

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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I Think I Know What You Mean

By Brian Wright

I grew up in several relatively small towns in Kentucky. However, I spent many memorable summers on my grandparents' farm. With the help of one of my country cousins, I learned a valuable lesson during the late 1960's.

We had been helping an uncle bale hay. A friendly discussion with my cousin turned heated. My uncle, apparently tired of the bickering, suggested we settle our argument "out behind the barn." That was fine with me. I knew I was right and was certain, given enough time to complete my argument, I would convince my misguided cousin of the error of his thinking. I led the march behind the barn. As I turned to address my opponent, he was on me like hair on a gorilla. Despite my brief spirited defense, I could not overcome the dastardly sneak attack he unleashed on me.

The "discussion" concluded, we quietly resumed baling hay. My cousin thought he had achieved victory but I knew better. As Mark Twain once wrote, "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

My uncle smiled as he gazed at my cousin's slightly mussed hair and my black eye and bloody nose. "I'm glad you boys were able to settle your differences and remain friends," he said.

What was the man thinking? I had just received the thrashing of my young life. Friends? With that uncivilized brute? Eventually, perhaps.

So what went wrong? The problem was, I thought I knew what my uncle meant when he said we should settle things behind the barn. I thought he was telling us to finish our conversation somewhere else. What he really meant was an uninterrupted, no holds barred, fight to the finish. To paraphrase from the movie "Cool Hand Luke," what we had here was a case of failure to communicate.

The valuable lesson learned that day was that words mean things. In order for us to communicate intelligently with one another we must share a common understanding of the words we use. I can guarantee that if I had understood what my uncle was really saying, I never would have led that doomed

march to the backside of the barn (ignominiously known in family circles as Wright's last stand).

One of the biggest problems we face in the task of proclaiming the gospel is agreement on the meaning of words. In many cases the world hears the words we use (when we muster the energy to speak out) but does not understand what we are saying.

A few examples of what we say versus what they hear:

We say Jesus. They hear God.

We say Son of God. They hear God the Son.

We say God is one. They hear God is a mysterious "one what and three who's."

We say Kingdom. They hear "church" or "heaven."

We say gospel. They hear three days work: death, burial and resurrection.

We say "saved by grace." They hear "don't break the Ten Commandments and tithe so that God will bless us."

We say Jesus will come again. They hear "he will return to escort us to heaven when we die."

We say death. They hear eternal life in heaven or eternal life in hell.

We say the wicked will be punished. They hear unending torture somewhere in hell's back forty.

We say believers will be rewarded. They hear polishing rainbows, preparing heavenly dishes and playing harps.

We say resurrection. At best they hear Jesus' crucifixion story; at worst they hear nothing.

Jesus provides insight on how and why this occurs, in his parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23). The seed is the word (gospel) of the Kingdom. This is the word that we have a role in proclaiming to the nations. The word (gospel of the kingdom) is defined in Scripture. It is only when we retain the scriptural definition in our speaking that we are truly proclaiming the gospel.

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Verses 4 and 19 explain the “mechanics” of misunderstanding. The evil one (Satan) takes away the word that has been sown in a person’s heart (mind). He does not do this by erasing the memory. The potential convert heard the message but didn’t understand it. The parable presupposes that the sower uses the scriptural definition of “seed.” The problem must lie in how the hearer understands the message (word, Gospel).

Satan would probably prefer that a person not hear the message at all. However, all is not lost for him when the Message is delivered. He can attempt to take away the “seed” that is sown by substituting non-scriptural definitions in place of the original meaning of the Message. People succumb to this subterfuge when they take the easy way out. They accept unexamined the counter-explanations of false teachings or dismiss the Message entirely (it matters little to Satan whether the rejected message is in its original or altered form) as unbelievable or incomprehensible.

Jesus proclaimed his life-long intention: “I must preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose” (Luke 4:43). Jesus asked God to “Sanctify them [the disciples] in truth; Your word [Gospel] is truth” (John 17:17). Jesus testified before Pilate, “I have come into the world to testify to the truth [the word/Gospel of the Kingdom]” (John 19:37).

