**HISTORY OF 4 UNIVERSAL EMPIRES.**

**FOR USE WITH THE STUDY OF DANIEL’S PROPHECIES**

**One of the principals of prophecy interpretation is: “History is the only answer to prophecy”. It is essential that we have at least a basic, skeleton view of the history of the empires which ruled from the time of Daniel until the establishing of the kingdom of God, in order for us to be able to see their impact on the people of God during their time. Further, it is important to see this history so that we may be able to understand the prophecies which Daniel has given to the world through the visions God gave to him. Following then, is a brief history of each of these empires: Babylon, Medo-Persian, Greece and Rome.**

**1. THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE. 606 BC TO 539 BC.**

**1. The roots of Babylon go back to about 2000 B.C.**

**2. Its prominence as a world power developed from 626 B.C., under its king Nabopolassar.**

**3. The territory of Babylon is where present day Iraq is. The former rulers of the Babylonian territory were the Assyrians. Assyrian rulers such as: Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal, two of which are mentioned in the Bible as enemies of God’s people.**

**4. Nabopolassaar was appointed by the Assyrians as a “Viceroy” of Babylon, in 626 B.C.**

**5. He made an alliance with the Medes. This alliance was strengthened by the marriage of Nabopolassar son, Nebuchadnezzar, to the daughter of king Astyages.**

**6. Nineveh, capital of Assyria, fell to the Medes.**

**7. After the death of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon. Under him, Babylon came to great power. He ruled from 606 B.C., until about 568 B.C., approximately 38 years. He conquered Judah and brought the people captive to Babylon. The capture, destruction and deportation of the people, extended through a process of sieges from 606 B.C., to 586 B.C.**

**8. Daniel was among the first ones to be deported in 606 B.C.**

**9. Nebuchadnezzar built Babylon into a truly universal empire for the world in his day. Even though it might not have been as large in territory as some later kingdoms, yet there had been nothing like it up until that time.**

**10. Babylon is famous for the hanging gardens which he built which are listed as one of the 7 ancient wonders of the world. Nebuchadnezzar also built walls around the city to tall for enemies to scale. They were wide enough at the top so that several chariots could ride side by side around them. The Euphrates River ran through the city, providing an endless supply of water. The only way into the city, was through great iron gates, the bottoms of which reached deep into the river, thus requiring that someone open them for entrance.**

**11. Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded in 568, by Evil Murodach, for less than 2 years; Neriglissar for about 3 years; Labosoarchad, for less than a year; and Nabonidus for about 13 years, until the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. About 3 years into his reign, Nabonidus put Belshazzar, his son, in charge of Babylon, while he spent his time at an oasis worshipping the moon god, Sin. Belshazzar was in charge the night Babylon fell.**

**12. Babylonian rule ended by the invasion of the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. It had been a world power for less than 100 years.**

**13. Babylonian society made contributions in literature, math, astrology, technology, etc.**

**14. Nebuchadnezzar once boasted: “Is not this great Babylon which I have built by the power of my might?”**

**2. THE MEDO – PERSIAN EMPIRE. 539 BC TO 335 BC.**

**1. Approximately 20 years before the fall of Babylon, other powers were gathering strength in the mid-east. The kingdom of the Medes was one of these. The current king of the Medes was Astyages, whose wife was princess Aryenis. To them was born a daughter, Mandane, who married one Cambyses, ruler of a province known as Anshan. To this union a son was born, whom they named Cyrus, after his grandfather.**

**2. Cyrus’ first wife was Cassandane, who gave birth to two sons, Cambyses II and Smerdis. (Both sons later ruled for short periods after the death of Cyrus). Cassandane also bore several daughters, of which two, Artystone and Atossa, would later marry one Darius the great. From them also proceeded other rulers.**

**3. Astyages (grandfather of Cyrus) died in 559 B.C., and Cyrus became king of Anshan. Anshan was a vassal state to the Medes. (Remember, at this time, 559 BC, Babylon is till the dominant kingdom in the world). Following his grandfathers death, and due to general discontent with Median rule, Cyrus, with help from one Harpagus, rebelled against them. This rebellion began in 554 BC, and in 549 BC, Cyrus captured Ecbatana, effectively ending Median rule. Though he now was conqueror of Media, and possessor of the Median crown, he officially assumed the title of “King of Persia”. From this point, Cyrus engaged in wars of other provinces, conquering and annexing them to his territories.**

