

Sent: Wednesday, April 20, 2016 10:05 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Daniel 8

"Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days! Then I got up again and carried on the king's business! But I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it!" (Dan. 8:27)

What was it about the vision that Daniel wrote about in Daniel 8 that so astounded him, including aspects of it which he was never able to understand? The part that pertained to "the appointed time of the end"!

The vision came to Daniel in the "third year of Belshazzar's reign"--roughly 12 years before the "handwriting on the wall" and the fall of the Babylonian Empire (recorded in Daniel 5)! It was basically a continuation of the vision he had in his dreams 2 years earlier, which we discussed in last week's lesson (Daniel 7). This one focused on two of the four great empires of history, prophesied in Dan. 7, which would rise and fall--the Medo-Persian and Grecian empires. And it was written in Hebrew, because of the significant implications it posed for the Jewish people and the future of the nation of Israel!

Daniel saw "a ram with two horns" (representing the kings of Media and Persia) which "butted" others in all directions and became a prominent world power--until it was "shattered" by a "shaggy goat" (representing the kingdom of Greece)...with a conspicuous horn between its eyes (representing Alexander the Great!) ...coming from the west...without touching the ground..." (suggesting the quickness of his conquests!). The goat "magnified itself exceedingly"! But as soon as it became mighty, the large horn was broken (Alexander the Great died at age 33 "without any more kingdoms to conquer," it is said!)... and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns (representing subdivisions of the Grecian empire). And it was out of one of those that a "little horn" (representing the notorious Antiochus IV Epiphanes) "grew exceedingly great... (in a negative sense!) toward the Beautiful Land" (speaking of Palestine!).

Daniel 8 provides a picturesque description of the atrocities of Antiochus, as do Josephus and other writers of history. But basically, Antiochus is forever depicted as one of the cruelest tyrants of history! According to David Jeremiah, he did everything he could to completely annihilate the Jewish religion--as Daniel prophesied he would, long before Antiochus arrived on the world stage! According to Daniel 8:10-12, he would "cast some of the host and stars of heaven (referring to the people of God) to the ground and trample them...oppose daily sacrifices, and fling truth to the ground!" Historians tell us that his attack on Jerusalem killed 80,000 Jews and sold another 40,000 into slavery! He was determined to extinguish Jewish religion and replace it with Greek worship and culture! According to Wiersbe, he prohibited the Jews from honoring the Sabbath, practicing circumcision, and obeying the Levitical dietary laws. His campaign reached the "fullness of evil" when, on December, 14, 168, he replaced the Jewish altar with an altar to Zeus--and sacrificed a pig on it! Image the Jews' horrors!

According to Jeremiah (that's David Jeremiah!), he collected the pig's blood and sprayed it all over the inside of the temple! The "unholy sacrifice" of an unclean animal on the sacred altar was what was called the "abomination of desolation," prophesied by Daniel and later cited by Jesus in Matthew 24:15-21, when speaking of the "end times"! "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains...for there will be a great tribulation, such as not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will...!"

What Daniel saw in his vision about Antiochus (in Dan. 8:9-14) was a prophecy of what was to occur in Jerusalem 380 or so years later--all of which would lead to an insurrection, in 165 BC, by

Judas Maccabeus and his followers against the forces of Antiochus, the death of Antiochus, and a re-consecration of the temple! It also led to the institution and annual Jewish celebration, which continues to this day, of the "feast of lights" (or Hanukkah, as we know it!)--all of which should give new meaning for us as Christians to the celebration of this Jewish holiday!

But the greater implication for us is that portion of Daniel 8 (in vs. 23-26), which even Daniel was not able to understand--and that was how Antiochus' evil is also a "foreshadowing" of what is to come--or as Daniel writes "...will occur at the final period of the indignation, pertaining to "the appointed time of the end"! Or as Jesus called it, "in the coming period of Tribulation"!

But there's another lesson that we can take from Daniel--and that is the way God, in all His sovereignty, used pagan kings to accomplish His purpose--and to "keep His covenant" with His people! We saw how God "made known to Nebuchadnezzar what would take place in the latter days" (Dan. 2:28); and how He "drove him away from mankind" and made him like a "beast of the field," until he recognized "the Most High as the ruler over all the realm of mankind," and ended up giving "praise, and exaltation, and honor to the King of Heaven"! (Dan. 4:28-37)

And, although this may be getting ahead of the story, we also know that God "stirred the spirit" of Cyrus, King of Persia, to provide for the return of the Jews to the land of Judah, for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and the temple in Jerusalem--as well as for the return of the "sacred vessels!" (Ezra 1-3)

And, as noted by Wiersbe, the "remarkable conquests of Alexander the Great were much more than battle trophies by a brilliant commander! It helped prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ and the spread of the gospel!" And it was Alexander the Great who put an end to the Oriental influence that threatened to take over the Western world. By extending Greek culture and language, he helped bring peoples together, and eventually Greek became the language of the New Testament! And, according to Wiersbe, what the Greeks began, the Romans completed--building roads and bridges enabling people to travel; and keeping nations under control with an iron fist and establishing peace, thus allowing the Christian message to be carried throughout the Roman Empire!

And, interestingly, according to David Jeremiah, and the writings of Josephus, despite all the conquests and brutality of Alexander the Great, he actually spared Jerusalem, and--unlike the later Antiochus--even worshipped in the temple, allowed the Jews to practice their religion--even though it was under his control--and (get this!) was apparently even shown the very prophecy from Daniel 8, which we studied last nite, stating that the Greek army would destroy the army of Medo-Persia! He believed the prophecy and acted on it! Just like we should do!

Well, Daniel 8 provides a rich sample of Biblical prophecies that have already been fulfilled to the letter! Add all the Messianic predictions fulfilled in the coming of Christ, and the evidence is overwhelming! Since the Bible's remaining predictions primarily involve the "end times" and the return of Christ (something about which Daniel had no clue!) we, now able to see how all this comes together, need to take them seriously and trust them totally!

And, like Daniel, get up from whatever gets us down and "carry on the King's business"!

Well, on to Daniel 9! Can hardly wait!

May God bless your week!

Lowell