The Apostle Paul is adamant that there is only one gospel. In Galatians 1:6-9, he warns against distortion of the gospel message and pronounces a curse on those who proclaim “another gospel.” Distortion of the gospel is equated with promoting “another gospel.” Distortion is achieved by redefining the meaning of words. In this way the Message is fatally altered.

To separate Jesus from the Message/word as he proclaimed it, either by focusing our attention on the messenger while ignoring his Message or by changing the Message he was commissioned by God to proclaim, is to replace the genuine with a counterfeit. Satan has done his work well. When we speak the Gospel we must not automatically assume that people understand what we are saying.

Preaching and teaching the Gospel is a hard assignment requiring our undiluted effort and persistence. We must never give up the task. ✧

From *The Great Ideas of Plato* by Eugene Freeman and David Appel (New York: Lantern Press), contributed by Betty Ackels.

“The grave is not the end of life” (pp. 93, 94, 718).

The great ideas pronounced in the “Phaedo”: The soul is immortal and it is rewarded in heaven for its virtuous conduct on earth — called “intuitive knowledge.”

Socrates: “Such is the nature of the other world; when the dead arrive at the place to which the genius of each severally guides them, first they have sentence passed upon them as they have lived well or not.

“And those who appear to have lived neither well or ill go to the river, Acheron: and embarking in any vessel which they may find, are carried in them to the lake and there they dwell. They are purified of their evil deeds and having suffered the penalty of the wrongs which they have done to others, they are absolved. Receiving the rewards of their good deeds each of them according to his deserts.

“But those who appear to be incurable by reason of the greatness of their crimes — who have committed many a terrible deed of sacrilege: murders, foul and violent or the like, such are hurried into Tartarus, which is their suitable destiny, and they never come out.”

(Note from author, p. 100): “It is intuition that tells us that God exists and rules the world with love and justice, that the soul is immortal, and is rewarded or punished in the hereafter, according to the degree of virtue it achieves in this world.”

Note how all the above ideas, often accepted as “Christian,” contradict the Bible: 1 Corinthians 15:3: “This mortal must put on immortality.” There is no such thing as an immortal soul resident in every human being. Immortality must be acquired, and this can happen only by believing Jesus and his Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14, 15; Gal. 3:2, 6, 8, etc.). Baptism in water follows belief in Jesus’ Gospel (Acts 8:12, etc.) ✧

The Law of Christ or the Law of Moses — a Friendly Letter to a Messianic Jewish Believer

We agree that the disciples of Jesus are not without law. We also agree that “the law” we are obligated to obey is written on the tablets of our hearts. So, the law is within us and not something external like a book of rules that we come “under.” You believe it is the law given to Moses. I prefer to call it “the law of Christ,” as Paul calls it in Galatians 6:2. I don’t believe both laws are exactly the same.

Previously I pointed out that Jesus seemed to contradict the OT law, and I gave examples. You said he did not, so here we disagree. I think the contrast between Deuteronomy 21:4 and Matthew 5:31-32 on divorce is an impressive illustration of the contradiction, i.e., the new law promoted by the Messiah. But I will not dwell on that for the moment.

Let me begin with Galatians, the letter you say is much misunderstood. It strikes me as significant to read that the covenant with Abraham is superior to the covenant made at Mt. Sinai. Also, the Abrahamic covenant came first, around 430 years before the law covenant (Gal. 3:17). So, then, the law covenant did not exist from the beginning. It was added hundreds of years after the election of Abraham as Father of the faithful. Galatians 3:19 states: "It was added because of transgressions, *until* the Seed should come to whom the promise was made."

I see two reasons in that verse for the added law to become no longer necessary. First, it was added to convince the people that they were sinners and incapable of obeying God perfectly (see also Rom. 3:20: "Through the law we become conscious of sin"). Why would it need to exist when the people of God are "justified by faith" and not "by works"? Why would that added law continue to be in force when the people are no longer transgressors? As Galatians 3:24, 25 says, "The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." Secondly, Galatians 3:19 (above) says the law was added "until the Seed should come." So why would the law continue in effect after Jesus, the promised seed, came and offered himself as a better sacrifice?