**4. In September of 539 BC, the army of Cyrus, under the command of Gubaru, attacked and defeated Opis, on the Tigris River. With this victory they gained control of the vast canal system of Babylonia. In early October, the city of Sippar was seized, without a battle, and very little opposition.**

**5. Two days after the defeat of Sippar, Gubaru’s troops entered the city of Babylon itself. We must note here the strategy he used to gain entrance to the city that was thought to be impregnable, with food and water supply for years to sustain them.**

**6. The city of Babylon was surrounded by massive walls, no enemy could scale. The only way into the city was through the two leaved gates, which reached deep into the water, near the river bed. The mighty Euphrates River ran through the city. If Babylonian troops stood guard on the massive walls, and with the gates closed and guarded, entrance into the city was thought to be impossible.**

**7. On this October night, Belshazzar gave a drunken feast to a 1000 of his princes, (no doubt assembled from all over). It is doubtful that this feast was a “2 hour dinner”; more likely several days of drinking, revelry and boasting of the greatness of Babylon. Ironically, Belshazzar apparently was aware that the troops of Gubaru were in Babylonian territory. Not to worry, the walls and the river kept anyone out who was not welcome. It was during this drunken feast, that an unbelievable thing happened. The shape of a man’s hand appeared on the walls, writing some strange words, Belshazzar nor anyone else could understand. Daniel was summoned to interpret the hand writing on the wall.**

**8. Daniel told Belshazzar: “Your kingdom has been weighed in the balances and found wanting”. “Your kingdom is given to the Medes and the Persians”.**

**9. Completely distracted by the revelry of their drunken party, and more so by the phenomenon of this hand writing on the wall, Gubaru’s army was busy with an unbelievable strategy to enter the city. With his troops positioned on two extremes of the city, and away from the walls, they began digging a canal. When the two ends met, they had a channel by which they could divert the water of the Euphrates River from going through the city, to make it go around the city. When the water level was so that they could wade in it, they crawled under the two leaved gate, opened them up, and let the army inside. Babylon fell that night, almost without a battle. Belshazzar was slain. Three weeks later, Cyrus entered the city, arrested Nabonidus, father of Belshazzar, and declared himself king of Babylon.**

**10. The kingdom of Cyrus has been known as both the “Persian empire”, and also the “Medo-Persian empire”. The reason is because in its rise to power, the kingdoms of the Medes and of the Persians were combined. At times Darius (the Mede) will be mentioned and at other times Cyrus (the Persian). Cyrus was the real ruler of the empire, even though provinces such as Babylon had overlords ruling at the same time.**

**11. The territory of the Medo – Persian empire was geater than any state or kingdom up to that time. Its primary location was where modern day Iran is. (Babylon, you may remember, was where modern day Iraq is). The ancient city of Babylon stood some 55 miles south of Baghdad. You will also find in some instances that Babylon will be mentioned as the place of rule, while at other times it will refer to “Shushan”, the palace, in Persia.**

**12. Cyrus left a legacy of generosity and freedom to all his subjects. In the very first year of his reign, he made a great proclamation of religious freedom for everyone. This especially included the thousands of captive Jews, who were freed to return to Palestine. 50,000 returned.**

**13. The Persian empire continued until about 335 BC, ruled by successor kings, as follows:**

**a. Cyrus, 559 to 530; Cambyses, 529 to 522; Smerdis, 522 to 522; Darius I (The Great), 521 to 486; Xerxes, 485 to 465; Artexerxes I, 464 to 424; Xerxes II, 424 to 424; Segdianus, 424 to 424; Darius II, 423 to 405; Artexerxes II, 405 to 359; Artaxerxes III, 358 to 338; Arses, 337 to 336; and Darius III, 335 to 330.**

