

***W.E.  
VINE***



***THE ROMAN  
EMPIRE  
IN THE LIGHT  
OF PROPHECY***

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# **The Roman Empire in the Light of Prophecy**

**The Rise, Progress, and End of the Fourth World-  
empire**

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# **PREFACE.**

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The following pages are the outcome of several conversations with inquirers shortly after the outbreak of the great war, in 1914, and of requests for notes of the views expressed. The subject of these conversations had occupied the earnest if intermittent attention of the writer for over twenty years. The notes were expanded into a series of articles which appeared in *The Witness* during 1915. These have been revised and somewhat extended for the present volume, especially the last chapter, much of which was previously precluded by limitations of space.

In regard to past history, the outlines of events connected with the Roman and Turkish Empires are given with the hope that the records will prove helpful to those who read the history of Nations in the light of Scripture.

In regard to the future, while there are many events which the Word of God has foretold with absolute clearness, and upon these we may speak unreservedly, yet there are many circumstances concerning which definite prediction has been designedly withheld, and upon which prophecy is therefore obscure. In such matters an effort has been made to avoid dogmatism. Prophecy was not given in order for us to prophesy.

On the other hand, the prophetic Scriptures are not to be neglected. Difficulty in understanding them is no reason for disregarding them. They are part of that Word, the whole of which is declared to be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3.

16). They therefore demand prayerful and patient meditation.

For a speaker to refer to the study of the prophecies in a way which tends to minimise their importance in the minds of his hearers is to dishonour both the sacred Word and Him who inspired it. It is significant that the book of the Revelation opens with a promise of blessing to him who reads (the reference is especially to public reading) and to those who "hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein" (chap. 1. 3), and at the close repeats the blessing for him who keeps its words (chap. 22. 7).

The quotations in the present volume are from the Revised Version, the comparatively greater accuracy of its translations being important for a correct understanding of many of the passages considered.

While the book is published at the request of several friends, the author fulfils such request with the earnest desire that in matters of doctrine that only may be accepted which can be confirmed from the Word of God itself, and that the Lord may graciously own what is in accordance with His mind for the glory of His Name and the profit of the reader.

W. E. VINE.

BATH, 1916.

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## **The Roman Empire in the Light of Prophecy.**

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# CHAPTER I.

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## THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES.

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The overthrow of the kingdom of Judah recorded in 2 Kings 24 and 25, and in the opening words of the book of Daniel, was a remarkable crisis in the history of the world. In judgment upon the people of God for their long-continued iniquity, sovereignty was removed from their hands, king and people were led into captivity, and Jerusalem was, in fulfilment of Jeremiah's words, given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon (Jer. 21. 10). The government of their land was thus committed to the Gentiles, and with the Gentiles it has remained from that day till now. These events took place in 606 and 587 B.C.

### **The Times of the Gentiles.**

But Gentile control is not to continue indefinitely. This, which is plain from many Scriptures, was intimated by Christ to His disciples when He said of Jerusalem that the city would "be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21. 24). The phrase, "the times of the Gentiles," calls for consideration, and especially as it has to do with Nebuchadnezzar's conquest just mentioned.

There are two words translated "times" in the New Testament; one is *chronoi*, which is invariably rendered

"times;" the other is *kairoi*, which, when the two are found together, is rendered "seasons." Thus Paul, in writing to the Thessalonian Church, says, "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you" (1 Thess. 5. 1, R.V.; cp. Acts 1.7). We may distinguish "seasons" from "times" in the following way: "times" denotes mere duration, lengths of time; "seasons" implies that these lengths of time have certain events or circumstances associated with them by which they are characterised. Thus the words almost exactly correspond to the terms "periods" and "epochs." Now the word *kairoi*, "seasons," is used in the phrase translated "the times of the Gentiles," which might accordingly be rendered "the seasons of the Gentiles." We look, then, for some special characteristic of the period or periods thus designated. We have observed that Nebuchadnezzar's overthrow of the kingdom of Judah involved the transference of its sovereignty from Jew to Gentile from that event onward. "The times of the Gentiles," accordingly, is that period, or succession of periods, during which dominion over the Jews and their land is committed to Gentile Powers.

### **Nebuchadnezzar's Dream.**

Special significance attaches to the fact that no sooner had the times of the Gentiles begun than God made known the future course of their authority over His people, and the character and doom of that authority, and made it known to the first Gentile conqueror himself. It was in the second year of his reign that Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream the great image by means of which the purposes of God were to be



communicated to him. The description of this, given by Daniel to the troubled monarch, is as follows: "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This image, which was mighty, and whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the aspect thereof was terrible. As for this image, his head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron, and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors: and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2. 31-35).

Interpreting this vision, the prophet identified Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean monarch, with the head of gold, and foretold that his kingdom, or empire, would be followed in succession by three others, corresponding respectively to the different parts of the remainder of the image and to the nature of the metals composing them. Of the four kingdoms the last is to engage our chief attention in these papers. Passing from the first, the **Chaldean**, as specified in Daniel's words to the king, "Thou art this head of gold" (v. 38), we are shown that the second kingdom was that of the **Medes and Persians** by the prophet's record of the doom of Nebuchadnezzar's successor, Belshazzar: "In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom" (Dan. 5. 30, 31; cp.