

The Book of Daniel #7

by: Ronald L. Dart

Early in the second century B.C. a truly vile man comes on the scene in the Middle East. What is it about that part of the world that periodically brings forth such singular men, men of consummate evil, that they recur again and again.

What you may not realize is, that the Old Testament prophets recognized that repetition, at least they predicted it would be so. How much they understood, well that's less clear. It's only from the later vantage point that we can look back over the prophecies and the history of the time and see the importance of the theme.

Prophetic Icons

Now if you're computer oriented, you know what an icon is. They are those little images around the margins of your computer screen, each one standing for some action that you might want to take. There may be a little paint roller that allows you to roll coloring on spaces of the screen. There may be a magnifying glass, and if you see that, you know that you could make this text bigger and see it better. Sure, if you're not into computers, you see icons all the time. You see them on signs all around the airport, you will see signs on the men's restroom door and women's restroom door. It doesn't necessarily have to say, men or women, but it has a little icon there that tells you which it is.

Now Daniel, like most of the prophets, is loaded with icons. These icons are verbal descriptions of things he saw and the things he saw stood for events, for systems of government, for rulers, kingdoms, even certain people or certain kinds of people.

If Daniel were on a computer screen with all his icons around the screen, there would be one singularly important icon. It would be a little horn. Now this is not the shofar, that is the Ram's Horn of Jewish fame and use. This is the Horn of the wild bull. It is the same kind of horn found on the corners of the altar in the temple.

Daniel's Three Visions

In earlier chapters of Daniel, we found two separate images of kingdoms, both of which had a little horn. They are the third and the fourth of a sequence of four kingdoms. In the visions, they might be part of a great statue or it might be four beasts that come up out of the sea.

The first two kingdoms are Babylon and Persia. The third was Alexander the great. The fourth was Rome. Now for some strange reason, Daniel gets three different visions, giving us three different looks at these four successive empires.

The Little Horn

In one of the visions, the fourth kingdom, it was said to have this little horn, then in the later vision, the third kingdom, the third beast, is said to have a little horn.

Now it becomes apparent when you read Daniel, and look at the accompanying history, that this little horn is not one man. The little horn can be said to represent a role played by a sequence of men over time, each of whom play the same role. It could be the same role in different times, different places. It could even be said to be, the same spirit.

The prophet sometimes see a power behind the human ruler of the kingdom, shall we say, a demonic power. It may turn out that the little horn played out in different men is the same 'spirit' in every case, but that may go beyond the evidence. I don't want to yield to the temptation to over interpret Daniel, that's been done far too often.

Antiochus the Fourth

Suffice it to say, that the first instance of the little horn is, in biblical terms, a type. It will be repeated. It is the first incidence of that little horn that all commentators see beginning in Daniel 11 and verse 21. In Daniel's vision, he is called a contemptible person. We know him in history, as Antiochus the fourth, also known as Antiochus Epiphanes. He would be a figure much deplored and hated, if he was nothing but a historical figure, but we know from Daniel that he was going to be repeated in Rome and we also know from the New Testament that he was a future figure. We are still going to see this vile person yet again.

A Fundamental Principle Of Understanding Prophecy

I consider it a fundamental principle of understanding prophecy, to understand the first fulfillment of any prophecy and to understand the history that surrounds it.

It was Isaiah that gave me this clue. In Isaiah 41 and verse 22, he says this, "Let them bring forth and show us what will happen: let them show the former things, what they may be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them, or declare to us things to come." Isaiah makes it clear, what he wants us to do is to show the first fulfillment, what it was so we can think about it and come to understand the latter fulfillment of it.

Epiphanes

Now this man's name, Epiphanes, has found its way into our language as Epiphany. A word that means manifestation, a word that is used for the advent of Christ. From his coins, we

know that Antiochus linked his name to the Greek, Theos, God, thus walking very close to the line of calling himself God manifest.

Reading from the New International Version, Daniel 11 verse 21. "He will be succeeded by a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue." Now we know from history that the technique of Antiochus was to make false promises and to cut deals with people to create a sense of security, which gave him time to prepare, which would weaken his opponent and make them more vulnerable to the betrayal that was sure to follow on the heels of it.

Now this same spirit lived again in Adolf Hitler. Adolf Hitler told the Austrians, for example, that on a particular date, the document exists, where he told the Austrians and assured them he had no designs on their country and he promised to do nothing to influence the Austrian Nazi party. Five days after the date on the document, he was sending secret instruction to the Austrian Nazis. Promises of peace, which were outright lies, were used as a tactic of war.

This same spirit infected one Yasser Arafat during his days, when he would talk of peace, make peace, cut piece deals, using them solely as a tactic of war to achieve his goals. He's dead. I wonder where that spirit went?