There was nothing wrong with the law. It was good. Paul wrote that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12). I know we agree on that. But the law can be abused and misused. I believe that is why Paul wrote, "But we know that the law is good *if one uses it lawfully*" (1 Tim. 1:8). In the preceding verses (6 and 7), he mentioned some who used it wrongly, "having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm."

So how did those "teachers of the law" go astray? Paul answers that in the verses that follow. He shows that the law was not designed for righteous persons such as the believers in Messiah Jesus who obey his Father's gospel. He said, "The law is *not made for a righteous person*, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the

unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:9-10).

Thus the choice is not just between being "under" the law or having it on "the tablets of our hearts." The choice is between being obligated to it as *sinners* or being free of it as *righteous* persons.

I think 1 Corinthians 9 is also a relevant and interesting chapter in this regard, especially verses 20 and 21. We agree that Paul was not "under the law." But he said he was willing to be "as under the law" to those who were actually "under the law." He also said he became "without law" to "those who are without law." So he could decide for himself whether to be "under the law" or "without law." But while he was "without law" he was not "without law toward God, but under *law toward Christ*." That would be sheer contradiction if the law of Moses and the "law toward Christ" were one and the same. But Paul would not contradict himself. We have to conclude that he was speaking of two *different* laws of God, the law from Mt. Sinai (given for a special reason to a special nation) and the law of Christ taught by Jesus, the new "Moses."

Even though the Gentiles are "without law," that is, without *the law of Moses*, they are under the law of God which is valid at all times and for all nations. Paul mentioned this in Romans 2:14-15. There are Gentiles who do by nature things that the law requires. They show that God's law is found not only on stone tablets and in the writings of Moses. It is inscribed on their hearts. As I see it, the law given to Moses was really only a specific statement of God's law. God's law applies to everyone, but that aspect of it given to *Moses* was only for the Jews and only for a certain period of time. It was as Paul said "added" and temporary.

So, the question arises, which form of the law is to be written on the Christian's heart? Is it the form that exists in the special form given to Moses? Or, is it more like the law already in the hearts of some Gentiles — a law which is more clearly defined by Christ? Both forms are the law of God, so why should we assume that the law already written on hearts will be replaced by a law now written on paper?

If the law of Moses is to be inscribed on our hearts, that raises the question of "which law of Moses"? Is it the one as originally given, or is it the one modified by Jesus? For example, Jesus changed the law concerning divorce. He ruled that only

adultery was grounds for it, and he reminded his listeners that in the beginning it was not allowed for any reason at all (Matt. 19:8).

The law of Christ also has a different *goal*. The OT law legislated many punishments for failure to keep the law. But Galatians 6:2 says, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” The context shows that even persons who have failed spiritually are to be assisted toward recovery, if possible. (Compare Galatians 5:19-21 with 6:1.) If the church were to execute a member of the body of Christ for adultery, it would break the Law of Christ but not the Law of Moses.

I have already mentioned 1 Timothy 1:6-10. Let us also consider verse 5 if we want to understand what Paul thinks about the law for the righteous: “The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

So the goal is love, just as affirmed in Galatians 5:14: “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Also in Romans 13:8: “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.” I would not say that the OT law is abrogated. It is still in use for the “sinners,” the unbelieving. But it places no obligation — in its OT form — on the righteous, the descendants of Abraham, whether Jewish or Gentile. The law of Christ obligates us to a much higher standard of behavior and holiness than the law of Moses.

We do not need to perform “outward signs” of our obedience. We are not in bondage to observing “days and months and seasons and years” (Gal. 4:9-10). And we do not need to offer animal sacrifices any more. Christ was the ultimate sacrifice, as stated in Hebrews 9:26: “He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” We are not obliged to perform physical circumcision or observe ritual laws defining clean and unclean foods (“I know as a Christian that nothing is unclean of itself. All things are clean” Rom. 14:14, 20.)

Perhaps you will refer me to Acts 21:26-30. Yes, Paul and some men went to the temple, but it was not as a matter of salvation or of spiritual necessity. They were simply performing a Jewish custom, not acting out of a required obedience to OT law. For me, the explanation of this episode is in 1 Corinthians 9:20. To the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might win Jews. The situation is similar in Acts 16:3. Paul had Timothy circumcised “because of the Jews.” His purpose was not obedience to the OT law, but to win those who were still under that law.

