

Rome and the Bible
Rome and the Old Testament
Rome and the New Testament
Rome and the church

Why?

1. Fits well with our recent study of evil angels and Satan – Revelation 13.1-2
2. The world power with the greatest and most recent impact on history of Israel and Christianity
3. The last of the prophesied powers of the Old Testament
4. Misunderstanding of its importance has led to gross errors
 - a. Some today are looking for a re-constituted Roman Empire
 - b. Many thought the “Holy Roman Empire” (962-1806AD) was it – neither holy nor Roman
 - c. Many today point to the European Union as the answer to this erroneous understanding
 - d. To pin down the prophecies about, and the importance of, this empire is to dispel nearly all such error

Rome and the Old Testament:

Daniel 2.38-45

First impact of this new power on Judea:

In 168 BC Antiochus led a second attack on Egypt and also sent a fleet to capture [Cyprus](#). Before reaching Alexandria, his path was blocked by a single, old Roman ambassador named [Gaius Popillius Laenas](#), who delivered a message from the Roman Senate directing Antiochus to withdraw his armies from Egypt and Cyprus, or consider themselves in a state of war with the Roman Republic. Antiochus said he would discuss it with his council, whereupon the Roman envoy drew a line in the sand around him and said, "Before you cross this circle I want you to give me a reply for the Roman Senate" - implying that Rome would declare war if the King stepped out of the circle without committing to leave Egypt immediately. Weighing his options, Antiochus wisely decided to withdraw. Only then did Popillius agree to shake hands with him.

(This is said to be the origin of the phrase “a line in the sand.”)

This is responsible for the events described in the books of the Maccabees and the Jewish revolt of 100 years until Rome became its protector in 63BC when Pompey the Roman general and co-emperor with Julius conquered Judea and entered the Holy Place of the Temple in Jerusalem.

It is because of these events that the “Feast of Dedication” was observed – **John 10.22**

According to historians, the daily sacrifices were stopped under Antiochus Epiphanes for three years, the Temple was defiled with pig flesh and broth, and a statue of Zeus was set up in the Holy of Holies. After the three years, the Maccabee’s were successful in restoring the Temple worship – this was on December 25, 165BC. Today it is called Hanukkah, or Festival of Lights, an eight day festival roughly corresponding with Christmas. Its center is a nine-branched Menorah, a special candelabrum.

This power had overcome all the powers before it; what had belonged to Babylon became Persia; what had belonged to Persia became the possession of Alexander the Great and the Greeks; what had been their empire had been absorbed and brutally defeated by the Romans.

This power had the right and the means to keep its subjects in line:

It was this empire who used crucifixion as one of its main means of capital punishment.

1. It was practiced as far back as the 6th century BC in Persia, and amongst the Seleucids, Carthaginians.
2. The word literally means to affix (figere) to a cross (cruci)
3. The Romans used large nails to “affix” the victim
4. It was designed as a means of execution that was
 - a. Slow
 - b. painful (from which we get the term “excruciating” – meaning “out of crucifixion”)
 - c. gruesome
 - d. humiliating
 - e. and public
5. The practice was outlawed in the Roman empire in 337AD by Constantine out of respect for Jesus Christ

This empire had built thousands of miles of roads that would accommodate their particular style of warfare, and their equipment. Illustration: the gauge of English railroads.ⁱ

It had a universal coinage and there was no part of it that could not be reached by roads or ship.

The entire empire was governed under strict laws.

A common language was spoken throughout, not Latin, but Greek.

Time was perfect for the spreading of the gospel of Christ.

Rome and the New Testament:

It is this empire, under Augustus Caesar, that is in power when the Lord is born.

Matthew 22.17-21 – it was this power who was collecting taxes from the Jews

Luke 2.1 – it is a decree from this power that sends Joseph with his pregnant virgin wife Mary to Bethlehem to fulfill the prophecy of the place of Christ’s birth

Luke 3.1 – it was in the 15th year of the reign of this power’s second emperor, Tiberius Caesar, and under its governor, Pontius Pilate, that John came baptizing and introduced Jesus as the Son of God

It was “in the days of these kings” that the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.

Zechariah 9.9 Read

Matthew 21.1-9

John 12.12-16

John introduced the King Who was to rule over the Kingdom which will never be destroyed

It is a misunderstanding, and a lack of belief, over this prophecy and its fulfillment that is at the heart of the difference between “Evangelicals” and many in the denominations, and the Bible.

Either the “God of heaven” DID set up a kingdom in the days of “these kings” or He was mistaken, defeated or deceitful in His prophecies.

Many have concluded that He intended to set up His kingdom, but it was rejected by the Jews, and therefore postponed, yet to be realized at the second coming of Jesus.

Matthew 11.14 “if you are willing to receive it” has been used to prove that the kingdom’s establishment was dependent on the acceptance of it by the Jews.

1. He finishes the statement with “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”
2. The conditional statement, if there is one, in the reference to John and Elijah, is not whether the kingdom would come at the specified time, but whether or not they WERE ABLE to receive it.
3. The kingdom came regardless of their being prepared for it.
4. Elijah did show up, on the mount of transfiguration.
5. But it was John the baptizer who fulfilled the prophecy in Malachi 4.5
6. He came in the “spirit and power of Elijah” – Luke 1.17
7. Matthew 17.12-13 The Lord stated flatly “Elijah has come already...” and the disciples understood he was talking of John the Baptist.

The fact is that the God of heaven DID set up a kingdom in the days of the Roman emperors, and it will never be destroyed.

