

The Lost Diadem (Version 2)

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To say that an outstanding feature of the present time is the almost universal spirit of unrest is to utter merely a platitude. The thing is so obtrusive as to be patent even to a frivolous mind.

Clashing of interests, conflict, upheaval and unrest are no new things in the earth. When, since the entrance of sin, did they not exist? Admitting this, however, we venture to affirm that the present epidemic of unrest and upheaval has assumed such proportions that it may justly be termed the leading feature of the age: and further, with the Bible as our guide, to anticipate that it will increase yet more.

The unrest existing today has about it two features that are worthy of notice:

(1) It is practically universal in its extent. Every country of note is afflicted with it, and most smaller countries as well. Of old it was more manifest in barbaric lands; now it is more pronounced in the civilised and richer nations. The civilization may be Eastern and ancient as in China, or Western and modern as in America and Britain: it matters not. The iron rule of Communism, slaughtering millions of human beings to attain its purpose, may appear to have abolished it; but beneath the surface it exists; and in lands of greater freedom the wind of agitation and upheaval blows strongly. It may soon become a hurricane.

(2) The unrest today is touching every department of human thought and activity. It never did this before. Empires have risen and flourished and decayed, while repose has rested upon the world of philosophy and the applied sciences. Today violent changes are marked in all directions. Men's minds are working with almost superhuman energy in formulating new ideas and theories — social, political and theological — and in the manufacture of wonderful contrivances.

What does it all mean? That is the question which surely must be uppermost in the mind of every sober observer. For the Christian, who bows to the Word of God, and accepts the light it sheds, there is no difficulty in discovering the answer. Human histories give us at the best imperfect details of a few of the happenings of time; the Bible alone reveals to us the golden thread of Divine purpose, running through all history. Let us attempt to discern this by the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, and so obtain the Divine answer.

Most of our readers are aware that before the Flood government did not exist. That age culminated in such violence and corruption that destruction was the only remedy — see Genesis 6: 1-13.

On the cleansed earth government was instituted in the person of Noah — see Genesis 9: 1-6. After the breakup of Babel, the authority seems to have departed from the main line of Noah's descendants, and each separate family began to range itself under its own tribal head, and the idea of kingship arose. There was no fresh development in regard to government on God's part until He called His people Israel out of Egypt, that He, the great Jehovah, might exercise authority in their midst.

The moment He chose for doing this was most significant. Egypt, almost the oldest of the nations, had risen to the highest point of her glory, having expelled the alien dynasty of 'Shepherd Kings,' and become united under the rule of powerful and warlike native Pharaohs, who carried their conquests to the Euphrates. Then it was that God asserted His right to His people, and smote the oppressor a heavy blow, which evidently was the beginning of decline for that empire. He carried His people, in spite of their perverseness, into the land of promise. Jehovah claimed that land as His, taking possession of it by

His people. He claimed it as His, in token that the whole earth is His. Twice is He spoken of as 'Lord of all the earth' in connection with the passage of the Jordan — see Joshua 3: 11, 13.

Arrived in the land of promise, the people tired of being peculiar, in having God alone as their invisible Leader, and they clamoured for a visible human king. This, though a serious departure from God, was permitted, and after they had bitter experience of the man after their own hearts, God raised up David, the man after his own heart, placing him as a shepherd over His people, and extending his kingdom by crowning his arms with success. The diadem — which was indeed not that of Israel only, but of the whole world — was placed upon his brow and confirmed to his seed. For a brief time it was worn by him and by Solomon his successor.

Then came the inevitable story of decline. The kingdom was divided, only the smaller portion following the wearers of David's diadem, and they declined in power, as the departure, in spite of occasional, God-given revivals, became more and more pronounced.

At last the end came. Zedekiah, the last wearer of the diadem — though perhaps he wore it only in name — added treachery to his many sins, and dishonoured the name of his God. Whereupon, as recorded no less than three times in Scripture — 2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 52 — Jerusalem fell before the Babylonians, and the dominion passed into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. Thus 'the times of the Gentiles' set in.

Just at this time by the pen of the prophet Ezekiel remarkable words were written. As the diadem which was, be it remembered, not of Israel only, but rather of the whole earth, fell from the brow of the last, apostate prince of David's line, struck thence by the hand of God in retributive judgment, these words were written. They are so important that we reproduce them in full.

'And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord God: Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is, and I will give it Him' (Ezek. 21: 25-27).

How wonderfully illuminating! How revealing, the beam of light here thrown over the dark pages of human history since that day! The diadem has indeed been removed, and if a comprehensive history of the world could be compiled, it would prove to be but a record of the various efforts of men and nations to exalt themselves and seize upon the diadem, and of the sure and skilful way in which when they appeared to have achieved their object, God has abased and overturned them.

