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Daniel: Historical & Chronological Comments (XII)

by James B. Jordan

NOTE: The Chronology of the 7 Weeks on page 3 of this newsletter summarizes the information in last month's. The four columns of numbers next to the dates represent, respectively, the years in the 70 Weeks, the number of years of the Temple's desolation, the number of years from the investiture of Jerusalem, and the number of years from the burning of the Temple. For the first part of this chart, see the July, 1995, issue.

20. The Last Vision: Its Setting and Meaning (Daniel 10-12)

The 79 verses of Daniel 10-12 are all one long vision and revelation. The setting is the third year of Cyrus. Daniel tells us that he had been mourning for three blocks of weeks, thus three **full** weeks, or 21 days. This period ended on the 24th **day** of the first month, and thus crossed the entire Passover and **Feast** of Unleavened Bread season. During this time, Daniel ate no meat and drank no wine, thus not participating in any form in any shadow observance of the feast. He did not eat "bread of desirability," which may mean choice bread, or might refer to unleavened bread. Finally, he used no ointment, which means he kept his body free from oils. Oil is **used** for anointing priests and kings in the Bible. By doing **all** of this, Daniel stressed that he was in exile from the bread and wine of God's kingdom, the anointing of God's work, the feasts of God's calendar.

Since Cyrus had decreed that the Temple be **restored** in his first year, clearly something had gone awry. Clearly the Temple had not been restored, as we know from Ezra 1-5.

Moreover, Daniel sees a "man **dressed** in **linen**, whose waist was girded with pure gold of **Uphaz**, whose body was like turquoise, whose face was light lightning,

whose eyes were like flaming torches, whose arms and feet were like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of whose **voice** was like the sound of tumult." This "Man" was in the air above the river Tigris, at Babylon (**12:7**). Clearly this is Yahweh, and He is above the river just **as** He was above the River **Chebar** in Ezekiel 1. The meaning in Ezekiel was **that** God had departed from the Temple and had come to be with His people in exile. The meaning in Daniel 10-12 is that God is **still** in exile and has not returned to the Temple. He is, however, above the waters, like the Spirit in Genesis 1, and is preparing a new creation.

The problem is described in Ezra 4, to wit, that after the first year of return from exile, opposition to the Temple's rebuilding arose among the people then living in the area, and they hired representatives to go to the Persian court and put a stop to the project. We are told that they **were successful** throughout the **reigns** of Cyrus and **Cambyes**, and initially successful with Darius **as** well.

Since Cyms was favorable to the Jews, it must be Cambyes who was not. Cyrus was off conquering new lands, and Cambyes, the **Prince** of Persia, was basically in charge. In Daniel 11:1, the person who is speaking with Daniel says that "in the first year of Darius the Mede I stood up to strengthen and protect him." Almost certainly this person is an angelic messenger. He says that there was some problem in the beginning of C yrus's reign, but that he had stood up to help Cyms. We now know from ancient records that **Cambyes** was co-regent with Cyrus in Babylon initially, but was removed during Cyrus's first year. Since it is clear that Cambyes opposed the **Temple**-rebuilding project, the "strengthening" of Cyrus would seem to be connected with the removal of **Cambyes'** opposition. Thereafter, in C yrus's **first** year, the decree to rebuild the **Temple** was issued. See William H. Shea.

“Darius the **Mede** in His Persian-Babylonian Setting,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 29 (1991):235-257.

Shea has argued cogently that **Cambyes** became co-regent with **Cyrus** at the New Year Festival in the Spring of 535 BC, on the fourth & y of the month. This was when Daniel went into mourning.

In Daniel 10:13 & 20, the angel tells Daniel that he had been fighting the Prince of Persia for the 21 days of Daniel’s mourning, but Michael, the Prince of Israel, had stood up to help him. Thus, he was able to gain a small victory. Soon he would be returning to oppose the Prince of Persia further. **Often this** Prince is said to be the angelic overlord of Persia, but Calvin rightly identifies him as the real prince, **Cambyes**. Shea has demonstrated that Calvin is almost certainly correct.

In fact, the real overlord of Persia is the godly angel who has been opposing Cambyes, and who has received help from the angelic overlord of Israel, who is the arch-angel (chief of angels) Michael, the **preincarnate** Christ. (That Michael is Christ follows from a comparison of Jude 9 with **Zechariah 3:2**.)

Why does Daniel name himself **Belteshazzar** in verse 1 of Daniel 10? This was the name Nebuchadnezzar had given him, the name of his captivity. **Since** the captivity is continuing, and has not, after all, come to an end, Daniel is still **Belteshazzar**!

Daniel sees the Lord at the Tigris, which runs east of the Euphrates. According to Deuteronomy 11:24, the Euphrates was the ultimate eastern boundary of the holy land. (The **Jordan** is not the **boundary**; the Jordan runs through the center.) When God returns to the Temple, He will cross the Euphrates to return. Thus, God is still in exile to the east.