**When trying to apply the reign of these respective kings of Persia, it is very important to give allowance for the many uses of the various names. We know, for instance, that Daniel was named “Belteshazzar” when carried to Babylon. Likewise, his 3 friends also were given different Babylonian names. This only illustrates the problems you run into when reading of different rulers at different times, even for different kingdoms. You will note in the listing of the names of Persian rulers above a duplication of names. There are two important things to keep in mind: 1. Different languages will produce different names, at least in pronunciation; 2. Kings of different eras often used assumed names the same as some predecessor had used. You see this kind of thing among Roman Catholic popes where you have a multitude of “pope Johns” or of “pope Pauls”, when their family names are something else. Note in the list of Persian rulers that there are 3 Artexerxes; 2 Xerxes; and 3 Darius. Thus it becomes a meticulous detail to sort out exactly which king is being referenced at a given passage of scripture. Therefore, when the Bible uses the name “Ahasuerus” and secular history uses the name “Xerxes”, care must be exercised to avoid confusion as well as misinterpretation. An example of this potential for confusion is in Dan. 5:31, where it tells us that Darius, the Median, took the (Babylonian) kingdom. The facts are, that at this time, Cyrus, the Persian, was the ruler of the Medo-Persian empire. Darius was ruler of Babylon, a particular province of Persia, under Cyrus.**

**A kind of clay pot upon which was written the decree of Cyrus freeing all the captives was found by excavators. In 1971, it was displayed before the United Nations in New York, at which time a resolution was passed, honoring Cyrus and his decree as the first human rights document in all history.**

**3. THE GRECIAN EMPIRE. 336 BC. TO 323 BC.**

**1. The Grecian empire has a comparatively short lived duration, yet made a tremendous and lasting impact on all the world, even down to the present time. Its history, empire, and much of its philosophical and cultural legends, owes its place in the world to one man: Alexander the Great.**

**2. Alexander was born in 356 BC, to Phillip of Macedon. He was one of the most successful military commanders in history, and was undefeated in battle. By the time of his death, he had conquered most of the world known to the ancient Greeks.**

**3. Following the unification of the multiple city-states of ancient Greece under the rule of his father, Phillip of Macedon, Alexander conquered the Persian empire and including Anatolia, Syria, Phonecia, Judea, Gaza, Egypt, Bactria and Mesopotamia, and as far as India. Before his untimely death, he already had plans to invade Arabia, Carthage, Rome and the Iberian Peninsula.**

**4. Alexander’s schooling came from the famous scholar, Aristotle. At the age of 18, he was both a general and an ambassador. His father was killed in 336 BC. Alexander, only 20 years old, moved quickly to take control of his father’s territory, and set out immediately in the conquest of the world. The balance of his life, only 12 to 13 more years, was spent in military expeditions. He was wounded twice in battle. He was weakened by malaria, which was a very prevalent disease. In addition he was a heavy drinker, which either caused or contributed to his death. One month short of his 33rd birthday, on June 10, 323 BC, Alexander died. Speculation of causes include drunkenness, malaria, poison or an over dose of medications. Conqueror of the known world, but dead before his 33rd birthday.**

**5. An empire without an obvious leader now exists. With no one person who was able to command the respect of a vast and diverse territory and people, the proud Grecian empire was without rudder or sail. Briefly the reigns were put in the hands of Alexander’s mentally ill half brother, Phillip Arridaeus and Alexander’s son, Alexander IV. With Phillip mentally unstable and Alexander IV only a baby, caretakers for the empire were named. One of these took control, but was soon assassinated. After this Alexander’s officers focused on the formation of rival monarchies and territorial states. With conflict between them on going, the empire was finally divided into four major portions: Cassander ruled Macedonia; Lysimachus ruled in Thrace; Seleucus in Mesopotamia and Persia; and Ptolemy I Sator in the Levant and Egypt. So quickly the Grecian empire had risen to power; just as quickly it had fallen from its lofty place in the world. Of course, it continued on in its divided state for some time, there not being any other dominating world power yet ready to come to the front.**

**6. The contributions of the Greek world to all mankind, then and on until today, are legendary. Philosophy; education; languages; arts; architecture; laws; government and much more are traceable to the Grecian world. In the annals of history, you seldom, if ever, find a world empire where one man founded it; expanded and ruled it; and died with it also.**

**7. By the 1st century BC, the rising Roman Republic had absorbed most of the territories in the west. The once mighty world empire of Grecian territories no longer existed. Out of its ruins, another power was gathering forces, and soon would burst upon the world’s stage with a force that would conquer the Mediterranean world.**

**4. THE ROMAN EMPIRE. 146 BC. TO 476 AD.**

**1. The Babylonian empire ruled from 606 – 539; the Persian empire from 539 – 336; the Grecian empire from 336 – 323. After the death of Alexander the Great, the Grecian empire was divided into 4 territories, ruled by his generals.**

