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Daniel: Historical & Chronological Comments (VI)

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12. The Sith Battle (Daniel 6)

Parallel to the story of Joseph and the Exodus, **Belshazzar** was a “king who knew not Joseph” and who consequently did not show favor to the Jews. Indeed, it seems that Daniel was out of favor with the throne, which may be why he was given a vision of the future in **Belshazzar’s** first year (Dan. 7), and why he seems to have retired **for** a time to the city of Susa in **Belshazzar’s** third year (Dan. 8) – these being years **Belshazzar ruled** in Babylon while his father was off in the desert at Tema. The judgment on **Belshazzar** leads directly to a new exodus of the Jews back to the promised land with the decree of Cyrus. Daniel 6 carries forward this theological parallel.

If Daniel really was at **Susa**, and not just therein a visionary trance, then he was well known to the Median and **Persian rulers**. ~~He may have been known to them~~ anyway. And, of course, when Darius/Cyrus took over Babylon, Daniel was in charge. **Thus**, he was made one of the three presidents of the empire, and the first among the **three**. In fact, Cyrus planned to set him over the entire empire.

In Daniel 6 we find something new in history. Prior to this time, the enemies of God’s people had always been acting primarily out of **socio-political** concerns. Pharaoh held the people as slaves. The Philistine simply conquered the land and took charge of the Israelites. So did all the other invaders. In Daniel 3 we find the Babylonian soothsayers accusing Daniel’s three friends for failing to worship Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, but they were merely **taking** advantage of an opportunity to get the three men out of the way of their own ambitions. Now, however, Daniel’s associates determine that

the only way they can get at him is to attack his God and his religion directly. This is a more mature, **self-conscious** kind of assault on the kingdom of God than we have seen before in the history of the world, and one that is a harbinger of things to come. Later, in Daniel 11:28, the heathen Antiochus **IV** is described as one whose heart is against God’s covenant and who acts out of hatred for the true faith. The new age of **international** witness-bearing is coming into being at this juncture of history, and one of its consequences will be the manifestation of a more self-conscious opposition to God and His people than ever before. Daniel 7 amplifies this theme when Daniel is shown that the witness of God’s people stirs up monsters in the hearts of men.

The decision that no god should be petitioned for 30 days, and that petitions be brought only to Cyrus/Darius, seems bizarre. Cyrus/Darius **does** not seem to have ~~been the kind of self-aggrandizing monarch who~~ would want such honors; notice his concern for Daniel and his willingness to recognize Yahweh as the true God. William H. Shea has provided a likely explanation: “What strange kind of request and decree was this? It would have been strange if these were normal and peaceful times, but these were not. Normally **the** Babylonians could have gone to their temples and seen their gods and prayed to them there. But at this time they **could** not.” **Nabonidus** had brought all the images of the various deities to Babylon to defend the capital city. “That **left** the other cities of the land unprotected by their individual gods. Worshipers could not go to see them in their various temples or pray to them there, because the gods were in Babylon. The **[Nabonidus]** Chronicle tells us that it took Cyrus four months, from the ninth month to the twelfth month, to get all these

gods back to their places. Meantime, the country was in a religious limbo." William H. Shea, 'Darius the Mede in His Babylonian Setting,' *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 29 (1991):246.

In fact, Cyrus/Darius might have reasoned that he, as leader of the world, could carry the petitions of the nations to their gods, since the gods were in Babylon. Also, such a decree, if obeyed, would help cement his **rule** over the **Neo-Babylonian** empire.

Daniel, however, prayed in his chamber to Yahweh, God Most High, Possessor of Heaven and Earth. His windows were open, as always, toward Jerusalem. This was not because he conceived of Jerusalem as God's place of residence, because Ezekiel had clearly shown that God had moved out of Jerusalem and had come to be with the exiles (**Ezk.** 8-11). Rather, the windows were open to Jerusalem because Daniel was praying **for** the city, and for the rebuilding of the Temple, which should shortly begin because the 70 years were over (see Daniel 9). The open windows, however, enabled Daniel's enemies to see him disobeying the king.