And yes, the early Christians went to the temple but I am not sure if they took part in offering animal sacrifices any more.

We now have a different kind of sacrifice to offer, as explained in Romans 12:1-2: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

I see nothing wrong with doing certain things that OT law requires since there is nothing “unholy” in the law. If my goal is to win the Jewish people I work with, for example, I will not eat pork in their presence. I might even rest and attend the synagogue on their Sabbath. I have no objections to many Jewish customs and rituals.

But for me, it becomes dangerous when a Christian is made to feel *obligated* to do these things, whether it is by obedience to Jewish laws written on paper or to Jewish laws written on “the tablet of the heart.” Paul warned that his converts would lose their status as Christian believers if they succumbed to those who insisted on the Law of Moses (Gal. 5:1-6).

I also look at it this way: There are more than 600 rules and regulations in the OT law. To know all of these in your heart would require more than committing them to memory. You would have to devote so much of your time to reading them, studying them and pondering how to apply them to modern situations. Until you had them all uniquely mastered so that they are actually a part of you, you could not say honestly that they are written in your heart. That would not be true at any time you had to look up even one verse in the OT law. And when you had them all mastered, what would you be? In a religious sense, would you be a Christian, or would you be a Jew?

I take Galatians 5:2-3 as a clear warning: “If [for religious reasons] you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the *whole* law.” Would I really want to be under a curse like that?

And verse 6 adds for emphasis: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” Again the emphasis is on love in connection with true faith.

These are some of my scriptural reasons. I could add several more. I wonder where you draw the line as to which law is written in your heart and which is not.

Do you offer animal sacrifices? How do you obey the law that requires the death of a child who curses or attacks his father or mother? (Exod. 21:15, 17). And what about the law to let a field rest in the 7th year? (Exod. 23:11).

I would think that not even all of the Ten Commandments apply to Christians, since Paul stated we *cannot* be condemned for breaking the Sabbath (Col. 2:16). A day of rest is God's gift. Mark 2:27 tells us: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." So we, as responsible and mature Christians, should know what serves us best — a nap in the afternoon if we work late hours during the week; time with the children if we have got little time for them on the other six days; or maybe walking or cycling for a while if most of our week is spent sitting in front of a computer screen.

In your letter, you said "persons of the nations would come to learn about the God of Israel through the Tanakh (the OT), and through the NT, in order to know what is pleasing in God's sight." In view of all I've said above, I think you can understand why I cannot fully agree with your statement. Sure enough, the Scriptures show us what is pleasing in God's sight. But the NT is very clear that the economy of the Law of Moses is not binding on us now as candidates for rulership with Christ in the Kingdom to come.

Jesus came to fulfill the law. He obeyed it perfectly. At the same time he gave us new insights into the heart and mind of the Father. If the OT law was God's complete revelation of His will and purpose, the Jews would not have needed the teaching of the prophets who came on the scene after Moses. We as Christians would not need the teachings of Jesus and his apostles. But the Bible plainly says, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things" (Heb. 1:1-2).

Because of Christ, we are no longer "married" to the OT law. Paul wrote: "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another — to him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God" (Rom. 7:4). The law has not been abrogated. Instead, we have died to our obligation to it in its OT Mosaic form, thanks to our new relationship with Christ the Bridegroom.

Paul wrote: "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law" (Gal. 5:18). Through the holy spirit, the law of Christ will live within us. We will be able to live according to the spirit. It will produce

within us the fruit of the spirit. This will be a sign of our true faith and that we are pleasing in God's sight (Gal. 5:22-25).

If I could speak just for myself, I'd like to say: If you're happy with it, just keep it. But I take the above-mentioned verses in Galatians 5 as a warning addressed to me. I see a sharp contrast between obeying God out of love which is promoted by Christ's law and, on the other hand, obeying Him out of the old human desire to be justified by works, which is promoted by the old law. Are you sure that you, at all times, can distinguish between works performed from "love" and those done out of "obligation" to the Law of Moses?

By the way, I somehow get the idea that you don't think we're living at the present time under the New Covenant. Am I right, or is this a misunderstanding?

