

CLARK NEWS

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WHY AMERICA?

Why did Thomas have to look to America for the one big thing in his life? Why, with all the accomplishments and capabilities of the English, must it have been an American who led him from obscure mediocrity to outstanding achievement? Why is it that America and not Europe has led all mankind these one hundred and fifty years since Thomas was born?

In order to answer such a question, we must go back twenty five hundred years, to the times of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. We must go back to a particular night when Nebuchadnezzar awoke from a troubled sleep and commanded a servant to bring to his bedside all the wisemen of the kingdom. This request was hurriedly complied with and when the wise men, dressed in their mystic robes, stood beside him, Nebuchadnezzar told them that he had had a dream and he had brought them to his side to give him not only the dream but the interpretation thereof. He then informed them that if they failed their lives would be forfeit.

The wisemen then told their king that they would gladly give the interpretation of the dream, but that he would first have to tell them what the dream was about. This made the king very angry, as he had forgotten the dream and could not tell them. He could only remember that he had been very frightened by it and that he was convinced beyond any doubt that it had great meaning. When the wisemen again informed him that they could not interpret a dream which could not even be related to them, the king ordered his servants to imprison them and on the morrow put them all to death. He then added that any other wisemen in the kingdom be put to death with them.

This last command applied to the prophet Daniel since he was considered to be one of the wise men of the kingdom. When the servant came to him to tell him that he was to die for a matter about which he knew nothing, Daniel demanded an audience with the king. He was granted the audience and when he stood before Nebuchadnezzar he told him that he was too hasty, and that if he would grant a little time that he, Daniel, would give him not only the dream but the full interpretation of it.

The king agreed to the delay and Daniel and his three friends immediately engaged in earnest prayer, asking God to reveal to them the thing the king desired to know. Their prayer was answered. The dream and its interpretation were revealed to Daniel, whereupon he asked to be taken again before Nebuchadnezzar.

This time when Daniel stood before the king, he began by reminding him that he had tried in vain to secure what he wanted from the wise men of his kingdom. Then he said, But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Having thus put the honor where the honor belonged, Daneil told the king that in his dream he had seen a great and terrible image. It had a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass and legs of iron. The feet were part of iron and part of potters clay but just as iron will not adhere to clay, the feet were weakened by this mixture.

Daniel then said that while the king stood gazing upon this image he saw a little stone cut out of a mountain without hands which stone rolled forth and smote the image on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the brass, the silver and the gold were broken in pieces by the stone and the whole image was carried away like chaff is carried away from a threshing floor by the wind, and the little stone grew until it filled the whole earth.

The prophet then gave the interpretation. He began by recounting to the king how God had given him power and dominion over his own people not only but over other nations. Then he said, Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as iron: forasmuch as iron breketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. He then said that the kingdom of iron would finally be weakened by the seed of men, which was represented by the clay, but just as clay will not adhere to iron, neither would the kingdoms of men adhere to the kingdoms of the image.

Daniel concluded by saying that in the days of these kings represented by the clay, would the God of Heaven set up a kingdom, represented by the little stone, which would never be destroyed, but it would break in pieces the great image and roll forth until it filled the whole earth. Daniel's final words were, The dream is certain and the interpretation thereof is sure, whereupon Nebuchadnezzar heaped great honor upon Daniel for God had caused him to remember his dream and he knew that through Daniel he had been shown what would come to pass in the future.

With this dream and its interpretation as our background, let us now examine the history of Babylon and subsequent nations to see if the dream has been fulfilled. We must begin by remembering that Babylon, represented by the head of gold, was indeed the great nation of that day. No other nation dared do anything of importance without first getting the approval of Babylon. On the other hand, the Babylonian kingdom was so corrupt that to this day we use the term to signify that which is corrupt in the extreme.

Babylon ruled until the time of Belshazzar when she was conquered by the Medes and the Persians and they ruled in her stead. Thus the head of gold was replaced by the chest of silver. After many years of Persian rule, the Greeks under Alexander the Great assumed leadership of the world and the belly and thighs of brass were reached. Finally the Greeks fell to the conquering Romans.

It is significant that the Lord characterized this fourth kingdom as being like iron and said that it would break in pieces all things. When we examine Roman history we see how literally this was

true. In the first place, Rome ranged far and wide, conquering and Romanizing as she went, until even the birth of Christ was effected by her. This does not, however, account for the comparison with iron. The Babylonians conquered and enslaved and taxed. So did the Persians and the Greeks and in some ways they were even more cruel about it than the Romans. The reason the Lord compared Rome to a kingdom of iron is because of her use of religion in the conquest of peoples. The Babylonians and the rest enslaved men's bodies but the Romans enslaved their minds as well.

