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The
of **Death.**
America?

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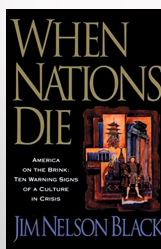
The Death of America?

As we take a close look at events transpiring in today's America, we might well ask, "Is America about to die?" After all, world powers and empires have come and gone through the centuries. Maybe the great American Empire is next? Europe's various divisions and empires have come and gone. Even the greatest empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome all eventually met their fate. Amazingly, it was not always invading forces that brought about the demise of an empire, but rather the collapse that took place from within!

As we carefully consider where America is as a nation right now, we could learn a lot by comparing the United States to Rome. These two empires have so much in common.

A Theory

In 1976 a famous general wrote an essay entitled *The Fate of Empires*.¹ In it he brings out the fact that historically, an empire lasts around 250 years before decadency sets in and rapidly erodes the very fabric of society from the inside out. What exactly is decadence? The dictionary explains: "A process, condition, or period of deterioration or decline; decay."² Let's take a quick look at the cause of the decadence at the root of the demise of great nations.



When Nations Die

In his book, *When Nations Die*, Jim Nelson Black identifies ten factors that have caused the downfall of great empires. Black observes that in some cultures, as few as three or four symptoms of social, cultural, and moral decline were enough to bring a society to the point of collapse:

1. Increase in lawlessness
2. Loss of economic discipline
3. Rising bureaucracy
4. Decline in education
5. Weakening of cultural foundations

6. Loss of respect for traditions
7. Increase in materialism
8. Rise in immorality
9. Decay of religious belief
10. Devaluing of human life

As Seen in Rome

The above factors are what ate away at the fabric of Roman society. But what does Rome have to do with us today? A lot. Yes, there are those in the media trying to downplay the similarities between Rome and the United States. Sorry — the similarities are hard to ignore! Rome was a Republic; America is (was?) a Republic. In fact, many forms of our education and government come from Greek and Roman structure. Rome was a world superpower, reaching as far north as England, to the south in Northern Africa and much of the Middle East; America, too, is a superpower with an influence around the world. Rome led the advance on certain technologies and architecture; America has done the same.

It has been said of the early Romans:

“A man was pious who gave the gods their due through worship and sacrifice, who honored his father and mother, and indeed all his ancestors, who stood by his friends, who was ready to die if need be for his country. A pious man submitted himself to things sacred, and believed unflinchingly that it was better to perish than to fail in his sacred duties.”

This sounds almost like the America of 150 years ago, except that we have more Christian than pagan roots. A society that is held together by such a cementing of beliefs would, and has, offered strong resistance to forces of disintegration.

Polybius, a well-known Greek historian, feared that Rome’s success would eventually destroy the Roman character. He predicted that arrogance and luxury

would infect the people, and then, “being inflamed with rage, and following only the dictates of their passions, they will no longer submit to any control,” and society would destroy itself.³ He remembered all too well what had happened in the closing years of the Grecian Empire, as decadency had played a major factor in causing it to fall into the hands of the Romans.

What Happened to Rome?

Polybius’s fears became reality. Here is what happened: Rome slowly declined as wealth, power, and passion took first place in the Roman heart. Once again, society became preoccupied with sensuality. Moral decadence set in, involving adultery and homosexuality, thus a *breakdown of the Roman family*. Eventually citizens lost interest in piety and dignity and focused on day-to-day living and instant gratification. Does this have a familiar ring to it?

What process played an important role in propagating the spread of moral decay? People became addicted to the amphitheater, choosing to watch violence, nudity and sports. Citizens worshipped the gladiators who fought in the arenas. Consequently, the Romans lost respect for human life. Originally punishable by death, abortion became common, even encouraged. Violence became an epidemic. Gang violence was rampant in the large cities.

Polybius, being a Greek, knew what had happened to his own nation. They, too, had begun with a high level of morality, but Greek society had faltered and drifted. Materialism, sexual immorality, and self-absorption took over Grecian hearts. Homosexuality was glorified. The stage and arts, once the hallmark

Rome slowly declined as wealth, power, and passion took first place in the Roman heart.





This beast has to be the United States of America.

of the noble Greek character, became lewd and violent. Lacking focus and a consensus of values, the once-great culture succumbed to the Roman army. Years later, as he predicted, the same things happened to Rome.

Interestingly, as Rome became steeped in decadency, she also was attacked mainly, but not solely, by nomadic, uncivilized tribes from the North: the Heruli, the Ostrogoths, and the Vandals. These tribes were later destroyed by Papal Rome, as they were resistant to the teachings of the Catholic Church. These details should not elude us, as the similarities with what is now happening in the US make for even more striking comparison.

As Rome's decadency increased, judgment calls on national security were not handled wisely. The military was spread too thin, trying to hold the decaying empire together. Attacks became more frequent from outside forces, weakening the empire even more and stretching its wealth beyond its capabilities. As this happened, a shift of power took place inside the country as Constantine tried to hold the empire together. He drew upon the growing Christian population to unite with the pagan elements, thus hoping to secure national security! To do this, the government shifted from a pagan government to a Christian ecclesiastical government to win the favor of the Christian population.

As ancient Rome faced collapse, it gave way for the rise of the papacy. Chapter 17 of the book of

Revelation depicts the Catholic Church as a corrupt woman riding a scarlet colored beast (Rev. 17:3-6). This is the "woman" and the "beast" which she rides was the Roman government. The result was a church state. We know from the Bible that a woman represents a church in biblical prophecy (see Ephesians 5:22-33; 2 Corinthians 11:2). If you study all of Revelation 17, comparing scripture with scripture, you will see the rise of the papacy. (For more information get the DVD series *The Days of Noah*, as it outlines this prophecy in great detail.) While the Roman Empire fell, strangely enough the religious element, namely the Roman Catholic hierarchy, still had ecclesiastical control over nations and kings of Europe all the way to around 1798. It was then that Pope Pius VI was taken from his throne on the 15th day of February (1798), made a captive by the French army, and kept a prisoner until 1799 when he died as a captive in France. So, up to that time, we see the failing Rome Empire desperately trying to hold itself together, calling on the Church of Rome to help accomplish that goal.