1. Mark 1.14-15
2. Mark 9.1
3. Colossians 1.13-14
4. Hebrews 12.28

Jesus said the kingdom is part and parcel with the gospel

1. Matthew 4.15 – “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
2. Matthew 4.23 – He went about healing and preaching the “gospel of the kingdom.”
3. Matthew 9.35 – again the same
4. Matthew 10.7 – Jesus instructed His apostles to preach “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
5. Matthew 13.19 – to receive the seed of the word is to receive the word of the kingdom
6. Matthew 24.14 – “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached...” It was to be preached long after His death, burial, resurrection and ascension!
7. To believe the gospel IS TO BELIEVE THE KINGDOM!

It was Rome who exercised its power of life and death to crucify the Lord of Life.

1. **Matthew 20.18-19** – He would be delivered to the Gentiles to mock, scourge and crucify, but would rise again the third day
2. **Acts 2.23** “by lawless hands...”
 - a.
3. Without this act, there could have been no kingdom
 - a. **Luke 24.25-26** - It was necessary that all things concerning Him be fulfilled
 - b. **Ephesians 4.9** – He had to descend into the grave in order to ascend
4. It was through this act that the Lord purchased His kingdom, His church, with His own blood
5. **Ephesians 3.10** - It is the result of this act that proves to all the heavenly powers the manifold wisdom of God
6. All this had to occur in the “days of these kings” – the Roman Empire, **Daniel 2.44**

Rome, the Jews, the city of Jerusalem and the Law:

It is this power that Daniel and the Lord said would destroy Jerusalem, the Temple and the Jewish way of life of 1500 years.

1. Daniel 12.11 – “Abomination of desolation”
2. **Daniel 9.26-27** – “bring an end to sacrifice and offering”
3. Luke 19.41-44 READ
4. **Matthew 23.38** “your house is left to you desolate”
5. **Matthew 24.2** – “not one stone left upon another”
6. **Matthew 24.15** – the abomination of desolation is yet future as the Lord speaks

While this event is not recorded in the New Testament, it is spoken of at length by the Lord, and was fulfilled within 40 years after His DBR and ascension.

Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (Masada in 73 AD)

1. Josephus says 1.1 million Jews were killed and many more taken into slavery
2. Reports were of so many crosses with victims outside the city, there were no more trees for miles around
3. Corpses filled the city so that there was no place to walk except on top of them
4. Mothers ate their own children
5. Titus did not want to destroy the Temple, but it caught fire when a torch landed on one wall
6. It burned so fast and so furiously, that the gold of the Temple melted and ran into the cracks and foundations.
7. Micah 3.11-12 “Zion will be plowed as a field.”

The triumph arch of Titus in Rome gives some history of it.

The wealth from the Temple and Jewish slaves built the Coliseum which still stands in Rome today.

What this meant:

1. The end of the Jewish nation (until 1947 AD)

2. The end of the Temple (to this day)
3. The end of the Law of Moses (forever)
 - a. No Jew can prove descent from Aaron – therefore not priests
 - b. All records have been destroyed

Hebrews 7.12-14 – Jesus Christ is now the High Priest, and will be forever (see vv. 15-17)

Zechariah 6.13; Hebrews 8.1

Rome and Christianity:

Prophecies concerning Rome:

1. Galatians 4.4 - Comprehended in the statement “fullness of time”
2. Daniel 2.44 - In the days of these kings...
3. Crucifixion of Christ...
4. Daniel 9.26-27 - The “people of the prince that is to come” and the destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple and Judaism

But prophecy is far from finished with Rome...

Daniel 2.44 - the implication of “it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms...”

Daniel 9.27 – “desolate” or “desolator?”

Daniel 7.23-27

Revelation 13.1-10

"Nero punished a race of men who were hated for their evil practices. These men were called Christians. He got a number of people to confess. On their evidence a number of Christians were convicted and put to death with dreadful cruelty. Some were covered with the skins of wild beasts and left to be eaten by dogs. Others were nailed to the cross. Many were burned alive and set on fire to serve as torches at night." Tacitus

Revelation 6.1-8 “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”

Two processes going on at once:

1. Saints being overcome by the beast
 - a. By the end of the first century AD it was illegal to call yourself a Christian
 - b. For 350 years it was dangerous to profess Christianity
 - c. Many saints died in many different ways
 - d. But the Church was preserved and triumphed
2. Judgments against the beast
 - a. The triumph of the saints was not by their own power
 - b. Wave after wave of judgments washed over the Roman Empire
 - c. Some estimates of the depopulation of Rome:

1. Population Decrease in Roman Empire

Rome itself

1,000,000 – AD1

400,000 - AD450

10-20,000 – AD500-800

*Dr. Philip Daileader, William & Mary College

2. At least two long periods of plague

The Antonine Plague – AD 165-180

Plague of Cyprian – AD 251-270+

(Bubonic Plague began in AD 541 and reappeared each generation until AD 750)

3. By the early 400's it was illegal to be a Pagan, and persecution against Christians ceased completely...for a while.
4. Culminate in the words of **Revelation 19.20**

ⁱ Illustration:

The US standard railroad gauge (width between the two rails) is 4 feet, 8.5 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and the US railroads were built by English expatriates.

Why did the English build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used.

Why did "they" use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons which used that wheel spacing.

Okay! Why did the wagons have that particular odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing, the wagon wheels would break on some of the old, long distance roads in England, because that's the spacing of the wheel ruts.

So who built those old rutted roads? The first long distance roads in Europe (and England) were built by Imperial Rome for their legions.

The roads have been used ever since.

And the ruts in the roads? Roman war chariots first formed the initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagon wheels. Since the chariots were made for (or by) Imperial Rome, they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing.

The United States standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8.5 inches derives from the original specification for an Imperial Roman war chariot.