Well, I'll leave you with these thoughts. ✧

Studies in Predictive Prophecy

BBE, Daniel 12:6: "And I said to the man clothed in linen, who was over the waters of the river, How long will it be to the end of these wonders?"

NLT, Daniel 12:8: "I heard what [the angel] said, but I did not understand what he meant. So I asked, "How will all this finally end, my lord?"

The study of Bible prophecy has produced a great variety of differing "schools." This is hardly surprising, since denominational Christianity demonstrates a similar fragmentation in so many doctrinal areas.

We should face the facts: Jesus urges us to "live by every word proceeding from the mouth of God." The complete words of God preserved within the canon of Holy Scripture contain, in fact, a mass of information relative to the future. Some have suggested that up to a third of the Bible deals with predictive prophecy — prophecy not only of the return of the Messiah and the coming Kingdom of God on a renewed earth, but of events to be identified as precursors and signs of Messiah's arrival.

It makes no sense that Christians should neglect the study of prophecy. Paul is a good model in this respect. When founding the church at Thessalonica he was probably with his converts for a period of several weeks only. Following the establishment of a believing community there he wrote the two wonderful letters to

the Thessalonians. These communications are filled with instruction about the Second Coming of Jesus and how to prepare for it. Second Thessalonians provides dramatically interesting information about the rise of a final tyrant “whom the Lord Jesus will put to death with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the brightness of his coming” (II Thess. 2:8). Paul has cited an Assyrian passage from Isaiah here (Isa. 11:4). The fact that he draws on that particular section of Isaiah gives us an important clue to his thinking. Equally significant is his obvious allusion to the seventh, eighth and eleventh chapters of Daniel.

Of the greatest interest is the fact that Paul gave his new converts, in the space of a few weeks, a complete run-down on the details of Antichrist — his appearance and sinister career. “Don’t you remember that while I was still with you I used to tell you about these things?” (II Thess. 2:5).

Marginal references in standard Bibles (the finest built-in commentary) will take the reader from II Thessalonians 2:3, 4 and 8 to the source of these allusions in Daniel 7:25; 8:25 and 11:26. These connections are the absolute essentials of an intelligent understanding of the mind of Christ in prophecy. Paul is not inventing his picture of the end-time “antichrist.” He draws on preexisting data provided by Daniel. As we shall see, Jesus followed exactly the same method. Detaching the New Testament from its roots in the Old remains the major defect in poor Bible study. We cannot afford to neglect Jesus’ and Paul’s reliance on the Hebrew Scriptures in matters of end-time prediction. And Jesus could not have made himself clearer: When speaking of a coming Abomination of Desolation or “Awful, Desecrating Horror,” he said: “Let the reader understand that when I speak of the Abomination of Desolation, I am referring to the Abomination of Desolation *as foreseen by Daniel the prophet*” (Dan. 11:31; 12:11; 9:27 and 8:13) (see Matt. 24:15). This climactic event was to be the signal for an unprecedented time of distress in Israel. And “immediately following” that unparalleled distress (Matt. 24:29), cosmic disturbances would herald the arrival of the Messiah in power and glory (Matt. 24:29-31). In this dramatic fashion the Kingdom of God, a new Government for all nations, would be inaugurated on earth.

What then did Paul have in mind when he alluded to Daniel 7:25? Daniel 7:24-26 says: “As for the ten horns, out of this [final] Kingdom ten kings will arise; and *another* will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. He [that eleventh horn/ruler] will speak out

against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alteration in times and law; and they [the saints] will be given into his hand for a time, times and half a time, but the court will sit for judgment and his [the eleventh horn’s] dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed for ever.” Thereupon, “the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the Kingdoms under the whole heaven [hardly a Kingdom *in* heaven and certainly a Kingdom on the earth!] will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One, and all the dominions will serve and obey them” (Dan. 7:27, see RSV, NEB).