When the charges were brought before Darius, he worried all day, until the sun went down. The narrative **before** us focuses our attention on the time because Daniel passes the night in the lion's den, and this constitutes a new Passover event.

The king **could** not change his decree, because the laws of the **Medes** and Persians were regarded as unchangeable. Here we see man playing at **being** God, for clearly only God's laws are unchangeable. In fact, this becomes the main issue in this text, for at the end King Cyrus/Darius does **indeed** change his decree, submitting to God higher law! This coming of a new law, God's law, also ties in with the Passover-exodus theme in this chapter, for now we have a new **Moses**. This time, wonderfully, Pharaoh Cyrus submits to the God of Moses' law.

Cyrus was greatly upset and displeased. He worried **all** & y. Then, **after** sending Daniel to the lions, he worried all night. He fasted. He could not sleep. And when he went to call for Daniel, his voice was broken. Cyrus here shows concern for God's people, and great distress at their afflictions. This begins a theme that is carried forward throughout the remainder of the book, for later, when God gives revelations to Daniel **concerning** future tribulations, Daniel is upset, worried, and distressed (Dan. 7:15, 28; **8:27**).

Why a den of lions? We may not doubt that these great monarchs had zoos and lion parks, so there is nothing strange about casting Daniel to the lions. In the economy of Divine history, however, God chose to cause Daniel's adversaries to light on the idea of using

a den of lions, rather than, say, punishment by hanging. The reason, I believe, is explained in Daniel **7:4**, where Babylon is pictured as a lion. The Babylonian captivity, thus, is a captivity in a lion's den. Daniel's being cast into a lion's den is a symbol of the whole preceding 70 years, and his emergence is a symbol of the exodus from Babylon that is about to take place.

The passage of the night obviously recalls the Passover before the exodus from Egypt. A **similar** night passage and deliverance is seen, for instance, in Esther 6 and Zechariah 3. The fact that the den was sealed points forward to the seal on Jesus' tomb, during the time of the greatest night passage and the final Passover. Thus, Daniel's emergence from the den points back to the exodus from Egypt, to the present exodus from Babylon, and forward to the resurrection of Jesus.

Daniel 6 matches with **Daniel** 3. In both cases God's people are brought to trial because of their faithful witness, are persecuted and almost destroyed, but ultimately delivered. This sequence is displayed as a characteristic of the 70 years of captivity. In Daniel 7-12, this same sequence will be displayed as a characteristic of the 70 weeks of years leading down to the Messiah. Daniel will be distressed to learn that the coming exodus will not result in a new **Solomonic** glory and peace, but rather that the faithful witness of God's people all over the world will call forth direct persecution of a kind never before manifested, but with ultimate vindication and triumph.

13. The Characteristics and End of Historical Development in the First Creation (Daniel 7)

We come now to the last four sections of Daniel, four visions: two during the Babylonian era, and two during the Persian era:

A. **Belshazzar** Year 1 (Daniel 7) - vision, in **Daniel's house; history down to Christ**

B. **Belshazzar** Year 3 (Daniel 8) - vision by a river; Persia and Greece: details

A'. Darius/Cyrus Year 1 (Daniel 9) - vision in Daniel's house; history down to Christ

B'. Cyrus Year 3 (Daniel 10-12) - vision by a river; Greece and Rome: details

Nebuchadnezzar had favored Daniel, and **Evil-Merodach** had restored **Jehoiachin** and thus also favored the Jews. **Belshazzar**, however, did not acknowledge Daniel. Thus, Daniel was clearly excluded **from the court** by this time. In the first year of **Belshazzar**, thus, it was appropriate for God to give Daniel a vision of encouragement.

Essentially the vision shows history moving in a

triadic spiral. First, the four winds of heaven stir up the great sea. Second, the sea brings forth a monster that attacks the saints. Third, judgment is passed on behalf of the saints, who receive a victory over the monster.