**2. During much of this time the ebb and flow of empires, wars, leaders, cultures, along with the rise and fall of great cities, was perhaps a fertile seed bed for the rise of the 4th universal empire: Rome. Archeological evidence (as well as tradition) suggests that the “village” of Rome was founded in the mid 8th century BC. It was several centuries later when it finally rose to world dominion. Not much by way of significance is mentioned of Rome until after the division and weakening of the Grecian empire.**

**3. It was at first a simple farming community. Over several centuries this evolved into vineyards and olives, cattle and sheep, light industry such as stone, brick and cement, and a growing commercial trade.**

**4. In the year 146 BC, after about 100 years of the “Punic wars” with Carthage, Roman armies finally destroyed that city. This, along with a vast multitude of conquests of lesser provinces, Rome became an enormous empire straddling the Mediterranean Sea. By the end of the first century AD, the Roman Empire had reached its greatest power. It was the largest empire the world had ever seen. It lasted from 146 BC to 476 AD, longer than the 3 previous empires combined as well as being larger and infinitely more diverse.**

**5. It was governed at first as a Republic, with a senate, but without a strong code of laws. In the first century BC, 3 men, Julius Caesar, Pompey and Crassus formed a triumvirate for the 3 of them to rule together. By 44 BC, Julius Caesar was victorious over the other 2, and was named dictator for life. From his time until the fall of the western empire in 476 AD, there were more than 60 emperors ruling Rome.**

**6. Because the empire was so vast and also encompassed an enormous diversity of peoples and cultures with their countless religious practices and gods, you have an empire that is always in flux and change. To help provide some stability, “colonies” were established all over and a sense of local liberty was granted to them.**

**7. Rome was known for its huge and aggressive armies. Wherever they engaged in war they usually conquered. The Roman “legions” are legendary. They consisted of 4000 to 5000 soldiers, led by a centurion.**

**8.The empire looked after its people very well. They built an extensive road system out of brick and stone, digging 2 feet deep for their foundation. Some are in use still today, such as part of the Appian Way. They built a maize of aqueducts to provide water to her cities. They built public baths. They built huge amphitheatres for games to entertain the people at. They had commercial trade traversing the empire. They had wealth, especially coming from conquered territories. They had a good system of education. They were artistically and architecturally progressive. Rome was the city built on “7 hills”; the mistress of the earth.**

**9. It is generally known that Romans were worshippers of many gods. They were often referred to as “pagan Rome”. But it is doubtful that many are aware of the vast extent and influence that religion and religious practices actually held over the Roman population and even its government. For that reason, I will comment on this aspect of their life at some length. The preceding empires all embraced idolatrous, religious gods of nature and of the planets (host of heavens), etc., but none to the extent the Romans did. Because of the far reaching distances of her territory and the enormous diversity of her people and culture, the Roman Empire well earned the name, Pagan Rome. This was not in any circumstances an irreligious people or empire. On the contrary, her insatiable indulgence in religious activities, sacrifices, festivals, temples, priests, etc., was, in fact, her trade mark. Polytheistic, mystical, idolatrous gods and worship were a regular part of Roman life. Roman religion was made up of complex interrelations between “gods” and humans. Romans believed that every person, place and thing had a divine soul. The Roman empire adopted many of the Greek’s religious beliefs including the representation of Greek gods in the form of humans. Private and personal worship was an important aspect of religious practices of ancient Rome. In a sense, each household in ancient Rome was a temple to the gods. Each household had an altar, at which the family members would offer prayers, perform rites, and interact with the household gods. Religion in ancient Rome developed into an elaborate system, with temples, altars, rituals and ceremonies, priesthood, beliefs of traditional paganism and the cult of the Roman emperors.**

**10. During the Roman Republic days, religion was organized under a strict system of priestly offices, which were held by men of senatorial rank. The “college of pontificates” (priests) was the uppermost body in this hierarchy, and its “chief priest”, the Pontifex Maximus (supreme Pontiff), was the head of the state religion. In the Roman empire, emperors were held to be gods, and the formalized imperial cult was very prominent. Several emperors were deified after their death.**

