greater liberality and breadth of ideas than any previous ruler. Roman franchise was granted to the citizens of many cities hitherto excluded, and all scientific men, of whatever nationality, were equally honoured. Still greater plans for Roman improvement were found among his papers after death. He was nearing the pinnacle of earthly fame when he fell, pierced by a score of daggers, in the presence of the senate which he controlled. He "stumbled and fell," leaving no heir to the throne. Another great man had passed from the scene of action. Heaven was watching, for the birth of the Son of man was near at hand. SDP 212.3

It was the year 44 B. C. when the plans of Julius Caesar were cut short by his untimely death. Republicanism was so far gone that the government fell into the hands of the strongest men, those who had military support. SDP 213.1

Lepidus, one of the second triumvirates, soon died; Antony, a second member, enamoured by Cleopatra, entrapped in the net of Egyptian darkness, cast himself upon his own sword and died; Octavius, an adopted son of Julius Caesar, alone remained. Says Gibbon: "A marital nobility and stubborn commons, possessed of arms, tenacious of property, and collected into constitutional assemblies, form the only balance capable of preserving a free constitution against the enterprises of an aspiring prince." Rome had none of these; every barrier of the Roman constitution had been levelled by the ambition of Octavius, called Caesar Augustus. Furthermore, the provinces had so long been oppressed by the scheming ministers of the republic that they gladly welcomed a one-man power. Augustus restored the senate to its former dignity, it is true, but "the principles of a free constitution are irrevocably lost when the legislative power is nominated by the

executive.” So Octavius was proclaimed emperor of Rome by the unanimous vote of that same servile senate. SDP 213.2

Thus was Caesar Augustus, the raiser of taxes, brought to the head of the fourth kingdom. SDP 214.1

After centuries of strife and turmoil, wars, bloodshed, and oppression, the world lay passive at the feet of the Roman emperor. One government encircled the Mediterranean; from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean one power bore sway. It would seem that earthly government had achieved its highest ambition. Satan exulted and rested in the hope that at last victory was his. But the moment of his quiet resting was the calm preceding his greatest struggles. So quiet were the nations that the lifting of a hand in rebellion in any of its most distant parts would send a throb to the centre, which would be answered by the return of the legions. SDP 214.2

Then it was that in the little town of Bethlehem Ephrath, where Mary and Joseph, peasants of the hill town of Nazareth, had gone to be taxed in obedience to the command of this same Augustus, was born a Saviour, even Christ the Lord. The very condition which caused Satan to exult were the conditions most favourable to Christ when he came to tabernacle among men. He whom Satan had opposed since the rebellion in heaven; he, the Prince of the worlds throughout space, “was made in the likeness of man,” and came into the world a helpless babe. The simple shepherds on the hillside near Bethlehem, tending their sheep where David had often tended his flocks, heard the angel choir proclaim the birth of the world’s Redeemer. Wise men in the eastern limits of the vast empire of Augustus, having read the prophecies, were watching for his star, and they, too, beheld a shining company of angels, and knew that God dwelt with men. But the rest of the empire slept on unconscious of his nearness. SDP 214.3

Bethlehem, the place of his birth, was dear to the memory of every true Jew. It was there that God met their father Jacob as he left home, a fugitive and alone. It was named Bethel, -the house of God, for said Jacob, “Surely God is in this place and I knew it not.” Jacob came to the same spot and paid tithe of his gain while with Laban. Deborah, Rachel’s nurse, was buried there. It was in Bethlehem that Abraham pitched his tent when he first entered the Promised Land. David, the chosen of God, was anointed there. The well of Bethlehem was noted, a fit symbol of him who was born in Bethlehem and offers the water of life to all. SDP 215.1

“The story of Bethlehem is an exhaustless theme.” In it is hidden “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.” But in spite of the sacred memories which clustered about the place, when the Christ was born but few men knew it. SDP 215.2

All that the sacred record gives concerning Augustus, the man who held universal sway, is that he was a raiser of taxes when the kingdom was at the height of its glory, and that after a reign of a few days, or years, he should end his career in peace. He had unconsciously been instrumental in preparing the way for the Prince of peace, and having done that, he passed from the scene. SDP 215.3

“As in old time Cyrus was called to the throne of the world’s empire that he might set free the captives of the Lord, so Caesar Augustus is made the agent for the fulfilment of God’s purpose in bringing the mother of Jesus to Bethlehem. She is of the lineage of David, and the Son of David must be born in David’s city.” SDP 215.4

Most of the life of the Saviour was spent during the reign of Tiberius, the successor of Augustus, whom Gabriel described to Daniel as a "vile person." History substantiates the description. He was not a direct heir to the throne, and he was never honoured by his subjects. The tyranny of absolutism began again to manifest itself, and the principles of the Oriental monarchies were repeated. Popular assemblies entirely ceased, and the emperor usurped the right to put to death without trial. The governors of Judah reflected the character of the general government. The Jews were bitterly oppressed, and as they knew the time was near for the appearance of a Saviour, they placed all their hopes upon a temporal king, one who should break the yoke of Rome and establish for them a separate kingdom. A few, perhaps, but only a few, divined the spiritual nature of the promise of a Messiah, for it was Satan's studied plan to blind men's eyes to all spiritual truth. SDP 216.1

In Babylon he had sought to make men drunk with idolatry; working through Medo-Persia he had hoped to slay those who were faithful to their God; through the teachings of Greece he had so fascinated man with the powers of his own mind that by works of righteousness which he might do, and philosophies of his own conjecturing, he was led to forget any higher power than that which he himself possessed. But through it all a few had clung to the promise delivered to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The world was ignorant of the Christ, but John the Baptist called many to repentance. Christ's ministry was during the reign of Tiberius, and while that vile person worked, planned, mistrusted, and killed, the Man of God went about all the towns of Palestine, healing the broken-hearted, and dispensing light to all who would accept. Angels watched him, Gabriel attended him, and in times of special danger, shielded him from the enemy who tracked him incessantly. Finally they nailed him to the cross; the Jews were responsible for it, but the Roman law upheld them in the act; and had it not been done by his own people, the Romans would have done it; for they had reached a condition when the life of man was but lightly esteemed, and the spiritual kingdom which Christ came to set up could never have been understood by the reigning monarch. The officers of Rome nailed the Son of God to the cross. The Prince of the everlasting covenant was crushed by those who sought to confederate together; they placed him in the tomb; they joined hands with Satan, as nation had never done before; but he broke those bands, and came forth triumphant. SDP 216.2

Representatives from the four quarters of the globe stood near him in his last hours. The Greeks met him at the temple at the last great day of the feast; the thief hung beside him on Calvary; Simon of Cyrene helped bear the cross, and the centurion, a Roman soldier, convicted, said, "Truly, this was the Son of God." The darkness which shrouded the dying form of Christ typified the condition of the Roman world. The light which shone about the tomb when the angels bade the Son of man come forth, typified the power with which the truth should penetrate the empire as his followers went forth to preach salvation. SDP 217.1