

# **The Beast And Babylon (Part One)**

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Matthew 24:32-44 contains a number of important instructions every disciple of Jesus Christ needs to consider deeply because his salvation may be greatly enhanced by doggedly following it. First, His instruction is not given to the general public but directly to His disciples, so He intends it specifically for us. Second, He specifically says we should know from signs He gave that His return is near, thus the responsibility is directly on us. Third, He emphasizes the element of terrifying surprise: The world will be taken completely by surprise, but we should not. Fourth, His overall instruction is that by being alert to the signs and taking advantage of them, we should be ready.

Are we getting anxious about Christ's return? We should not be anxious in terms of being fearful but hopefully and expectantly anticipating it occurring. News reports are getting so alarming that one wonders whether things can get much worse, and the daily pressures of enduring life's sin-sick, wearying culture are mounting. There may also be a measure of concern because it seems to be taking so long to come to pass. We are certainly in the "time of the end," yet personally, I have been waiting for this to occur since 1959.

Part of our anticipation exists because we have had it drilled into our minds "to watch" for certain events to happen. Sometimes it looks as though prophesied events indeed are being fulfilled. Currently, though, some of the more important events we have been trained to watch for are just not happening. If they are, they are being worked out in a way we are unprepared for and thus do not see. Jesus meant His admonition to "watch" in the sense of a soldier on guard duty being alert to what is occurring around him, and so we watch. But what if our point of view, the perspective from which we watch, is incorrect?

We might be alertly, diligently, and sincerely watching but at best getting only a part of the picture. It is like a soldier on guard duty, alert but looking in the wrong direction, and the enemy sneaks up from a blind spot and surprises him.

## **Europe Is Not Coming Together**

This series will suggest the possibility of a different point of view on Revelation 17 and 18, especially the woman riding the Beast. First, though, what about the Beast itself? Over my entire 44 years in the church, I have been taught repeatedly that we should look for the Beast to rise in Europe, but where is it? Perhaps most deceiving of all is that Europe is not acting much like the Beast of Revelation 13. Does not verse 4 say, "Who is able to make war with [the Beast]?" This exclamation paints a picture of an awesome, war-making power.

Europe is not coming together in the way we anticipated; it is not becoming the colossus we expected to see arise. In reality, Europe is disunited and at times seems flat on its back politically, economically, and militarily. News articles from recent months clearly and specifically illustrate Europe's present condition, and these will help lay a foundation for understanding what professional journalists observe is happening—or not happening—in Europe.

An article by *Washington Post* columnist Anne Applebaum appeared on February 2, 2003:

If [Defense Secretary] Donald Rumsfeld had been deliberately searching for a way to simultaneously irritate the leadership of Europe's two largest countries, expose their deepest national insecurities *and* undermine the entire European Union political project, which has long revolved around a "Franco-German axis," he couldn't have found a better way to put it [than to call Germany and France "Old Europe"]. He was also, as it happens, correct, possibly more correct than he knows. Although all concerned vociferously deny it, Europe is indeed beginning to divide—slowly, unevenly but perceptibly—into two very distinct camps.

Even though Europe plans to unite well beyond the prophesied ten nations (to twenty-five nations by 2004), the attempt to unify and the laws being enacted to make standards uniform are producing the opposite effect. Europe is in fact declining in many areas important to becoming a superpower, which is what the Bible shows the world-dominating Beast to be.

Here is another series of comments taken from PrudentBear.com. They appeared in an article by Marshall Auerback titled *International Perspective*, on January 28, 2003. Mr. Auerback is British.

Disagreements over farm policy, Zimbabwe and, now Iraq: the aspiration for a common European defense and foreign policy today looks as futile as Don Quixote charging at windmills. Does this division have implications for a common European economic policy as well, notably in regard to Britain's future membership in Europe's economic and monetary union (EMU)? . . .

Aside from the obvious question of what this growing divide means in regard to future policy in Iraq, this split between the UK on the one hand, and France and Germany on the other, reflect broader political, economic and philosophic divergences between the two blocs—between Anglo-American neo-liberalism and continental Europe's "social market model. . . .