Prince of the Covenant

Let's continue in Daniel 11 verse 21, "Then this one, who invades the kingdom when his people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue, {22} Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him, both it and a Prince of the covenant will be destroyed." Now scholars see in these events, the wars that were waged between Epiphanes and the Egyptians at the time. The Prince of the covenant would then be the Prince of Egypt with whom Epiphanes cut a deal, only to betray him and stab him in the back. Other scholars see it as a reference to the Jewish high priest, that is the Prince of the covenant.

Continuing in verse 23, "After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully, and with only a few people he will rise to power." Boy, that sounds like Adolf Hitler, who cut all kinds of agreements and made all kinds of promises, acted deceitfully and managed to rise to power with relatively few people.

Antiochus, {24} "When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve something that neither his father nor his forefathers did. He will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers. He will plot the overthrow of fortresses, but only for a time. {25} With a large army he will stir up his strength and courage against the King of the South. The King of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him." So much treachery that will undercut everything he tries to do.

"Those {26} who eat from the King's provisions will try to destroy him; his army will be swept away, many will fall in battle. {27} The two Kings, both of them with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time." What an image this draws, of these two men sitting across a table from one another with their hearts, both of them bent on evil telling lies to one another, trying to gain an advantage. But Daniel says, it all means nothing because there is an appointed time that the end will come anyhow.

The King of the North

Daniel 11 and verse 28 says: "The King of the North will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country." You have to visualize these wars between the King of the North and the King of the South raging back and forth across poor Palestine, with Jerusalem sitting right in the crossroads of it and all of her people suffering terribly from these wars.

"At the appointed time," verse 29, "he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before." He was in fact, on the verge of success. "Ships of the Western coast lands will oppose him, and he will lose heart." What happened was, the Romans showed up and said, "Let's knock this off, or else we are coming down here to settle it all for you!"

Verse 30, "Then he will turn back, and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant." What he is talking about here is the treacherous Jews who would turn against their own covenant. We may even know the name of the man who led that faction, he was a priest and his name was Menelaus. When Antiochus took the city this time, his men slaughtered 80,000 men, women and children.

Abomination That Causes Desolation

Let's continue in Daniel 11 verse 33, "His Armed Forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation." Antiochus put a stop to all worship at the temple, and he erected a statue of Zeus Olympus there, converting the Temple effectively to a temple of Zeus.

This happened on December 16, 168 B.C. We know precisely when it happened. Three years later to the day, Judas Maccabeus would rededicate the Temple to God. Apparently Antiochus stopped the sacrifices 55 days before he set up the statue, giving us 1150 days total that the evening and the morning sacrifices were stopped. We talked about this earlier in Daniel.

Now this is a pivotal point in the prophecy because it is at this point we begin to realize this is not solely about Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn. We know it because of something Jesus said in the Olivet prophecy.

The Olivet Prophecy

One day Jesus and His disciples were walking around the Temple Mount (Matthew 24:1) and the disciples, the country bumpkins they were, were admiring the Temple and all the things that they saw there. They were pointing them out to Jesus, {2} "And Jesus asked them, "Do you see these things? I will tell you the truth, there's not going to be left here one stone on top of another, that shall not be thrown down."

Jesus and His disciples, went down across Kidron and up the other side of the Mount of Olives and He sat down there, {3} "And the disciples came to him privately and said, "Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?" They realized that the end of the Temple meant the end of their world.

Jesus answered, in verse 4, and said, "Be careful about this, let no man deceive you, {5} For many will come in my name, saying 'I'm Christ' and shall deceive many. {6} You will hear of wars and rumors of war, but don't be troubled: for all these things have to come to pass, but the end is not yet. {7} For nation shall rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines, pestilence and earthquakes in various places. {8} All these things is just the beginning. {9} Then they will deliver you up to be afflicted, and will kill you, and you will be hated of all nations for my namesake. {10} And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and hate one another, not only that, {11} Many false prophets will arise and deceive many. {12} And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold."

You know when I read through this, I began to realize the comparison with the time, when Antiochus and the wars raging back and forth across Jerusalem that, people were betraying one another. They were hating one another, the people of the covenant were doing this. They were becoming offended, they were stumbling, and because the actions of Antiochus, many of them, their love for God grew cold.

Abomination of Desolation

Jesus said, in Matthew 24 and verse 13, "But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved, {14} And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto nations; and then shall the end come. {15} When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (let the reader understand) {16} Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Get away.

Now there are many interpreters of the Old Testament who believe that everything Daniel said had been fulfilled, its over, you don't need to pay any attention to it anymore at all.

Some Christian teachers basically say the entire Old Testament has been done away, it has been superseded, it is useless. You don't even need to bother reading it.

Yet , here is Jesus saying, somewhere along toward the middle of His ministry, {15} "When you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place," what Jesus is revealing to us here is that that pattern of events that took place under Antiochus is going to happen again. And when it happens, you had better get out of here, because just like in Antiochus' day, people are going to die in their thousands, men, women and children. "But he that will endure to the end can be saved."

