



Britain the leper of Europe?

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BIBLE PROPHECY shows that when Christ returns there will be distinct groupings discernible within the kingdoms of men. For example, "the kings of the earth" will bitterly oppose Christ, even when he is King: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD [Yahweh], and against His anointed" (Ps. 2:2). On the other hand, Tarshish will very quickly perceive the wisdom of submission: "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts" (72:10). "The kings of the earth" refers to the Western European nations, Tarshish refers to Britain, and therefore we should be looking for signs that indicate a divergence between Britain and Europe.

At the time of writing (mid-March) Britain is in the middle of an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, which is exacting a terrible toll on British agriculture. The disease has spread to France and also to Northern Ireland. Extraordinary measures to prevent the spread of disease are being taken. The effect of the disease is being felt far beyond the farming communities.

Inevitably questions are being asked by other countries as to the extent to which Britain is to blame for what is happening. Hugh Byrne, the Irish Minister for Marine and Natural Resources, was in no doubt. He has been very critical of the way the British Government has handled the crisis.

Furthermore, he has described Britain as a leper: "Britain is now the leper of Europe. And by that I mean that, because the country has been infected with the disease, her neighbours feel fearful that they may catch the contagion".¹ In fact, other European nations have been more sympathetic towards Britain and have tended to distance themselves from these comments. But there are hints of discontent on mainland

Europe. In a review of European reaction, the BBC² quoted the German newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* as saying: "But now, the rapid spread of foot-and-mouth disease is threatening to turn the international reaction to Britain's woes from pity to bitter resentment".

It is not clear as yet how this crisis will unfold. But there is no doubt that it is causing the differences between Britain and mainland Europe to be exposed.

In speaking of the last days, God says to Daniel: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (12:4). One of the features of modern society is the ease of transport. Men indeed "run to and fro". In order to make better profits this is also true of the transport of animals. One reason why the disease has spread as it has in Britain is because of the way animals are transported long distances to be sold, sometimes only to be transported and sold again.

In a recent article in *The Testimony*³ it was noted that modern technology is ignoring the truth of the statement in Ecclesiastes: "Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field" (Eccl. 5:9). Britain is currently learning that this is indeed the case. Farming is not an industry that can simply be allowed to go to the wall.

The terrible effects of this outbreak will be felt for a long time. May our Lord soon return, when the blessings of the Kingdom will be upon the earth: "He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease" (Ps. 107:38).

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1. *The Independent Tuesday Review*, 13 March 2001, p. 5.
 2. BBC News, Thursday 15 March 2001; <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.
 3. Dec. 2000, p. 465.