Donald Rumsfeld's comments about Germany and France representing "Old Europe" might have struck a nerve in Berlin and Paris, but his observation that Europe's political (and, indeed, economic) center of gravity has moved eastward is unassailable. Even France's *Le Monde* conceded as much: "It is perhaps unpleasant to hear it, but for the moment it is unavoidable; the countries of East Europe are massively inclined to follow automatically American leadership in defense and foreign policy." The violent reaction of the French political class in particular might say more about that nation's delicate national psyche than anything else. But whether by accident or design both France and Germany have now been put on notice that their opinions matter less and less in the real world, and that their ability to control the leadership of Europe is also in decline.

Things pertaining to prophecy are happening in Europe, but they are not going in the direction or at anywhere near the speed we expected because of what we were taught. Yet, what if portions of the Beast that will affect its end-time configuration are arising elsewhere? What if nations important to the fulfilling of certain prophecies connected to the Beast have already risen and are exercising their power—and we are not looking in the right direction?

## European Weakness

Another article, much longer and far more detailed than the usual newspaper or news magazine column, deals with areas that any nation deemed to be an influential world power would consider vital. It reveals major weaknesses in Europe's economic, military, and demographic makeup as compared to the United States, leading the reader to understand that, at this time, Europe is not an entity nations need to fear offending, as they might fear the Beast pictured in Revelation 13.

The following excerpts come from an article, "Old and In the Way," by Karl Zinsmeister, which was published in the December 2002 issue of *The American Enterprise*. The title is interesting because the article was written long before Donald Rumsfeld made his now-famous "Old Europe" statement. Zinsmeister, editor-in-chief of *The American Enterprise*, was asked by the State Department to present an overview of American culture at a conference in Warsaw, Poland, in April 2002. Once there, he found he was the lone American representative.

His report is a summary and a response to the continuous and vile America-bashing that occurred throughout the meeting, which reflected what is going on frequently—and intensifying—among the European public. The word "growing" is important to the thrust of his article, in which he contends that, while the U.S. is still growing in areas important to national greatness, Europe is declining and divided despite what it may look like on a map:

This simple reality needs to be faced squarely by Americans: In a great variety of areas—foreign policy, demography, religion, economics—Americans and Europeans are growing apart. While the September 11 attacks deepened American sobriety, patriotic feeling, and national resolution, in Europe they merely created one more flashpoint for division. European elites, already worried they won't be able to keep up with America over the next generation, are now approaching panic as the U.S. coalesces, during its September 11 recovery, into an even steelier and more determined colossus. . . .

Some Europeans complain that the U.S. is more and more heading off on its own without them. They are right. America's psychic link with Europe, I suggest, is fading extremely rapidly. . . .

Since the end of the Cold War Americans have felt much less intertwined with Europeans, and at least as interested in China, Mexico, India, and the Middle East as we are in Europe. . . .

If enough of these divergences accumulate, however, America may eventually be forced to conclude that, as economist Irwin Stelzer has put it, many European nations "are ceasing, or may have already ceased, to be our friends."

The U.S. will never be hostile to Europe; there are too many links of kinship and shared purpose for that. But neither do I expect the U.S. will have especially warm relations with the E.U. 15 or 20 years hence. . . .

It isn't just differing policies that are splitting the E.U. from the U.S. It is also sheer competition. The very idea of forming a united states [*sic*] of Europe comes in large measure from a desire to keep up with America. Today, "much of the psychological drive for Euro-nationalism is provided by anti-Americanism," notes John O'Sullivan. . . . During his term as president of the European Union, the prime minister of Sweden

Goran Persson insisted that functioning "as a balance to U.S. domination" was Europe's most important role. The view of many European leaders is that "whatever diminishes the stature of the United States is of benefit to Europe," states Jeffrey Gedmin. . . . Many of the economic choices, cultural initiative, and foreign policy decisions being [made] in Europe today are animated by simple competitive envy. . . .

"It would be a misreading of Europe's political elites to see anti-American complaints as isolated gripes which can be overcome, one by one, through patient dialogue," warned Michael Gove, a perceptive editorialist for London's *Times*, when I visited his office. "Europe," he said, "is not begging to differ in particulars, but beginning to diverge in fundamentals."

The philosophical differences between Europe and the U.S. are reflected and magnified in three critical structural breaks: 1) Europe has surrendered much of its economic dynamism. 2) Europe has lost its stomach for military action, substituting an exaggerated confidence in diplomacy. And, 3) Europe is on a path to population collapse.

