

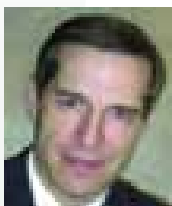


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Final Offer: An Endtime Rewards Program

By Wilfred Hahn

An unsettling spectre has been playing out globally in recent years. As has already been observable for some time, a geo-political power shift has been underway. In terms of economic clout, Asia and the Middle East have been in ascendancy, rapidly moving into position as world creditors, as well as becoming leaders in world trade. During this same period, the European Union has formed itself into a political counterweight to the United States.



Various so-called non-aligned nations such as Russia, Iran and Venezuela have found opportunity to effectively hector the established world power axis at its fringes. If this were not confusing enough, other types of influence and power have been emerging to notable effect.

For example, as American and other global financial institutions have recently again fallen into crises — as they seem to do every 20 years or so — it has been Middle Eastern and Asian money that has come to the rescue. This seemed so unlikely both for geopolitical and religious reasons. It wasn't more than a few years

ago that there was an uproar in America when China wanted to buy Unocal (an American petroleum company). At the time, a WSJ/NBC poll showed that only 15% of Americans favoured letting China buy Unocal and only 31% would allow Arab countries to invest in the US at all.

Yet, how is it that Shar'ia observing nations are the source of money that is supporting Western-based financial systems? Supposedly, these operate on principles that are the very antithesis of the teachings of Islam. It is all very confusing. What is behind all these power shifts?

Due to the high oil price, money continues to gush into these countries. In 2008, a surplus of \$300 billion is estimated for the Gulf states alone — Kuwait, Qatar, Arab Emirates, Oman, and Saudi Arabia, which, incidentally, account for nearly half of the world's SWF assets.



One thing is for certain, the incentives of money and power seem to be behind these changes. According to the Bible, it is precisely these elements that play a role in the emergence of the world's final power structure. However, before we further explore these dynamics, a brief overview of the Islamic connection and the emergence of the Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWFs) is timely.

What Oils the Situation?

Although they have existed for some time, it is only lately that Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWFs) have come into prominence and influence. They seem to be popping up all over the place, recently Russia and Saudi Arabia announcing the formation of several new ones. What are they? They are country-sponsored investment companies that are growing rapidly. According to one estimate, they are expected to quintuple in size over the next 10 years, controlling a total of as much as \$15 trillion.

China and a number of Middle Eastern countries control the largest of the SWFs. But where is all the money coming from? It is estimated that two-thirds of all SWF assets were derived from oil and gas export revenues. That high oil prices should be swelling the treasuries of these countries (also Russia) should be no surprise.

Consider that back in 1971, 41% of the world's energy was supplied by oil. What is the reliance today? Despite several supply crises since that time, it is

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40% ... virtually unchanged. The 12 country members of OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) still account for 40% of the world's oil production and 70% of its reserves. Almost 4 decades have passed, and this cozy arrangement with respect to OPEC, the Middle East and oil remains.

Due to the high oil price, money continues to gush into these countries. In 2008, a surplus of \$300 billion is estimated for the Gulf states alone — Kuwait, Qatar, Arab Emirates, Oman, and Saudi Arabia, which, incidentally, account for nearly half of the world's SWF assets. Now we understand why the SWFs of Muslim countries have lately emerged as such influential actors on the world stage.

But, what to make of these shifts in the various power structures in the world? While we cannot predict their specific roles, they assuredly are part of last-day, geo-political power struggles.

Endtime Power Strategies

Consider this verse, "He [...] will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price." (Daniel 11:39, NIV) This verse is excerpted from a section that describes the actions of the final world ruler. We see here that elites of some kind, will receive considerable reward for their complicity in supporting the agendas of the final incarnate "spirit of the antichrist" himself.

Who are the ones that receive honor from the Antichrist? The answer — those that will acknowledge him. Virtually all English Bible translations use the word "acknowledge." It means here that certain key people who recognize him and accept his authority will receive a reward — land. It should be noted that the original Aramaic word used for "land" in this verse can also convey the idea of property



or economic domain as well as geographic area. After all, in ancient times, land was the main foundation of wealth and economy.

It only follows that this must be a small, elite group of people who likely are already influential in their own right. Why? They will be made rulers over many. As not everyone can be made a ruler over many, therefore, these will be few. Not only is this logical, but the Bible also specifically tell us what the reward will be for everybody else; in other words, all the rest of the masses that acknowledge and worship the Antichrist. They will not be killed (a negative reward) and be allowed to “buy or sell.” He causes, “[...] all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell” (Revelation 13:15-16).

The elites, on the other hand — whoever they are — are bought off for their loyalty with further reward ... the additional pay-off of power or economic domain, we reason. It is the same or similar deal that Satan offered Christ when he was being tested in the wilderness, promising “[...] authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours” (Luke 4:6-7).

But why did the devil think it worthwhile to specifically test Christ in such a colossal way? Obviously, it would have been great gain for him were he successful. Here was motive and incentive. We may therefore take some license and deduce that there will be a similar motive behind the Antichrist’s endtime reward systems. The elites selected for reward must have something to barter in return ... likely their fame

or endorsement. And, it wouldn’t be surprising then if these were highly revered people, politicians, great humanitarians, or Christian masqueraders ... even so-called “angels of light.”