A vision of this was granted to Daniel, which he has recorded in his prophecy in Daniel 7. It confirmed the dream previously given to Nebuchadnezzar, recorded in Daniel 2. For a brief moment it seemed as if the diadem was to belong to that great king. But exalting himself above measure, he was painfully abased in abject madness, as recorded in Daniel 4. Not long after, his great Babylon fell and was overturned. So too it was with the succeeding empires — Persian, Greek and Roman. Each ran its day, and each was overturned at the end.

Since the dissolution of the Roman Empire, no great empire, holding practically the civilized earth in its grip, has been permitted to arise. True, nearly a century ago men began to talk of a British Empire, for Queen Victoria had been proclaimed Empress of India. All that is passed however; and its dissolution — if an empire really did exist - proceeds steadily. Two great wars of world-wide dimensions have taken place; and today both Asia and Europe resemble armed camps. The diadem of the earth is lost; it is 'no more.' Powerful nations, that wish to regain it, hesitate; fearing lest in overturning others, they overturn themselves.

The present state of extremely unstable equilibrium cannot, however, go on for ever. Not a few are aware of this and talk vaguely of a coming 'Armageddon,' meaning by this a great conflict which will embroil the whole civilized earth. They appear to forget that when this word is used in Revelation 16: 13-16, what is predicted is not a frightful conflict of man against man, but rather the bold and impious hurling of the united forces of men against God. It is more than possible, however, that these warnings of coming ills do herald the near approach of the real Armageddon. Their words, like those of Caiaphas in John 11: 49-52, may mean more than they themselves are conscious of.

New forces of great strength have arisen in these later years. In lands, where some form of Christianity still lingers, they centre themselves around the idea of 'the brotherhood of man' based on 'the universal fatherhood of God.' The new, progressive, humanistic theology, Unitarianism, Socialism, are all branches of this root idea. More imposing still is the atheistic Communism, which now dominates the minds and actions of great nations, containing about a third of the human race. All this in the hands of Satan may well prepare the way for the last great federation of mankind, to get ready for Anti-Christ.

Some may wish to observe that the Messiah, to whom the diadem really belongs, has already come. He has indeed: but not to assert those rights, but rather allowing man to have his hour, and the power of darkness to assert itself, that He might accomplish redemption by His death. Satan, who profanely has usurped the diadem, actually offered it to Him during the temptation in the wilderness. He refused it, and chose not that short and easy cut to glory, but the toilsome road that lay through death and resurrection — 'ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?' (Luke 24: 26).

He did, however, plainly predict the coming of another prince, who would accept a diadem — purporting to be the true diadem of the earth — from the hands of Satan. 'I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive' (John 5: 43).

In the days of the coming great trinity of evil — the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, of whom we read in Revelation 13 — it will seem as if at last Ezekiel's prophecy was reversed and nullified. Men will have federated themselves into such a condition of so called 'brotherhood,' that it will only need the appearance of an unscrupulous 'superman,' to seize the reins of power, and institute the most monstrous tyranny the world will ever witness. Let that state of things be reached, and what can save men from the net they have cast for their own feet? Yet a vast majority may even glory in the tyranny established. They will say, 'Peace and safety,' thinking that at last the diadem is recovered so permanently, that no more overturnings need be feared.

But, 'when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them' (1 Thess. 5: 3). The last line of Ezekiel's prophecy will find sudden fulfilment. The last great overturning will take place in the true Armageddon. First, both the beast and false prophet and their armies will be destroyed by the sudden appearing of Him, 'whose right it is.' Shortly after, as we judge, the imposing northern powers, Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, Tubal, and their many allies will have the tremendous overthrow, predicted in Ezekiel 38 and 39. The last and decisive overturning will have taken place.

In that day the long-lost diadem, brilliant then, not only with the gems of creation, but with the brighter jewels of redemption, will be seen upon the head of the once rejected Man of Nazareth, our adorable Lord Jesus. Thence it will never be removed for though at the end of the thousand years of His righteous reign there will be the rebellion engineered by a released Satan, as foretold in Revelation 20: 7-10, this uprising will be instantly crushed, so that it never will become an overturning. Upon His

sacred brow the diadem will have found its permanent, its eternal resting-place.

In view of these things what shall we say? Let us in the first place not be disturbed in mind, as we view the unrest and the spirit of upheaval which fills the earth today. Let us rather be concerned that we keep flying the flag of true testimony to Christ, and the Gospel which is centred in Him. God does not vary His plan of action as men invariably have to do. The instructions given by our Lord at the outset still stand good — the Holy Spirit has come and we follow the first disciples, as He said, 'ye shall be witnesses unto me' (Acts 1: 8).

Then further, let us not join hands with the world nor aid its schemes and movements, which, though they may not know it, are paving the way for Antichrist. Let us abide in communion with the Father and the Son, when our attitude towards the men of the world will be as the Scripture directs: we shall, as much as lies in us, "live peaceably with all men," and instead of being overcome of evil, 'overcome evil with good' (Rom. 15: 18, 21).

Lastly, we shall treasure in our hearts the thought that all the unrest and overturning is only, 'until He come.' Shall we not turn our eyes toward the sun-rising of that long-looked for day, and say, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'