### **Economic Comparisons**

It may help to compare the following from Zinsmeister with Revelation 18.

We have conventionally thought of Europe as having about the same standard of living as Americans. This is less and less true. For the European Union as a whole, GDP per capita is presently less than two-thirds of U.S. levels. America's poorest sub-groups, like African-Americans, now have higher average income levels than the typical European.

What's behind this? For one thing, Americans work harder: 72 percent of the U.S. population is at work, compared to only 58 percent in the E.U. American workers also put in more hours. And U.S. workers are more productive—an E.U. worker currently produces 73 cents' worth of output in the same period of time a U.S. worker creates a dollar's worth.

Strongly reinforcing this is a February 16, 2003, *Atlantic Monthly* article by Ted Halstead. He writes, "American parents have the least amount of free time to spend with their children; indeed, the average American works nine weeks more each year than the average European."

Zinsmeister continues:

The locomotive of Europe is the German economy, which has been in a serious mess for more than a decade. Germany's annual growth rate over the past ten years has been a limp 1.4 percent. Among the major industrial nations, only Japan (a true basket case) has done worse. The German labor market has become one of the most inflexible and uncompetitive in the world, which is why unemployment has been stuck at 9-10 percent [now 11 percent] for years, even amid a global economic boom.

A February 10, 2003, *USA Today* article titled "German Coziness Puts Nation at Risk" by Steven Komarow confirms those statistics, giving the following figures on 2002 GDP growth for the several countries:

Ireland, +3.9%; Greece, +3.2%; U.S.A, +2.4%; Spain, +1.9%; Sweden, +1.6%; U.K. +1.6%; Austria, +.9%; France, +.9%; Belgium, +.7%; Germany, +.3%; Italy, +.3%; Portugal, +.3%; Netherlands, +.2%; Japan, -.3%;

As bad as one might think it to be in the U.S., the American percentage of increase of GDP in 2002 was *eight times* greater than Germany's and Italy's and almost three times greater than France's.

Resuming from Zinsmeister's article:

Over the long haul, these sorts of disparities add up to crunching economic divergences. Since 1970, America has produced 57 million new jobs. The E.U., with an even bigger population, has produced 5 million (most of them with the government). A startling 40 percent of the unemployed in Europe have been out of work for more than a year, compared to only 6 percent in the U.S. . . .

If no visible alternative loomed, citizens might not realize that better ways of achieving prosperity exist. But any European with eyes can observe that the United States makes very different economic choices, with very different results. Here is one root of the resentment felt by European elites, who would otherwise have a free hand to mold their societies according to their own visions. "The anti-American alliance," noted Michael Gove in the London *Times* earlier this year, "resents American economic success because it reminds them that their preferred cocktails of protectionism, state regulation, subsidy, and intervention constrict growth. America's practical success is a standing rebuke to their abstract beliefs."

## Defense Strategy

A second divergence splitting Europe from America is defense strategy. When it comes to guarding the peace, current European leaders put all their faith in endless talk, commissioneering, and resolution-writing of collective diplomacy—what they call "multilateralism" (a term nearly as feeble as the concept). Given Europe's history with the Treaty of Versailles, Neville Chamberlain's Munich Agreement, a biological weapons "ban" secretly violated with impunity by the Soviets and scads of other signatories, plus many more recent failures of "let's pretend" diplomacy in places ranging from Iraq to Rwanda to Bosnia, it's inexplicable that Europeans would bet all future peace on the security of parchment walls. But that's exactly what they are doing.

Charles Krauthammer diagnoses the problem this way: "After half a century under the American umbrella, West Europeans have come to believe that their freedom is self-generated. It is by now, they feel, a simple birthright, as natural as the air they breathe. When they see the U.S. slaying dragons abroad—yesterday Afghanistan, today Iraq, tomorrow who knows who—they see a cowboy whose enthusiasms threaten to disturb the perfect order of things, best symbolized by the hushed paper-shuffling at the International Criminal Court."

At the same time they've bet the farm on swiss-cheese [*sic*] treaties, the Europeans have pared their military spending to the point where the entire continent now has approximately the same force-projecting power as the Swiss navy. . . .

Without admitting it, the Europeans have essentially decided to rely on the U.S. to keep them safe. . . .