We are given at least a few criteria with which to identify who these elites might be at that future date. In the first instance, they must be humans. Also, they must be capable of being rulers, already likely possessing some measure of power and authority. And, they must be willing worldly complicitors.

Although these events play out during the future Tribulation period (and therefore really do not concern us), is it already possible today to discern the power structures that these elites might command? Although we cannot be definitive by the light of conditions today, we can certainly propose some candidates — whatever the form they may actually take. In addition to the newly emerging SWFs, we outline three more:

1. The 10 Kings. The Bible makes extensive mention of the 10 kings that will give their power and authority to the Antichrist (Revelation 17:12). This group indeed could fittingly represent these elites mentioned in Daniel 11. The Bible provides us with at least 13 sets of characteristics or markers of these 10 persons. The strict literal meaning of the word king (whether in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek) is a human male that is head of a nation, tribe or people. Of the more than 2,500 appearances of this word in the Bible, only with one exception is it conclusively used in any other way than as referring to a male head. That applies to God, who was also manifest in the flesh. The word “prince” is instead almost always used to describe potentates of spiritual realms.

However, it remains true even at this late date that we cannot yet identify

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these 10 kings. There are a number of theories, the most prevalent of which is that these 10 kings will all come from a revived Roman Empire, of which the European Union of today is the predecessor. While this is a very plausible and popular interpretation, it remains unproven. The Bible simply does not provide us with a conclusive identity of the 10 nations. Daniel 9:26, which, on the one hand, is an extremely important verse in the apologetics of Bible prophecy, does not provide an iron-clad connection to the European Union of today. (For a more in-depth examination of the 10 kings, please see the *Midnight Call* issues October to December 2006.)

However, could new types of power structures other than sovereign countries emerge that could also have heads like kings? If so, we could then pose some additional candidates:

2. Financial System Powers. There are a number of possibilities in this arena. Some prophecy analysts have theorized that the heads of various financial entities (such as banks) could qualify as the 10 kings. Or could it be 10 regional central banks, coordinated under the Bank of International Settlements (BIS)? To date, most all central banks are coordinating their activities through the BIS. In fact, the Club of Rome some time ago conceptually divided the world into 10 financial regions.

Certainly, financial conglomerates are becoming ever larger and financial systems ever more invasive. It is these large companies that are behind the ex-



plosion in financial markets (as of end 2007, valued at \$760 trillion or 15 times the size of the world economy), accounting for an increasing share in world income, levels of indebtedness, and economic control. Today, the largest 50 financial corporations in the world represent well over one-third of total world banking assets.

3. Corporations. Multi-national firms (MNCs) today, as a group, are probably the most influential economic force in the world. And, as money is power in this age, they may also be the most powerful, viewed as a group. Though these companies may find their roots a few hundred years ago, their global power has only really developed over little of the past half century or so. Could 10 MNCs emerge sometime in the future that are large enough to master the world?

It is possible. In fact, today, of the top 100 hundred economic entities in the world, roughly half are made up of countries, the other half by MNCs. The heads of these companies, though they are answerable to boards of directors, nevertheless are very influential. These firms can employ hundreds of thousands of employees — more than the population of many countries. Some secular analysts do foresee the day where a small group of such commercial polyglots will indeed dominate the world economy.

Each of these forms and structures will have a human head at its top. All of them will likely be pursuing a reward of some type. Yet, having taken this brief survey (hardly exhaustive),



we still cannot identify the identity of the elites that Daniel mentions with any degree of certainty. This shouldn't be disappointing. It causes us to keep watching; to not be taken unawares; and to remain open to new information. The world's power structures do keep shifting. Though "[...] we have the word of the prophets made more certain" (2 Peter 1:19), at the same time we must also realize that our Enemy is cunning and a supreme master of deception.

The only wise and sure conclusion is that we must keep our options open — keeping ourselves oriented to the Scriptures; watching and waiting for our Lord's return, so as to not be distracted nor caught sleeping.

Thoughts to Ponder

We have pondered the questions of who will be the final group of elites who are in complicity with the Antichrist as well as the nature of their reward. We have no certain answers as to their final identities. However, there are at least two things that we can know with surety.

We know the fate of these elites and also everyone else in the world that does not acknowledge Him, the true God and Savior. Just as was decreed to Nebuchadnezzar, "Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes" (Daniel 4:32). Seven times means seven years in the typical Aramaic usage. At the end of the Great Tribulation, "every knee" of those remaining shall bow and worship Him, the Lamb that was slain.

We also know the identities and fate of those who do not acknowledge the Antichrist. They are the ones who in-

stead acknowledge the Risen Savior. However, while this refers to those who became believers in the Tribulation, on this side of the rapture, they are those that struggle against the "spirit of the antichrist." Christ's promise remains in force: "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

What then is our reward ... and the price? Certainly not the promise of something so mundane and temporal as the "land" promised to the elites; in other words, material wealth, position and power in the world. Said Christ, "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:12).

No, the saints are the ones that the world will hate, as the world also hated Christ. Said Jesus, "[...] you will be hated by all nations because of me" (Matthew 24:9). As Apostle Paul experienced, the saints are more likely to be troubled than coddled, perplexed than self-reliant, persecuted than befriended, rejected than accepted. "For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body" (2 Corinthians 4:11).

Take courage, Christ is coming quickly with his reward. "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done." (Revelation 22:12) For, soon it will be time for "rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great" (Revelations 11:18). ^{MC}

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