As we ponder Rome's decadence, we almost imagine that we are talking about the United States! When one takes a quick look at the list of the ten items that cause the demise of a nation, we can clearly see that America is at that point! We do not need to cover all of these in detail — they are obvious! By all indicators we, as a nation, are exhibiting every one of the items in Mr. Black's black list. Does that mean America is dying? Well, not quite yet!



America in Bible Prophecy

The Bible tells us that God, “removeth kings, and setteth up kings” (Daniel 2:21). When we consider the history of America, we know for a fact that it was raised up by God to fulfill a very important prophetic purpose. When we examine Bible prophecy, we see that “beasts” represent nations (see Daniel 7:3, 17 and 23). We often find that these beasts come out of the “sea” (see Daniel 7:2 and 3). Seas, or waters, represent “people, multitudes, or nations” (see Revelation 17:1 and 15). These Biblical interpretations are well established by nearly all Bible theologians. The Bible clearly points out the rise and fall of nations, with each new nation coming up out of “seas” or “previous nations.”

When we turn to Revelation 13, we see a series of four beasts coming up out of the sea, referring to Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. But then the next scene we see in Revelation 13: 11 is this: “And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.” So here we see a beast that comes on the scene sometime after the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of the papal power as seen in the Roman Catholic Church.

This lamb-like beast comes up out of the earth, which means it arises from a new, vacant, or sparsely-populated land, unlike the other beasts that came out of the sea. This beast has two lamb-like horns, which represent two Christ-like characteristics. But don't let its looks deceive you, as it looks a lamb

(Christlike) but speaks like a dragon (a threatening world power)! The two horns represent the separation of church and state. This beast has no crowns like those seen on the other beasts. This indicates that this beast is not a monarchy but takes on some other forms of government, more in the form of a republic. It exercises power equal to the sea-beasts, which means it becomes a formidable world power.

The lamb-like horns and dragon-like voice point out a striking contradiction between the profession and the practice of the nation thus represented. The prediction that it will speak “as a dragon” and exercise “all the power of the first beast” plainly foretells a development of the spirit of intolerance and persecution.

More Still to Come

As we identify America in Bible prophecy, we see that it has a role to play in world events. We do not have space in this article to get into the deeper details of the subject at hand, but we can look over some key points. As we continue in Revelation 13 we see the next events:

“And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the

beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." Revelation 13:12-15.

History shows, as we saw earlier, that as Rome fell into decadence, it started to crumble as a nation. In order to unify and in an effort to try to save the empire, Constantine facilitated the change of Rome to Papal Rome (aka: Holy Roman Empire). He became a Christian for political means and then legalized Christianity in hopes of bringing Rome back to its prominence as a world power.

Although Rome's national power subsided, its ecclesiastical power grew. It is depicted as the first-beast power — a woman riding on a scarlet-colored beast. America will make an "image," so at some point, it will become like the first-beast power. This power will unleash events never seen before as it "deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do..." This will set the stage for the final events leading up to the Mark of the Beast.

The Final Events


America still has a major role to play in Bible prophecy. The end is not yet! There are several developments that still need to transpire. We certainly do not want to run off into fanaticism or start setting dates for Christ's return! But we do live in unprecedented times. Think about it — every generation up to ours has faced some serious world crisis: WWI, The Great Depression, WWII. Even before these there were serious world events that posed challenges with each generation. What will happen in this generation? Danger signs of our decadence loom on every side. I say this honestly: we are nearing serious events.

Can any of the factors mentioned in this article be a catalyst to change this pluralistic, humanistic society into a so-called Christian nation again? I can hear some saying, "That will never happen!" But we never thought there would be the collapse of communist countries in the late 1980s. We never thought we would be able to take the gospel into some of these

hardline countries. We never thought a "pandemic" could shut the whole world down. We never thought we would see the world pulled together through something like social media. We are quickly learning that what we think can't happen will happen.

Could it be that in a time of serious crisis, amid political, social, and natural calamities, people would run back to church? That sounds good, right? In fact, a call back to God is being made by leading Evangelical Christians. They agree — America is on the downhill side of decadence. Their answer? Bring this country back to God and what it stood for 200 years ago. Sounds good!

But wait. What happened with Rome? It became the beast power, the papacy, which history testifies was an intolerant religious power that plunged the world into the Dark Ages and persecution of the faithful. In our day, could we go from bad to worse — a new "Dark Ages"? Would a serious crisis cause a mass of quasi-Christians as it did in Rome — a false form of political Christianity? Could history repeat itself? The book of Revelation indicates that it most certainly will. Could a religious backlash cause religious intolerance here in our country against those who go against the status quo? Time will surely tell.

One thing I do know is that when you are faithful to Christ, He is faithful to you. While there may be a coming storm, Christ is the great Storm-Calmer. He will send peace to our hearts in the midst of the storms and bring us safely to the other side! 

1. Sir John Glubb (1897- 1986) was a legendary British commander of the old Trans-Jordan and Arab nations and was knighted by the Queen of England. Ironically, he was stationed in Baghdad for several years.

2. The American Heritage Dictionary.

3. The General History of Polybius, translated by James Hampton (fifth edition, vol. II., Oxford: W. Baxter, 1823), 178-179.

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