Until Europe demonstrates an equivalent willingness to commit its sons and its treasure to national defense, all talk of building a formidable independent military force in Europe is merely hot air. Wishful thinking will not man and equip a carrier battle group, build a missile shield, or otherwise instill the necessary awe in the world's tyrants.

Of course, most European elites deny such measures are necessary. To quote my British friend Mr. Gove again: "Europe's leaders seek to manage conflict through the international therapy of peace processes, the buying off of aggression with the danegeld of aid or the erection of a paper palisade of global law, which the unscrupulous always punch through. Europeans may convince themselves that these developments are the innovations of a continent in the van of progress, but they are really the withered autumn fruits of a civilization in decline."

## Demographic Decline

A final, crushing, structural divergence separating America and Europe is demography. Birth rates in Europe have been catastrophically low for two decades. Europe is thus getting old and starting to shrink. The U.S. remains a youthful and fast-growing nation. Mr. Zinsmeister's assessment of this critical area follows:

It takes 2.1 lifetime births per woman just to keep a population stable over the long run. Today, German women are having less than 1.4 children each—only two thirds the level needed to maintain zero population growth. Italians and Spaniards are at a shockingly low rate of 1.2 lifetime births per woman. The E.U. as a whole is far below the level needed simply to replace its current population.

The social, economic, and geopolitical ramifications are stark. At current fertility rates, Germany's total population will shrink from 82 million to 67 million over the next 50 years. Italy will tumble from 58 to 39 million people. Over that very same period, the population of the U.S. (where the birth rate is more than half-again as high) will go from 283 million to 410 million.

And it isn't only the raw numbers that will change; the *composition* of the population will also shift dramatically. As birth rates remain below the replacement level year after year, and old people live longer and longer, a geometric spiral forms, and a society becomes elderly. By the end of my expected lifetime in the 2030s, fully *half* of all Germans will be over 50. Italians will be even older—half over 54. (The U.S., by comparison, will have a median age in the upper 30s.) The European Union will be a very gray place, and within its boundaries every single employed individual will have its own elderly person 65 or older to provide for through the public pension system. This is not a recipe for an energetic society.

Europe's disinterest in childbearing is a crisis of confidence and optimism. It is a spiritual indicator, reflecting millions of individual decisions to pursue self-interest and material well-being instead of participating in the human future. These individual decisions will have profound collective effects. . . .

Among other effects, "a weakened Europe is likely to grow more resentful toward America," warned British journalist Charles Moore in a lecture to the New Atlantic Initiative last year, "rather than blaming themselves."

Though a nasty flame-out is conceivable, I will close with a less alarmist yet blunt prediction about Europe's likely future. Fifty years hence, when my oldest children approach retirement, I expect that today's European dream of achieving economic and military superpower status will be a dim memory, and that some more realistic alternative will have replaced it.

At that point, under current trends, the largest Western European country—Germany—will rank about 23rd on the list of the world's biggest nations. Europe as a whole will contain in the neighborhood of 360 million people and falling. Americans will be at 550 million and rising. The U.S. economy will have grown to more than twice the size of Europe's.

I expect that Americans and Europeans will be reasonably amiable. . . . But it will be China, India, Mexico, Indonesia, Brazil, Vietnam, the Arab world, and Turkey that the U. S. will have to huddle with most earnestly at important international conclaves—not Europe.

That is, frankly, not the circumstance most Americans would prefer. By rights, Europe and America ought to remain close cousins. But Europe's current choices in politics, economics, social and family life, and moral reasoning unmistakably suggest that a less familial relationship is emerging.

It is easy to see that things are not going well in Europe, and they have not been going well for at least the last ten to twelve years. Even though they are gradually uniting, they are in reality declining in power and influence. That is not what the visionaries anticipated for a united Europe.

### **Beastly Parallels**

With that foundation, I want to emphasize that this series of articles should not be considered as church doctrine. I am thinking "out of the box," speculating on what is happening in the world right now. Please feel free to offer your ideas, criticisms, and suggestions.

Events may happen that will change my point of view in the future. At this time, though, it looks as if either 1) a major portion of the Beast may be arising in the nations of Israel led by the United States and United Kingdom, or 2) the woman riding the Beast in Revelation 17 consists of the nations of Israel led by the United States and the United Kingdom. This second possibility is the most likely at this point. However, this is a large subject, and we can only cover a small number of scriptures that pertain to it.