This enslavement was made possible through a circumstance which not even Rome ever understood. That circumstance was Rome's adoption of the Christian religion, which was not the Christian religion at all, but an apostate religion which Rome believed to be the religion of Christ. It was through that religion that Rome broke in pieces all things. It was through that religion that Rome ruled the world and remains to this day a powerful influence in the minds of men.

Certainly in the face of such a statement it is imperative that an explanation be given concerning Rome's adoption of an already apostate religion. If we will go to the Bible and examine the true religion which Christ established we will see at once what is meant.

We will find there that Christ's religion was one of great simplicity, yet one which elevated men to the highest levels to which the human soul can aspire. For example, Christ said, Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. The other doctrines of the Church were of equally sublime character. To teach these doctrines and to encourage the people in their obedience, Christ established a Church with 12 apostles at its head. When Judas fell, another was appointed to take his place, showing that God intended that 12 Apostles, selected by Him, were always to stand at the head of His Church.

The Church itself was a very simple one, based on an individual testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. All who had received this testimony were eligible for membership and were commanded to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. But being eligible for membership did not make them members. If they had received this testimony and repented of their sins, they were baptized in the rivers and lakes of the country in a similitude of the death and burial and resurrection of Christ. After this baptism they had hands laid upon them for the gift of the Holy Ghost which was to lead them into all truth. Then each week these people met together and bore testimony to each other of God's blessings and they partook of the sacrament which consisted of broken bread and a cup of wine, symbolic of Christ's broken body and his spilled blood.

The apostasy from this simple, soul saving religion occurred because of the backgrounds of the two types of people who came into it, the Jews and the Gentiles. Because of their background, neither the Jews nor the Gentiles were satisfied with the Christian religion. They were both accustomed to much pomp and pageantry in religion and they felt that the simple rites of the Christians were inadequate. Moreover, many of them were steeped in the immoral practices of their day and had no real intention of giving up those practices to follow in the humble footsteps of Christ. They preferred to alter the Church so as to permit such practices, or at least to make it possible for such practices to be forgiven by the Church.

Thus from the very beginning, the people who came into the Christian Church devoted themselves more to altering the Church to make it conform to their likes than to an effort to have it follow the teachings of Christ. On the other hand there were so many of them making these changes that the Apostles were never able to stem the tide. Nearly all the epistles of Paul contain rebukes of the people for their perverseness as do those of the other leaders. Added to these rebukes were pleas for the people to return to the true Gospel, although they knew that the pleas would never be heeded. They knew that the day was soon to come when a great falling away would take place and the true Church would be lost altogether.

Christ Himself had spoken of that day to John while John was on the Isle of Patmos. He said that it was Satan who led the people to do these great evils and that it "was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" He also permitted John to understand that when this occurred that power would be given Satan "over all kindreds, and tongues and nations". Rev.13:17.

The final loss of the True church was greatly hastened by the constant persecution from without which Church members had to undergo. Persecution from without could not change the Church, but it could and did put to death those faithful men and women who were trying to maintain true worship. With them gone, the revisers, the modernizers, had a free hand as Paul had foreseen when he said, "For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:29-30)

Once the apostles and other faithful members were out of the way, changes came faster than ever. Among other things, the simple rite of the sacrament was altered to include the greatest pageantry with the emblems carried before the people and venerated by them. Even a type of spiritual cannibalism was introduced, with the people being told that the bread was no longer bread but the actual body of Christ and that the wine they drank was no longer wine, but the actual blood of Christ. Afterwards the wine was wit drawn from the membership altogether and was partaken of only by the priest. Baptism by immersion, with its symbolism of Christ's death, burial and resurrection was abandoned in favor of sprinkling, a form without scriptural authority and without the symbolism which baptism was intended to provide. So it went with the other ordinances.

That was the religion which Rome adopted when the Emperor Constantine proclaimed that he had seen a flaming cross in the sky. Constantine and all Rome with him knew nothing of Christianity. They had no way of knowing what Christ intended it to be. They knew only what it was when they first found it, and if the Christians themselves were vying with each other for places of authority and wealth which they had brought into the church, how could Rome be expected to know that Christ never intended that places of authority and wealth be in His Church at all?

Perhaps the most conclusive evidence of the complete apostasy which had taken place in the Church before it became the official religion of the Roman empire is the matter of divine revelation. Peter as head of the Church's Council of Twelve Apostles, held the authority and power to stand at the head of the Church. Whatever revelation God had for the Church as a whole would come through Peter as long as he still lived.

Even in its apostate condition the Church recognized that fact and when Rome agreed to make Christianity the State religion, the Church leaders knew that they had two jobs to do. One was justify the moving of Church headquarters to Rome and the other was to tie the then ruling power in the Church up with Peter. They did it in what was probably the only way they could do it. They stated that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome and that the succeeding heads of the Church in Rome had been his legal heirs as head of the Church.