**11. Most forms of Roman religion required some kind of sacrifice, thus, with an unlimited number of gods, there were daily sacrifices to appease and worship these gods. Romans were by nature religiously superstitious. Their private homes as well as the Roman state, worshipped their deities. To the Roman peasant, the world abounded with gods, spirits and omens. A multitude of festivals were held for these gods. Rome had “vestal virgins” (sworn to celibacy for life) to guard the “holy flame” of Roman temples. Home religion was controlled by the father, while the state religion was controlled by the “Pontifex Maximus”. Under the Pontifex Maximus, the organization of the state religion rested with four religious colleges, whose members were appointed for life. The highest of these bodies was the Pontifical college where the vestal virgins and others resided. Sixteen Pontificates (priests) oversaw the organization of religious events. They kept records of religious procedures and dates of festivals and days of special religious events. (Yes, there were that many of them). A position called “Flamines” acted as priests to certain individual gods, specializing in prayers and rituals to each specific deity.**

**12. There were 6 vestal virgins, who served a total of 30 years, and their main duties were to guard the sacred fires of the temple. They would be whipped if the fire ever went out. Their punishment for breaking their “vow of chastity”, was to be walled up alive underground. If a criminal condemned to death, saw a vestal virgin, he was automatically pardoned.**

**13. The college of Augurs, of 15 members, had the job of interpreting the many omens of public life. They would make a square space on the ground, from which they would look out for auspicious omens. Another college of 15 members looked after the Sibylline Books, (scriptures) and interpreted them for the Senate.**

**14. There was not a month in the year which did not have a religious festival, with nearly all of them celebrated with games. The Circus Maximus (stadium), which could seat 350,000, and the Coliseum with 50,000 capacity, were the venues of these festivals. They had festivals to honor the gods of every distinction. A festival in February was a period of nine days in which families worshipped their dead ancestors. There was also a festival of fertility in February. The festival of Mars was the first 19 days of March. Twenty four men would dress in armor and helmet and jump, leap and bounce through the streets, beating their shields, shouting and chanting. The festival of Vesta was held for a week in June, at which time they made sacrifices of food to the goddess.**

**15. Much more could be written about Roman religion, but what we have reviewed should suffice to convince us that religion was no side-line in Rome. It held a tremendous influence over everyone and everything Roman. The daily life of every Roman was virtually controlled by their devotion to deities and the sacrifices made to them. Religion in Rome was not an option, but a sacred duty. Everyone worshipped any god they chose, and no doubt manufactured many through superstitious mysticism, and perceived omens. It was almost as if when a Roman arose in the morning, he was confronted with the question of: “what will the daily sacrifice be today”?**

**16. With so much emphasis on their religious life and with so many gods, sacrifices, temples, priests, festivals and ceremonies, all related to religion, you would think that somewhere in the midst of it all there was a plan, a purpose and a power that could work to change the spiritual life of people and offer them some hope. It just was not there. It was just religion. Its primary function, or benefit if you prefer, was a vent for their superstitious beliefs and also an avenue for the satisfying of every carnal appetite. Nothing about their daily religious activities offered any change from lusts, passions, crime, baseness, self centeredness, hate, murder, drunkenness or anything else. It did not have a plan of faith by which their hearts could surely have a hope of human deliverance. It did have penalties, punishments, judgments, exorcisms and the like. It only goes to emphasize that you can be very religious and it not have any character benefit or future hope attached to it. Revelry, pleasure, self gratification and being like everyone else, were the only real benefits. While they worshipped the gods of rain, sun, war and countless others, they really did not have any power to do anything, since they were dead pagan gods.**

**17. In the midst of this almost frenzied worship, festivity, organization, priests and sacrifices, and amazing thing happened. A TOTALLY NEW AND DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS SYSTEM WAS BORN, WHICH WAS IN OPPOSITION TO ALL OF THE DEITIES AND SACRIFICES OF ROME! Under the reign of Roman emperor Tiberius (AD 14 – 37), Jesus Christ entered both the Jewish world and the Roman world. He was born in the little town of Bethlehem, in about 4BC, amidst rumors and fears that “another king” was coming to the world. He entered the public ministry about 30 years later, and after 3 ½ years, voluntarily gave his life at calvary for the sins of the world. This sacrifice was the means of ending all religious sacrifices and worship carried on for whatever reason, both in the Jewish sacrificial system as well as the Roman Pagan religious sacrificial system. The Jewish sacrificial system was effectively terminated with the death of Christ at calvary, though a rejected priestly system ceremoniously continued them until the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. The Roman empire’s sacrificial system and countless gods, which by the way was much more numerous and far reaching than the Jewish system, continued on, with the apparent view that nothing could put an end to a system so vast and influential as it was. They not only were disinterested in the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, they were increasingly hostile to its presence and its promises which transcended anything the Roman system had to offer. The ultimate, abrupt and overwhelming termination of this Roman sacrificial system is one of the marvels of providential destiny as well as an unbelievable episode in human history. We will therefore chronicle in brief detail this astounding event.**

