



January 2018 · #036

**Dear praying friends in Europe –**

*"But when the time was fulfilled, God sent his Son" (Gal 4:4). God can wait "until the time the Father has appointed" (V2). What kind of time was this? It was the reign of Emperor Augustus (Lk 2:1), known in history as the "Golden Age". The Roman Empire had extended to Europe and North Africa, the political situation was stable, no war and at the same time with the "koine" there was a generally understandable language throughout the empire.*

All of these were factors helping the gospel through Paul to be spread so quickly. The Roman Empire was God's tool to carry the message of Jesus all over the world at that time. Worship to the God of history!



**Ortwin Schweitzer**

**"Empires are not from God!"**

This view is held by many Christians today. The Bible, it is said, speaks only of nations, never of great empires. Therefore, state forms like the EU were not wanted by God. Let's take a closer look.

**The nation states**

There are 4 core sites where the Bible talks about the origin of the peoples.<sup>(1)</sup> The second one is Genesis 11. People still have *one* language after the flood. They are inventing new building materials and now want to build a city and a tower, a collective effort to stay together. That is not criticized. But there is the addition: "... a tower whose top reaches to the sky." That was the hubris God opposed. He shattered their language into languages "and they were scattered into all lands" (V 9). The languages as the deepest identity of nations appear in this account as the punishment of God. And looking at the two world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both born of nationalism, you can still feel something of the curse of God's confusion.

**The great empires**

Building a "city with a tower" together like the EU is a joint effort and connects. The problem is therefore not the state form, but the hubris to deliberately omit the reference to God from the constitution, to abolish God as in Babel.

**Cyrus**, God calls (Isa 45): "My anointed (= Messiah/Christ), whom I took by the hand, that I subject peoples before him", i.e. create for him a great empire. But that's not the point, but that he obeys God - and lets Israel go to his land.

(1) Other passages Genesis 10:32; 11:1-9; Deuteronomy 32:8; Acts 17:26

**Please also pray**

- for the World Economic Forum in Davos; that the real issues of poverty and inequality of wealth will be addressed.
- for Greece; as the 8 year Eurozone/IMF bailout agreement comes to an end, that a realistic plan for dealing with the ongoing debt be found.

**Nebuchadnezzar**, is not reprimanded because he is so powerful in Babylon (Dan 4:19), but because he is arrogant (V.26f). The same is found in the NT. Neither by Jesus nor by Paul is the Roman Empire, which was then ruling, even questioned in any way.

**Jesus**, when the national-religious hardliners try to trap him with the question whether one should pay the emperor taxes, answers confidently (Mt 22:21): "Give to the emperor, what is his ..." - no questioning of the empire of the Romans by Jesus.

**Paul** knew about the corruption of all authorities in the Roman Empire, but he formulated Rm 13:1: "Everyone is subject to the authority ... because it is of God." He phrases the task of Christians in 1 Tim 2:1f to pray for these (Roman!) kings and all the authorities. They thereby confirm that they are citizens of the Imperium Romanum and at the same time that they are citizens of the Kingdom of God, for whose king Jesus they went to their deaths. The Bible *obviously* does not care about the state form – because God has them all in his hand, the nations and the empires. The important thing is that God is in first place and the rulers do not stand out.

**Let us pray for**

- Give thanks that the Kingdom of God has permeated all forms of government for 2000 years.
- Pray for the right balance between the EU and the nation states.
- Give thanks for the democratic form of government today at national and European level.
- Pray for God-fearing politicians at all levels with a humble mind.