If this claim had been true, God would have spoken to the Church through them, if he had had anything he wished to communicate to the Church. In the year 96, or 30 years after the death of Peter, in which time three bishops of Rome had supposedly ruled as Christ's only legal representative on the earth, the Lord did have a communication for the Church. It was the most marvelous communication given to the Church in all its history, that found in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. It was not given to the pope, however, the Bishop of Rome, but to John, the last of the living apostles.

Thus we see that the claim of the Romans that the pope stood at the head of Christ's Church while one of the original Quorum of 12 Apostles still lived is as false as it is ridiculous. We also see that if the Lord did not recognize the early popes, he certainly did not recognize any later papal authority. Thus, what the Romans adopted and made into a state religion and with which they enslaved men's minds as well as their bodies was an apostate Christian religion which God had already rejected and which he still rejects today.

If there still be doubts as to whether the Roman Church was an apostate Church, there are still its fruits to be examined. Christ said, By their fruits ye shall know them. He also said that a good tree brings forth good fruit and that a corrupt tree brings forth corrupt fruit. If that be true, then we must consider whatever fruits there were during the long rule of the Roman Church as its fruits, and its guage of goodness or corruptness. That Church ruled supreme in everything. It ruled in what education there was, in what business there was, in what government there was. No man at any time nor in any place was beyond the jurisdiction and control of the Roman Church while she reigned supreme. Yet, with all that power, with all that opportunity to make of society whatever she wanted to make of it, she did as Daniel foresaw she would do, she crushed and broke in pieces all things with her iron superstition, her iron tyranny, her iron cruelty, and in any land where she holds that same power today, those same conditions still prevail.

After a thousand years of this iron rule we begin to see the intermixture of the potter's clay. It first appeared in England in the year 1215 when the noblemen forced King John to sign the Magna Charta, and gave political freedom its first weak beginning. Its second appearance came with those brave men and women who dared to defy the entrenched tyranny of the Church, the Reformers, both Protestant and Catholic.

From that time on the increase of the clay in the feet of iron was rapid and continuous. One by one the ancient powers of political tyranny and religious oppression were overcome. Entire churches were set up independently of Rome. Entire governments were set up independently of papal permission. Nowhere would the reformers, whether political or religious, adhere to the established order. Just as Daniel had said, the clay would not mix with nor adhere to the iron.

It is more than a coincidence that just at the time when the Reformation was breaking over Europe that Columbus, guided as he himself said, by the Holy Ghost, sailed westward and discovered a new continent. It is more than a coincidence that the men and the women who had not been able to find peace either in the reformed or the unreformed governments and churches of Europe, finally looked to America as a refuge. There, in an uninhabited wilderness, they felt that at last they could find what they so sincerely sought.

The most important fact that we have to consider when we think of the settlement of America is that she was founded and populated by the very choicest of all the peoples of Europe. Some of those who came here were wealthy, some were poor, some were Protestant, some were Catholic, and some were of other turns of mind, but they all had one thing in common. They were desirous of finding something better as a way of life and they were willing to give up all they had known and to face the rigors and the hardships of the unknown in order to achieve it. There are no better people on earth than the people who will do that.

In the light of all this, is it not significant that Daniel foresaw that in the days of these kings, or in other words, in the days of the great Reformation, that God would set up His Kingdom? Is it not reasonable to assume that if God were going to set up a Kingdom, that He would do it in America away from all the evil influences of Europe and that He would want the choicest people of the whole world with which to do it? Shall we not say, therefore, that God inspired those men and women to come to America in order that he might work out the establishment of His Kingdom. May we not say also that it was inevitable, then, that Thomas Henry Clark should have to look to America for the greatest thing in his life. All men from that day until this and on into all the ages of eternity must look to America for the finest things in their lives. They come from here because God put them here.

Dear Family:

I am not apologizing. I am explaining. I have not printed any issues of the Clark News for a rather long time nor done anything else because what time I have had to devote to the Clark work I have spent trying to decide what can best be told about the life of Thomas Henry Clark.

If I have decided correctly then I am thankful. If I have decided incorrectly, then I am sorry, but I have felt that the best thing a life of Thomas Henry Clark could possibly do would be to present the story of the Gospel to the members of the family who still reside in England and give them a chance to accept it and enjoy what Wilford Woodruff gave us.

I have now completed the first seven chapters, and that is what I have been doing all this time. The next chapter takes up the restoration of the Gospel, the next is the mission of Wilford Woodruff and the conversion of THC, the next is the persecutions of the Church in Missouri, and the next Thomas comes to America and the persecutions he endured at Nauvoo. The next, the crossing of the plains. If you have any information of the family in these periods please send it. If not your help and opinions will be appreciated on the above.