**18. In the process of reviewing the virtual elimination of the Roman daily sacrificial system, we need to incorporate the ascendency of Christianity in the Roman world in order to see how this phenomenon evolved.**

**a. Its first 7 -8 years were spent in an incubation period in and around Jerusalem, severely condemned, despised and persecuted by the Jewish religious hierarchy, as well as under a cloud of suspicion by the Romans.**

**b. Its message of the resurrection of Christ and ultimately of the Christian, based upon faith in the Lord, was strange, unacceptable and it interfered with the religion of the world.**

**c. Persecution drove them to move from Jerusalem to other areas and to begin preaching their message of salvation through Christ wherever they went.**

**d. One of the great enemies of the church, Paul, was converted from his brutal persecution to become the most passionate witness for Christ of all.**

**e. He spent the rest of his life from one crisis to another, until finally he was murdered under the reign of Nero in about 65 -67 AD.**

**f. Nero instigated a cruel, sadistic, heartless butchering of Christians, after accusing them, falsely, of setting Rome on fire.**

**g. By this time (about 65 AD) Christianity was springing up in every corner of the empire.**

**h. Jewish persecution effectively ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish polity, but persecution increased under the emperors of Rome for years to come.**

**i. From Nero (AD 54 – 68), and all the succeeding emperors, to a more or less degree, until the edict of Constantine (313 AD), Christianity endured relentless campaigns to destroy the Christian church entirely.**

**j. But the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church, and it grew exponentially.**

**k. In 313, Constantine issued an edict, giving Christianity an equal footing with every other religion in the empire.**

**l. Because of imperial favor, Christianity exploded in popularity and acceptance.**

**m. But it was a Christianity of “baptized Paganism”, and not one of genuine faith and conversion.**

**n. When Constantine defeated his rival emperor Licinius in AD 324, the empire was ruled, at least in name, by a professing Christian emperor.**

**o. Positions of governance of the empire were filled by people professing and favorable to Christianity, because of imperial support.**

**p. In 361, Julian the apostate ascended the throne and denounced Christianity in an effort to return the empire to paganism. He failed completely.**

**q. In 380 AD, emperor Theodosius made Christianity the official religion of the empire, essentially outlawing any other religion.**

**r. Over the next 150 years, to the time of emperor Justinian, the hordes of barbaric, pagans, as well as the elite populace also, were now essentially forced to embrace Christianity.**

**s. In a few short centuries, the Christian religion had struck a fatal blow to the entire existence of Roman, pagan religion and its sacrifices to heathen gods which had been practiced since its founding.**

**t. In 395, the Roman empire was divided into eastern and western Roman empires, with the eastern capital in Constantinople and the western capital in Rome.**

**u. In 476 AD, the western Roman empire fell, effectively ending the existence of the ancient Roman rule.**

**v. Christianity, through the church’s growing dominion under the power wielded by the assertion of the papal “pontifex maximus”, was rapidly gaining control over both church and state, religion and politics. This phenomenon will get much more attention later.**

**19. We have witnessed the rise and fall of 4 universal empires over a period of a little more than 1000 years. We have seen the rise of the kingdom of God in the days of the last of these 4 kingdoms. Briefly, we witnessed the early church in its power; we saw it endure severe persecution; we saw it come into favor of emperors and gain acceptance by the entire population, finally by imperial edict. Then we saw the purity and spirituality of the Christian church deteriorate into only a shadow of its early strength and purity. We are at about the 6th century AD, and there is much before us to discover.**

**20. Finally, take a look back at this capsule of the history of these 4 empires, and it will not be hard to see how different the Roman Empire was from the rest. It was longer in existence; covered more territory; more advanced in many ways; a more diverse culture; a society that was different; different forms of government; massive in its religious emphasis; and, perhaps the greatest difference of all, it was the birth place of Christianity, which came to alter the societal make up of the entire empire. “Dreadful and terrible”, to borrow the words of Daniel 7, in describing the 4th beast of his vision of that chapter, seem to fit Rome very well.**