Only Daniel sees the Lord above the Tigris. The men who are with him are struck with fear and flee. Probably God appeared to them as the glory cloud, and this great thunder cloud made them depart. Or possibly they were just struck with an unreasoning phobia and fled.

As the Lord spoke, Daniel fell into a deep sleep, from which the angelic messenger awoke him. The angel set him on his hands and knees, and then told him to stand up. The angel began to speak to him, but Daniel was unable to reply until the angel touched his lips. Daniel was too weak to hear until the angel touched and strengthened him again. This sequence of events shows us several things. In general, it shows us that we need God’s help to understand His word, help from both human angels (teachers and pastors) and God’s spirit. Second, it shows us something of what the angel did when he strengthened Cyrus. **Finally**, it reveals something relevant to the vision. God’s people would be greatly troubled for centuries by the kings of the South and North, but God’s messengers would strengthen them from time to time. What happens to Daniel here would happen to them as well.

The angel reveals to Daniel the course of history from

his day to the coming of Christ. He mentions the next four kings of Persia, the coming of Alexander, and the fracturing of the latter’s kingdom (11:1-4). Wars between North and South are then described (vv. 5-19), leading to the career of **Antiochus Epiphanes**, the first **Little Horn** (vv. 20-35). Then comes the career of the **Willful King**, the second Little Horn, who is Herod the Great (vv. 36-45). At the time of Herod, Michael will arise, many **will** be raised to life again (a reference to the coming of the gospel), and there will be a great tribulation (a reference to the events leading down to AD 70) (12:1-3).

Daniel is told to seal up the book of this revelation (12:4). What this means is that everything **after** the coming of Michael is under a seal. Daniel **only** has **been** given part 1 of the book. This is **explained** in 12:8, when Daniel asks about the final end, the events at the end of the period described. In v. 9, it is these events in particular that are said to be sealed, which explains why the preceding events are, in fact, openly described in Daniel 11, while the events leading down to AD 70 are sealed until the re-opening of the book in Revelation 5-8. The book Daniel seals has the seals broken and is opened in Revelation 5-8, and its contents then describe the great time of distress mentioned in Daniel 12:1.

Daniel then asks how long it will be, and hears the Lord say that it will be “time, times, and a half” until the hand of the holy people is completely shattered. This is often taken to be 3 1/2 years, but since it refers to the entire history just described, that is an unlikely interpretation. The “time” is that of Persia. The “times” are those of Alexander and his successors, including **Antiochus**. The “half” refers to Herod and the Romans, who are broken off by the coming of the Messiah and of the **final Kingdom**.

The final verses, 12:11-13, provide hope. From the time that the wicked Jews drive God away from the Temple by committing the abomination of desolation will be 1290 days, while those who endure 45 more days, for 1335 days, will be blessed. Meanwhile, Daniel will enter sabbath rest and rise again for his reward at the end of history.

As we saw in Daniel 8:14, the period of desolation was actually about 2300 days. The numbers given here do not correspond. Thus, some have projected to the AD 70 events. But we have seen that those are sealed up and not revealed. Thus, the reference is to the time of Antiochus, and we are returning to them for a message of hope.

Since the numbers do not correspond, we are invited to look for a symbolic meaning. 1290 is 3 x 430, which is the number of years Israel spent under Egyptian domination. 45 is the number of years from the exodus to the **full** conquest of the land under Joshua (Deuteronomy 2:14, Joshua 14:6-10). Thus, what seems to be prophesied is the encouragement of a new exodus and a new conquest after the desolations of the apostate Jews and Antiochus. Days

Timeline of the Persian Period					
537	1	54	52	50	Cyrus 1
					Prayer of Daniel 9
					Cambyases removed as ruler of Babylon; Daniel 11:1
					Decree of Cyrus
					Jews return to Jerusalem
					Jubilee Year
536	2	55	53	51	Cyrus 2
					Work on Temple begins
535	3	56	54	52	Cyrus 3
					Opposition to Temple halts its rebuilding
					Daniel mourns 3 weeks; Daniel 10:1-4
534	4	57	55	53	Cyrus 4
533	5	58	56	54	Cyrus 5
532	6	59	57	55	Cyrus 6
531	7	60	58	56	Cyrus 7
530	8	61	59	57	Cyrus 8
529 ***	9	62	60	58	Cambyases 1
525	13	66	64	62	Cambyases 5
524	14	67	65	63	Cambyases 6
523	15	68	66	64	Cambyases 7
522	16	69	67	65	Cambyases 8
					Pseudo-Smerdis seizes throne
					Cambyases dies, possibly suicide
					Darius takes throne
521	17	70	68	66	Darius 1
520	18		69	67	Darius 2
					Haggai and Zechariah prophesy
					Temple foundation laid; God returns
519	19		70	68	Darius 3
					Vashti deposed
518	20			69	Darius 4
					Zechariah 7
517	21			70	Darius 5
516	22				Darius 6
					Temple completed
					Esther taken for queen-selection
515	23				Darius 7
					Esther becomes queen
					Ezra 7-10
514 ***	24				Darius 8
510	28				Darius 12
					Esther 3-8
509	29				Darius 13
					Esther 9-10

502	36				Darius 20
					Nehemiah rebuilds walls

490	48				Darius 32
					Nehemiah returns to Darius
489	49				Darius 33
					Sabbath Year

rather than yearn tells us that the tribulation **will** be brief, though three times as intense (three times 340).