The great sea is clearly the gentile world. The four winds of heaven are God's people, not angelic forces. This is clear from **Zechariah 2:6**, where **Zechariah** is told that God has spread out His witnesses as the four winds of heaven among all the nations. **Zechariah 6:5** then shows God's people, the four winds, as chariots riding forth from God's temple to bring His word to all the world. The expression "four winds of heaven" is also used for the four points of the compass in Daniel **8:8** & **11:4**. In Daniel **7:2**, however, the winds are actively stirring up the sea, and this is a very fit picture of the evangelistic witness of the Jews in the Restoration era, corresponding very closely to **Zechariah 1-6**.

Instead of bringing about rapid conversions to the Lord, however, this witness has the effect of calling forth monsters. The word of God brings up monsters from the sub-conscious of the human race. Men hate God, and so when a witness brings God close to their consciousness, they react. Accordingly, whenever the gospel has been preached in a new place, it calls forth dormant energies and hatreds from the depths of the "flesh." The missionary movement of the **19th** century, for instance, produced communism all over Asia and Africa. The Reformation called up horrible monsters from the impenitent power-holders in Europe and the Papal lands.

The monsters must be called forth so that they can be dealt with. God is interested in bringing humanity to maturity. The sub-conscious wickedness of the "flesh" must progressively be exposed by the light of God, so that **humanity** matures gradually in "**epistemological** self-consciousness." If the monsters are not brought out into the open, they cannot be slain. Thus, when the kingdom of Christ **comes in** the **New Testament**, the mystery of iniquity is also revealed, so that the **battle** can be joined. The Great Whore Wickedness, who was locked up in her own counterfeit Ark in **Zechariah 5**, is now let loose to ride the Beast in Revelation 17. This is so that she can be killed. While the events of Revelation happened in the first century, the process we are describing will occur over and over as the kingdom grows progressively stronger and humanity is forced to **maturity**.

Now, formerly God had told His people that if they obeyed Him they would be blessed with prosperity. This is the clear message of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. But both of **these** passages prophesy events down to the Babylonian captivity, and not beyond it. These chapters have their direct application to the "former

days," when God was treating Israel more like children, with instant and visible rewards for obedience. Now, as the "latter days" commence, God is treating them with **greater** maturity. He calls on them to do what is right, even though it will bring persecution, because the last result will be victory.

This is what distresses Daniel in this chapter. In Daniel 1, Daniel acted **faithfully** and God miraculously blessed him: Within ten days it was visibly obvious that his diet of vegetables was making him fatter and **healthier**. By **chapter 6**, however, Daniel's **faithfulness** is just getting him thrown into a den of lions. Judah had been taken captive by the lion of Babylon because of her sin, but now Daniel is being thrown to lions because of his **faithfulness!** God shows Daniel in these remaining visions that this is how it is going to be in the mature, "**latter**" days that are **commencing at this juncture** of history.

This does not mean, by the way, that Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 have been simply set aside. Their promises are still true and good, but are going to be applied in a far more complex way than before.

Four beasts are shown caning out of the sea. The first is a lion with the wings of an eagle. This represents Babylon. Daniel "keeps looking until" he sees the lion change. This "looking" represents the passage of time. The lion **loses** its wings and is transformed into a man. This almost certainly refers to the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar.

The second beast resembles (not "is") a bear. This represents Media/Persia. The bear is raised up on one side, which probably refers to Persia's ascendancy over Media. It has three ribs (or possibly tusks) in its mouth, signifying that it is gobbling up the world. **Angels** say to it, "Arise, devour much meat." I think this command refers to the events in Esther, when it **looked** like the Jews would be slain by people in the Persian empire, ~~but in fact God's enemies were slain instead. Alternatively,~~ the angels could be encouraging the Persians to make more and more conquests, until finally Persia spent itself in vain attempts to conquer Greece, and fell back, exhausted.

The third monster was like a leopard with four wings and four heads. Dominion was given to it. This represents the empire of Greece, started by Alexander the Great, which then broke up into four separate dominions.

The fourth monster is undefined, possibly because Rome was unknown at this time. All Daniel **sees** are claws, teeth, and horns. The ten horns of Rome correspond to the ten toes of Rome in the statue of Daniel 2.

