

Come to Understanding

They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24

July 1, 2012

Volume 11 Number 13

The King of the South (Part 1)

The Book of Daniel is filled with prophetic imagery foretelling events that were to follow. While Daniel was in captivity, the control of the great world empire was transferred from the Babylonians to the Medes and the Persians. Even Daniel himself could not understand the meaning of many of the prophecies that he had been given. Their meanings were “closed up and sealed,” not to be understood until they were opened and unsealed at some later time, which was called “the time of the end.”

9 And he said, Go your way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.
-Daniel 12

Many of these prophecies are so detailed that there are some that believe the Book of Daniel must have been written after the events had already happened. Of notable mention is Chapter 11. Some have adopted the views of a third century critic named Porphyry who reportedly doubted that these events could have been written before they had actually happened:

...his strongest objection is to the particularity of the details in chapter xi, which refers to the history of the Ptolemies and Seleucidae in their relation to the Jewish people, and which being so clear and exact must, according to his views, have been written after the event; he supposed the writer to have lived soon after the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes: hence, the prophecies of the four kingdoms, which are generally interpreted as referring to Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, he would close with Alexander's successors (see William Binnington Boyce, *The Higher Criticism of the Bible*, London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1881, p. 286).

Some, known as “preterists,” believe that nearly all biblical prophecies have already been fulfilled and can now be clearly understood from a historical perspective (see Samuel M. Jackson, et al., eds., *The Concise Dictionary of Religious Knowledge and Gazetteer*, 2nd ed, New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1891, p. 806.) If their belief is true, then history has already passed through the period known as “the time of the end.”

However, the study of Daniel, as well as many other prophetic books of the Bible, reveals that near-term prophecies often also serve as a “type” of future prophetic events. Even the law was not given as an end in itself. Instead, it was given as “a shadow of good things to come:”

1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.
-Hebrews 10

The “good things to come,” as recorded in the law, the words of the prophets, and the psalms, were the revelations of the glory and power of God through Yahshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ):

44 And he said to them, These are the words which I spoke to you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. -Luke 24

It is in Him that all things are fulfilled. He has already finished the work of offering salvation and the promise of the Holy Ghost to those that believe in Him. However, there is still more! He will return to take back kingdoms of this world and reign forever:

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Messiah; and he shall reign forever and ever. -Revelation 11

Yahweh used His prophets to call His people to repent and turn from worshipping idols and to obey Him. When they failed to do so, He brought judgement through the hands of kings from the north. Even after the northern kingdom of Assyria judged Israel, Judah still refused to repent:

18 Therefore Yahweh was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

19 Also Judah kept not the commandments of Yahweh their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.

20 And Yahweh rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.
-2 Kings 17

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8

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Then Yahweh brought the King of Babylon, whom He called His “servant,” to judge the unrepentant Judah:

- 8 Therefore thus says Yahweh of hosts; Because you have not heard my words,
- 9 Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, says Yahweh, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations. -Jeremiah 25

Ironically, when Judah was judged by the King of Babylon (a “King of the North”), instead of repenting and trusting in Yahweh, many of them trusted in the power of the Pharaoh of Egypt (a “King of the South”) to protect them. Yahweh warned them:

- 1 Woe to the rebellious children, says Yahweh, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin:
- 2 That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!
- 3 Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt *your* confusion. -Isaiah 30

Even after the King of Babylon destroyed Judah, many of those that had escaped his captivity fled into Egypt where they rebelliously rejected the Word of Yahweh and worshipped the image of the goddess known as the “Queen of Heaven:”

- 15 Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense to other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying,
- 16 *As for* the word that you have spoken to us in the name of Yahweh, we will not listen to you.
- 17 But we will certainly do whatever thing goes forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for *then* had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. -Jeremiah 44

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While all of this was going on in Egypt, Daniel was a captive in Babylon, serving in the government of its king. Yahweh was showing Daniel prophetic dreams and visions, as well as the interpretation of those of others, concerning the earthly kingdoms that were to follow that of Babylon. The interpretation of a vision of one of the kings was fulfilled the same night that it was given, as the King of the Chaldeans (Babylon) fell to Darius, the Median:

- 30 In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.
- 31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, *being* about threescore and two years old. -Daniel 5

It was during the first year of the reign of Darius that Yahweh showed Daniel some of the most detailed and important prophecies of the Bible. It is significant that these detailed prophecies came as Daniel recognized that Yahweh does fulfill prophecies according to the detail of His Word. He knew that because Yahweh had told the prophet Jeremiah that the captivity of Judah would last seventy years, that was how long it would last!

- 1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;
- 2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. -Daniel 9

That is when Daniel earnestly humbled himself in prayerful repentance:

- 3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: -Daniel 9

While Daniel was praying and repenting, Gabriel told him that he had come to give him “skill and understanding:”

- 20 And while I *was* speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before Yahweh my God for the holy mountain of my God;
- 21 Yes, while I *was* speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.
- 22 And he informed *me*, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill and understanding. -Daniel 9

In a prophecy often known as the “seventy weeks,” or “seventy sevens,” prophecy Gabriel proceeded to tell Daniel the details of when to expect the coming of the Messiah and the new covenant (see Daniel 9:25-27). It was also during this first year of Darius, the Median, that Gabriel showed Daniel the prophecies concerning the coming “King of the North” and the “King of the South,” which would be sealed up until “the time of the end:”

- 1 Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, *even I*, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. -Daniel 11

(To Be Continued in Part 2)