Much will go unanswered in this article. But because of current happenings in the world, if neither of these two possibilities is correct, then we either 1) have a great deal more time before Christ's return for things to form as we were taught, or 2) dramatic and miraculous events will have to occur both in the U.S. and Europe for the Beast to arise solely in Europe in the near future and to exercise the

powers the Bible shows it to have. If those dramatic and miraculous events do not occur soon, and if world events continue at the pace they normally move, we will have a very long time before Christ's return. I—and many of you—will be long dead before that occurs.

Before we close, it will be helpful to see the prophetic parallels between Daniel 2 and 7 and Revelation 13 and 17. These parallels indicate Europe will be a major player in the Beast unless our current interpretations are incorrect. If they are wrong, then the possibility arises that the Beast need not be confined to Europe.

Jesus says in Luke 12:49, 56, "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! . . . Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?" "Fire" indicates judgment, and Jesus clearly wanted to get on with seeing His work concluded. However, as He shows, things have to be done in their proper order. In this case, He is referring to His death.

Clearly, in calling these carnal people "hypocrites," He expected them to understand who He was and what His mission was. If He expected them to grasp what was going on during His day, how much more does He expect of us? Greater depth and clarity and therefore understanding are always to be found because God is faithful to reveal more as we grow and come closer to its fulfillment. Yet, it is evident from the church's history that we do not always hit the correct understanding of prophecy right off.

Ezekiel 6:14 adds to this fact that most prophecy is misunderstood: "So I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land desolate, yes, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblah, in all their habitations. *Then* they shall know that I am the Lord." This final sentence occurs frequently in Ezekiel. In each case, it means that people will not understand the fullness of something until either it is actually being fulfilled or it is completely over. This means, as matters progress, we have to do some updating—including some speculating—from time to time to adjust our understanding to fit reality.

Daniel 2:32-35 describes the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and the prophet interprets it in verses 38-40, 44:

. . . and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron. . . . And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Verse 38 shows us that in this imagery the king represents the entirety of the kingdom's existence as a world-ruling empire. The term "after you," in verse 39 introduces three separate, successive kingdoms following Nebuchadnezzar's Chaldean Empire. Then verse 44 shows that the image's timeline exists until our day and the return of Jesus Christ for the establishment of the Kingdom of God.



This prophecy, then, brings us right into our present time. We can look for the last empire, represented by the feet and toes, to exist today. History has shown those four empires to be the Chaldean, Medo-Persian, Greco-Macedonian, and Roman empires. The last existed from 31 BC to AD 476, when secular history shows that the Vandals defeated Rome. However, Emperor Justinian revived and reestablished Rome as the "Holy Roman Empire" in AD 554.

All of Daniel 7 is helpful at this point. The important element to note is that this illustration from Daniel's dream parallels Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2, but it uses different imagery. This confirms that the legs of iron in Daniel 2 and the fourth beast in Daniel 7, which are parallel images, exist at Christ's return, fight against Him, and suffer defeat, and then the saints receive the Kingdom.

Revelation 12:3-4, 9 records:

And another sign appeared in heaven; behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. . . . So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

The Dragon is identified as Satan (verse 9), providing the lead-in to the introduction of the Beast in Revelation 13:1-8. The similarities between this and Revelation 12:3, 9 show a direct relationship between the Dragon viewed in heaven and the Beast rising on earth.

This relationship is further confirmed in Revelation 13:4, which shows the Beast on earth receiving its power from the Dragon. Another commonality is that both the Dragon seen in heaven and the Beast on earth have seven heads and ten horns, yet there are two differences: The first is in the number of crowns (seven on the Dragon, ten on the Beast), and a second is in the location of the crowns (the Dragon's are on the heads, while the Beast's are on the horns. At this point, what that difference means is unknown.

The Beast in Revelation 13 is a further illustration of the fourth beast of Daniel 7 with its ten horns. The ten horns represent ten kings who will be part of the Beast and present at Christ's return. There is no doubt that the legs of iron of Daniel 2, the fourth beast of Daniel 7, and the Beast of Revelation 13 and 17 all reveal the Roman Empire, its revivals, and some of its end-time configuration.

This awesome combination of powers is forming for that great day of Christ's return.