

157 "Rolling up His sleeves" - 5

We have been using recent Weekly Reflections to understand, as much as we are able, what is going on in the world from God's perspective, in the light of the promises and prophecies God has given to us in His holy Word.

We have identified that we are in a time of gradually increasing divine judgement, which currently takes the form of warning, notably to the nations of the post-Christian West, to renounce their arrogant secularism and return to the "God of their fathers". In this process of warning the Lord is in part making use of the false faith of Islam as a "wake-up call", especially via the vile behaviour of "IS", and the seemingly inexorable arrival of large numbers of Muslim people into Europe. Meanwhile God's door of mercy remains open for any who will pass through it by their simple admission that "Jesus Christ is Lord " (eg John 1.12-13 / John 3.14-18, 35-36 / Romans 10.9,13). The next event in God's dealings with this sinful earth is to be His removal of Christ's true church from the earth when its numbers are complete (eg., I Thessalonians 4.13-18 / I Corinthians 15.51-58), to be followed by Judgement with a capital J, and then by God's glorious and unfolding victories.

The Lord has also made known to us another strand in His judgements, the strand that involves "Rome". Now we must remain cautious here, for this attracts numerous "over-the-top" interpretations these days which we need to keep at arms' length. Equally though, where the Lord has made things clear in His Word for the preparing of His people, we would be quite wrong to brush the whole thing aside as some choose to do.

In Daniel Chapter 2.31-45 is the vision given by God to Nebuchadnezzar - one of several extraordinary prophecies in God's Word which liberal Bible critics simply have no answer for: the great image in human form, denoting four mighty kingdoms - Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and then Rome. The prophecy foretells the division of the Roman Empire (which occurred in 364 AD when it split into western and eastern parts), and finally the two feet of the image - still concerning Rome - consisting of iron and clay which cannot mix, hence involving much strength yet shot through with instability.

Limited space prevents much further detail here, but we need to mention Daniel Chapter 9.24-27 - another meticulous prophecy, that of the "Seventy Weeks" - just four verses of Scripture yet containing the entire timescale of the Messiah. Sixty-nine of those weeks have now taken place, to the very hour. The final,

seventieth week concerns the seven years of the Great Tribulation that is yet to come, and it is in this period that the antichrist figure and system, though already present, will come to the fore (eg, Daniel 11 / II Thessalonians 2.1-12 / Revelation 4.1 - 19.21, especially Chapter 13, the "false trinity").

Now we gather from all this that "Rome", in some shape or form, is to be heavily involved in the forthcoming emergence of the person and system of "antichrist". This could include the Church of Rome: since the Reformation, many Bible-believing Protestants have identified the office of Pope with the spirit of the "antichrist". For what it is worth, in recent weeks I have heard the present Pope, the first ever Jesuit to hold that position, described by two different people who closely follow these things as "highly political" and "a fox".

This Roman connection could also somehow involve the European Union, founded in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome. Britain's uneasy relationship with the EU may well be due in part to the clash between Britain's Protestant constitution and the dominance of the Roman Church on the continent.

The upshot of all this for Christian people like us is to keep an informed eye on Islam, the Church of Rome and the European Union. Shared between these three great edifices is a strong, long-held desire for global unity, but it would be a global unity of Man - with Man on the throne, with Man dwelling triumphantly in his rebuilt, finally-completed Tower of Babel, and with the antichrist feeling entirely at home.

God will not have this: He will have the victories He has promised, with the focus on His chosen people the Jews, on Jerusalem itself, and above all on His only-begotten Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ, Emmanuel, God with us.

"I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42.8). Praise God, He means it.

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