

The Last Great Crisis.

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It is not an unusual thing to find students of prophecy confounding together the different actors in the great crisis of the last days. The reason is not far to seek. Some of those characters act in unison to such a degree, and pursue to so large an extent the same policy, that it is easy to account for the confusion that exists in the minds of some as to them. Considerable discrimination is needed in the examination of this subject.

The Antichrist naturally comes to mind first. This title occurs in 1 John 2: 22, where he is spoken of as the leader both of Jewish unbelief and of Christian apostasy. He not only denies that Jesus is the Christ (the long known form of Jewish unbelief), but he denies also the Father and the Son. In 2 Thess. 2: 3-4, he comes before us as the man of sin, the son of perdition. In this passage we learn that he will sit in the temple of God (in Jerusalem, surely), and proclaim himself the supreme object of divine worship. To this lie, God will give up the great mass of the Jewish people who will have returned to their own land in unbelief, and also the vast body of lifeless professors of Christianity who have never received the truth in the love of it. This passage reminds us of Dan. 11: 36, where the same great leader in wickedness is spoken of as "the king." Here we find him in a strictly Jewish connection. He is the accepted political head of the returned Jews, and an object of jealousy and hatred to the kings of the North and of the South, who both make war upon him. No one, we judge, can read Dan. 11: 36-39 carefully, and question that the Antichrist is a Jew. Under the same title of "king" he appears also in Isaiah 30: 33; Isaiah 57: 9. In the first of these passages his doom is described; in the second, Israel is reproached by Jehovah for having any dealings with him. Turning again to the New Testament, he comes before us in Rev. 13: 11 as a wild beast coming up out of the earth, having two horns like a lamb, but speaking as a dragon. Here is shown his connection with the Imperial power, of which we will speak presently. It is plainly the same wonder-working person as in 2 Thess. 2. A later passage in Revelation (Rev. 19: 20) speaks of him as "the false prophet," which carries our minds back to Deut. 18: 15, of which Scripture he pretends to be the fulfilment. Another plain allusion to the Antichrist may be found in Zech. 11: 15-17 As the foolish shepherd, he devours the flock that the true Shepherd loved so well, and would fain have blessed. Having refused Him who came in His Father's name, Israel will receive him who comes in his own name to their hurt and ruin. There are many minor allusions to the same person in different parts of Scripture (e.g., Psalm 10: 18 — "the man of the earth"), but those referred to above are the most important ones, and will suffice for our present purpose.

We will consider next the last great Imperial Head of the West.

In Dan. 7: 8 a little horn, bold and blasphemous in his actings, arises out of the ten-horned fourth beast. We need not stay to prove that the fourth beast represents the Roman Empire; most of our readers are agreed as to it. Its ten horns are the ten kings who rule it at the end under the presidency of the little horn. As the Prince of the Romans, who long ago destroyed Jerusalem and the sanctuary, he will form a covenant with the mass of the returned Jewish people for one week — seven years (Dan 9: 26, 27). This covenant or treaty will doubtless be negotiated by the Antichrist acting on behalf of the Jews as their king. It is divinely described in Isaiah 28: 14-20 as a covenant with death and an agreement with hell, and appears to be entered into on the part of the Jews as a defence against their dreaded Northern enemy. The book of the Revelation furnishes us with some valuable information as to the re-appearance of this great power, which, as all are aware, has no existence at all at present In Rev. 13: 1, it arises as a wild beast out of the sea. This shows us the circumstances which lead to its uprising.

The sea represents the nations in a state of upheaval. Such a condition of things can easily evolve a great empire, the empire of the first Napoleon being a proof of it. But such passages as Rev. 11: 7; Rev. 17: 8 imply that another power will be at work. "The beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit": ominous words! Satan's hand is there, in order to deprive God's King, if possible, of His rightful inheritance in the earth. He nominates the beast for universal sovereignty in a moment when God's time has almost come to give the kingdoms of the world to His beloved Son. We are disposed to regard Isaiah 14 also as referring to the last great Gentile head under the titles of, "Lucifer, son of the morning"; we leave it as a suggestion with our readers.

The third actor is the little horn of Dan. 8: 9. Care is needed here, for many fail to distinguish between the horns of Dan. 7, Dan. 8. The horn of Dan. 7, as we have seen, arises out of and dominates the *fourth* beast, which is almost universally believed to be the Roman Empire. The horn of Dan. 8 arises out of one of the four principal divisions of the Grecian Empire, the third beast of the preceding chapter. The horns are thus totally distinct. Antiochus Epiphanes was the forerunner or type of the Eastern horn, who will be a great thorn in the sides of the returned Jews. As the King of the North in Dan. 11: 40, he makes war upon them, and comes to his end in their land. In him will probably be fulfilled the many unfinished prophecies concerning the Assyrian, notably Micah 5: 5-6. This power has no existence at present, but will doubtless be brought upon the scene in due time.

The fourth prominent figure in the latter day crisis is Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal (Ezek. 38, 39). Here we have the vast dominion of Russia, a power ever bitterly hostile to the Jews. This enemy appears to come up against the land after the appearing of the Lord; his overthrow and the complete annihilation of his hosts is graphically portrayed by the prophet. This is not the same enemy as the king of the North, though many students of the prophetic word appear to think so. Their policy is the same, and they both come against Jerusalem and the glorious land from the North; but they are distinct powers nevertheless. The king of the north is the less formidable antagonist of the two, and is backed up by another, in all probability by Russia itself (Dan. 8: 24); Gog comes up with far greater hosts after his tool (as we cannot help regarding the king of the North) has met his doom. Another Scripture which we believe refers to Gog is Isaiah 33: 1. After the opening of the kingdom of Christ in Isa. 32, a new enemy comes up treacherously to spoil His people, and is consumed as the burnings of lime and as thorns in the fire. Who is this but the great Northern adversary? There are thus four principal movers in the stirring events of the last days, and if we would understand prophecy aright we must not confound them. The first two act together in their wickedness; the second two act in concert likewise. The first pair are characterised by hostility to God's Christ; the second by animosity to His earthly people. But God will triumph over all in His time, and will yet give the kingdoms of this world to His beloved Son, who alone is worthy.