Daniel then sees a small horn grow up among the ten horns, and eventually rip up three of them. This

horn had eyes like a man and a mouth uttering great boasts. This horn becomes the visible face of the fourth empire. **This** horn corresponds to the terra cotta among the toes of the statue in Daniel 2.

This is the Second Little Horn. The First Little Horn, who is Antiochus Epiphanes, is described in Daniel 8 and arose out of the Greek empire. This Second Little Horn comes up out of the Roman. Daniel 11 seems to **fill** out the picture, providing us in verses 21-35 the career of the First Little Horn, Antiochus **Epiphanes**, and then in verses 36-45 the career of the Willful King, who is to be identified with the Second Little Horn. Note that the Willful King “speaks monstrous things against the God of gods” (Dan. 11:36), just as the Second Little Horn is said to “utter great things” in Daniel 7.

Discounting those who want to see the the horn as the Papacy and those who want to toss it all into the far future as some “Antichrist” to come, there are two possibilities left. Calvin argues that the **Second** Little Horn refers to the Roman emperors. Rome conquered the world before it came to have emperors. Roman power was divided into many parts, with consuls, **praetors**, proconsuls, senators, district governors, **quaestors**, etc. **These**, Calvin says, are the ten (many) horns. **When** the **Caesars** came to power, they uprooted some of that power and became bigger than the other **powers in Rome**.

The problem with this view, as I see it, is that the ten horns are identified as ten (many) kings within the Roman empire; thus, they represent various kingdoms or districts. The Second Little Horn takes over three (several) of these districts. Moreover, if we identify the Second Little Horn with the Willful **King** of Daniel 11, and I think we must, the description of events in Daniel **11:36-45** does not really fit the **Caesars**.

Far preferable, in my opinion, is the suggestion that the Second Little Horn is Herod the Great. Philip **Mauro**, in his *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation* (Swengel, PA: **Reiner Pub.**, 1944), argues quite persuasively that the Willful **King** of Daniel 11 is Herod the Great. He does not make the **connection** to the Second Little Horn, but he might easily have done so because it fits admirably.

I **shall** postpone until **we** get to Daniel 11 an extended discussion of the actual events predicted there, and the argument for seeing their fulfillment in the **career** of Herod the Great. (See Chapter 14 and 23, below). For now I shall assume my conclusions, and ask the reader’s patience until we get to Daniel 11, at which point I shall discuss the importance of Herod as the climax of the **Jacob-Esau** and **Amalek** themes in the Bible.

Daniel sees one “like a Son of Man” receive the **Kingdom**. This is a reference to Ezekiel, who is **called** “son of man” scores of time in his prophecy. Daniel’s contemporaries would not have missed this connection. Ezekiel’s person, life, and activities are a major type of Christ’s: a priest, baptized at the age of 30 by God Himself at a river, prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem, actually bringing that destruction to pass (**Ezk. 43:3; Ezk. 8-11**), prophesying the end of the old world order to the nations, establishing a new Temple for God’s people.

The Son of Man is the opposite of the Second Little Horn, which is a counterfeit man. Thus, Jesus pays **taxes** to Caesar, but both He and John the **Forerunner** directly attack Herod, the Second Little Horn. Jesus rebukes Herod, **the** fox in the hen house (Luke 13:31-14:1).

Daniel sees that the Son of Man receives the kingdom, and then the time arrives when the saints also receive it. This is the difference between AD 30 and AD 70. The destruction of Jerusalem was the end of the first creation, and established the kingdom of Christ on earth. When the city falls in Revelation 18, the saints ride forth to conquer the world in Revelation 19, and the millennium of Revelation 20 begins.

Daniel asks about the Second Little Horn (w. 24-27). Herod the Great will arise out of the Roman empire and assume three (several) provinces. He will be different from the Romans, being an **Edomite**. He will attack the people of God and seek to change the law of God. He will be **killed**, and his **dominion**, maintained by the later Herods, will be removed and annihilated by AD 70, at which point the world will be given to the saints.