What is the overall meaning of this vision? **First** of all, it means that the Jews will no longer be the exclusive center of God's attention. The New Covenant, which begins at this time in its **preliminary** form, is international. The Jews will serve within an international context, and God's angels will be wrestling with other national powers, while God oversees it **all** from above the waters. The basic outline of history, into which this revelation fits, is as follows:

THE FORMER DAYS

1. Priestly period, from Moses to David.
 - a. From Aaron to the desolating sacrilege under Eli.
 - b. From the desolating sacrilege to **Saul/David/Solomon** and the new Temple.
2. Kingly period, from David to Nebuchadnezzar.

THE LATTER DAYS

1. Priestly period, **from** Cyrus to Jesus.
 - a. From **Jeshua** to the desolating sacrilege under Jason.
 - b. From the desolating sacrilege to **Herod/Jesus/the Spirit** and the new Temple.
2. Kingly period, from ascension of Jesus to end of history.

Thus, at the beginning of our period, the crown of the king of placed on the head of Joshua the high priest (**Zechariah 6:9ff.**). After **Zerubbabel** the **Davidic** prince rebuilds the Temple, the kingship will be put into abeyance. Israel will be ruled, basically, by their priests again during this period. The priests will also be kings, in a sense, anticipating Christ the Priest-King to come. The kingship will be held by the priests until Christ comes, at which point they should yield to Him (which, of course, they refuse to do). In fact, the high priests did rule Israel during the Restoration era.

The Jews would be a priestly nation "spread out" among all other nations (**Zechariah 2:4 & 6**). It would be their witness that mattered (**Zechariah 1 & 6**; Esther 1-10). The new history, thus, would be bigger than merely Israel, and would involve the lands of the North and South, and to a lesser degree, West (11:30) and East (11:44), the four parts of Alexander's fractured empire. God's people would **be** spread out as the four spirits (winds) of God in these four areas (**Zechariah 2:6**).

A second aspect of the meaning of the history **pre-written** in Daniel 11 is the opposition of North and South. The other events in Daniel have taken up from previous events in Israel's history. For **instance**, the war of the

Temple vessels against Babylon repeats in a new way the war of the Ark against **Dagon** in 1 Samuel. The judgment and restoration of Nebuchadnezzar, after he takes his ease in his palace, recapitulates the judgments on David and his restoration after he, at his ease in his palace, **fell** into sin with **Bathsheba**, the **consequences** of which eventually led to his exile when **Absalom** took over the kingdom. Daniel in the lion's den is a recapitulation, as we saw, of Passover and deliverance.

So, we are invited to ask if anything is **being** recapitulated in the perennial conflict of the North and South in Daniel 11. I suggest that this is an expansion of the conflict between northern Israel and southern Judah that occupies most of the book of Kings.

In general we have conflicts back and forth that climax with the appearance of a particularly evil person, **Antiochus**, who seeks to stamp out true worship. At that time, those who know God will stand up, and the wise will guide many back to the true faith (11:32-33), after which the power of this evil king will be broken. This reminds me of the conflicts between Israel and Judah, the coming of Ahab and particularly Jezebel, who tried to stamp out the true faith, and then the coming of Elijah, Elisha, and the schools of the prophets, who rebuilt the faith of the people. Then Ahab and Jezebel were destroyed.

The history of Herod, and behind him, Rome, in verses 36-45 are designed, I think, to recapitulate the conquest of the world by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. They were conquered by Cyrus, God's Anointed Shepherd as he is called in the Bible (Isaiah **44:26-27**; 45: 1). Similarly, Herod and Rome were conquered by Michael, the Son of God, and the **Kingdom** of God arrived in its fullness.

The north is mentioned 8 times in this vision; the king of the north 7 times. The south is mentioned 10 times; the king of the south 8 times.

Third, while at the international level this history recapitulates the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, at the **level** of the priestly nation the history recapitulates the priestly history from Aaron to David.

The apostasy of the two sons, Jason and **Menelaus**, and their sacrilege against the Temple, which caused God to desolate it, recapitulates the sins of the two sons of Eli, which had the same effect in 1 Samuel 1-4. **Antiochus** as scourge of Israel parallels the Philistine.

The Tabernacle was never put back together, though in a shadow the priestly worship continued. Similarly, after **Antiochus** was defeated, the true **Zadokite** priests were not restored to the Temple, and so Temple worship from that time on was only a shadow of what it had been.

Herod is a greater Saul, who tries to kill Jesus, the greater David.