Let's continue in verse 17 of Matthew 24, Jesus said, "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything of his house, just get out of there. {18} Don't let him who is in the field go back to his house to get some clothes, no just leave. {19} And woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days, {20} Pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day, {21} For when this comes there's going to be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, nor will ever be again." The great tribulation is a singular time in history and it was still future when Jesus was talking to His disciples. It is one time, not a repeated event. There has never been a day like it before, and there will never be a day like it again.

And {22} "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved alive, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." I can't help but wonder what Jesus' disciples thought about this? When was there ever a time when the weapons that were available, when the warfare that was available, the tragedies that were happening, that no flesh would be saved alive.

We are getting to the place to where it seems more likely all the time. {23} "Then if any man says to you, Christ is over here, don't believe it. {24} For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and they will show great signs and wonders in so much that if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect." But you see, people who read their Old Testament will know, that the Scriptures tell us that a man may come along and call down fire from heaven, though he performs great miracles and though he does all sorts of signs and wonders, if he tells you to go and serve another God, you will know.

"Behold, {25} I have told you before." Now it's at this point, you have to realize then, that the things we're reading back in Daniel 11 is a pattern of human behavior. It is a pattern of events going on in the spirit world, that is going to be repeated again.

History Repeats Itself

Everybody knows that history repeats itself. It repeats itself for very clear reasons, among them, human nature doesn't change, human beings do the same things over and over again. They follow the same course of action and reap the same kind of results and God doesn't change either. And so the outcome is the same.

What the Scriptures are telling us is that you need to study carefully what happened in Daniel's prophecy and the history that fulfilled it, because it's coming again.

Deceive the Very Elect?

Let's continue in Daniel 11 verse 32, "With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant." This is interesting because the flattery and the corruption appears to come after the violation of the covenant. In other words, people who turn away from the covenant they made with God, the deal, the obedience that they promised and didn't deliver become available for corruption.

It was Jesus who said it in that same Olivet prophecy. He said they will come along and perform signs and wonders to such a level that they will, if possible, deceive the very elect.

But said Daniel's prophecy, in Daniel 11 verse 32, "The people who know their God will firmly resist him, {33} Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or plundered or captured. {34} When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who were not sincere will join them." You know this is really a tragedy. It basically says the people who are really trying to obey God are going to be persecuted and they're going to get a little help from here and there but by and large even the people who join to them and try to help them will not mean a word of it.

And of course that's what Jesus said in the Olivet prophecy. He said, "People will betray one another, they will turn their backs on one another and will hate one another.

When Is The Appointed Time?

Continuing in verse 35 of Daniel 11, "Some of the wise will stumble, so they can be refined and purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time." Oh, we want to know so bad when that is. If only we knew what He means by the appointed time? When is the appointed time? Daniel wanted to know but he never found out.

Now some of the events before and after this prophecy may happen twice but far too much of what happens in the verses following cannot possibly apply to Antiochus and, of course, we know from Jesus that we are not finished with the icon of the 'abomination of desolation' or the icon of the 'little horn.'

The King Will Exalt Himself

"The King," this is verse 36 of Daniel 11, "The King will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. {37} He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all."

Make a note, this man cannot possibly be Islamic. Now the reason I say that is because some people believe the man of sin, or the great evil antichrist will be an Islamic power. No, this person can't be, because of his attitude toward gods. For Islam, there is only one god. Anyone who rejects him should be killed and anybody who tries to exalt himself above him should be killed.

Now none of this was true of Antiochus, because he was imposing the religion of his father on the Jews. The one desired of women might be Tammuz but it makes no sense since he would have had no objection to the worship of Tammuz.

The New American Standard Bible stays closer to the King James version, it says "And he will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women." You know, Hitler, who has been a model already in this series, may serve as a model here, because he was widely believed and I think it has pretty well been proved, that he was sexually perverted, not merely just homosexual, he was a true pervert.

The Lawless One

It is impossible as you read this to avoid the words of Paul. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 1, "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, {2} not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. {3} Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion, the great apostasy, occurs and the man of lawlessness, the man of sin, is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. {4} He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God." He sets his throne right in the Temple of God, claiming to be God, exactly like Antiochus Epiphanes did, only this guy is not Antiochus Epiphanes.

Now Paul says in verse 8, that "the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming."

Hey, this guy that he is talking about here will be on the scene at the time of the return of Christ.

Some people will be led astray by this.

Continuing in verse 9, "The coming of this lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan as displayed by all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders. {10} and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. {11} For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie {12} and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.".

This is a very serious warning, and it is strange how closely it marches in step with the history of one Antiochus Epiphanes, who set up the abomination of desolation.

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