An important fact emerges from this portrait of the wicked ruler of the end-time. *He is an individual*, not a series of individuals spanning centuries. His career lasts for a brief period only and he is the eleventh ruler associated with ten other “kings.” Nothing is said about a collective series of “popes” or other leading figures. The description is of a single “horn/ruler” not less an individual than the ten other associated rulers. A similar portrait of this awful personage is provided in Daniel 8:23-25: “In the closing part of their rule [i.e. the rule of the empires and rulers among whom the Greek Kingdom of Alexander the Great was divided], when transgressors have run their course, a king insolent and skilled in intrigue will arise. His power will be mighty, but not by his own power, and he will destroy to an extraordinary degree and prosper and perform his will. And he will destroy/corrupt mighty men and the holy people and through this shrewdness he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence. And he will magnify himself in his heart and he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will even oppose the Prince of princes [giving rising to the well-known title “Antichrist”]. But he will be broken without human agency.”

His destruction “without human agency” is strongly reminiscent of the demise of the Man of Lawlessness, the Son of Perdition depicted by Paul. Of this individual Paul says that the Messiah will annihilate him by the brightness of his Second Coming (Parousia) (II Thess. 2:8). Paul evidently elaborated on the picture painted by Daniel in his seventh and eighth chapters. The fact that Paul calls on information about a wicked “horn/ruler” tells us that Paul also had one individual in mind and not a series of leaders spanning centuries or millennia. Paul describes this final Satanic agent as “the Man of Lawlessness” or “Man of Sin” (the Greek originals have both forms), namely the Son of Destruction —

that is, the one destined to be put out of existence. Judas Iscariot, who was similarly an individual person not a continuous series of wicked leaders, is given the same description as “the Son of destruction” (John 17:12). John also spoke of a final, single Antichrist: “You have heard that Antichrist is coming” (I John 2:18). He went on to speak of the spirit of antichrist already at work in many antichristian agents.

All this points unmistakably to a final manifestation of evil in a single person. Our point is confirmed when we add Daniel’s further information from his eleventh chapter. Daniel 11:31 describes the career of an end-time “king of the North” who succeeds in invading “the temple fortress” and setting up the Abomination of Desolation. His military campaign involves the desecration of a sacred building: “Forces from him [the King of the North] will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the Abomination which causes Desolation” (Dan. 11:31). He proceeds to ruin others by turning them to godlessness with his clever propaganda (Dan. 11:32). Then, in a final fit of arrogance and madness, “the king will do as he pleases and he will exalt himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods. And he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed [by God] will be done” (Dan. 11:36).

It was to this terrifying autocrat that Paul referred when, in words strongly reminiscent of Daniel, he wrote of the “Man of Lawlessness, the Son destined for Destruction who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (II Thess. 2:3, 4).

Paul, as we have seen, wanted his converts to be fully appraised of the facts about God’s end-time opponent. These remarkable passages of Scripture (and we have dealt only with a small portion of them) require no less attention today. Scripture is to be expounded generation by generation and preserved intact.

Jesus was profoundly interested in these Danielic portraits of “Antichrist.” In his extended prophetic discourse in response to the disciples’ question about the “sign of [his] coming and the end of the age” (Matt. 24:3), Jesus focused on the Abomination of Desolation as Daniel had described it. In Mark 13:14 Jesus gave personality to the Abomination. He spoke of the Abomination standing where “*he* ought not to” (the participle in Greek here is a masculine singular form). The appearance of this Abomination, as Daniel

had predicted it (Matt. 24:15), is to be the distinct event which precipitates the time of indescribable suffering to which no other time of trouble past or future can be compared (Matt. 24:21 quoting Dan. 12:1).

Referring, as we are instructed, to the words of Daniel we find some relief in the grim story of the end of the age. The Abomination is to create its awful havoc for a limited time. Daniel in a critically important question and answer session with the interpreting angels sought information about “the closing part (or stage) of these events” (Dan. 12:8). He had already asked about when these same remarkable events of the vision of chapter 11 would terminate (Dan. 12:6). They would last, the angel informed him, “for a time, times and half a time.” Daniel recognized this as the same period of time mentioned in 7:25 and assigned to the career of the wicked horn/king. Seeking further clarification on this most vital of all issues in prophecy Daniel rephrased his question: “My lord [*adoni*] what will be the final stage [*acherit*] of these events?” The reply is most illuminating. “From the time that the regular sacrifice is removed and the Abomination of Desolation set up, there will be 1290 days” (12:11). This extension (by one month) of the famous last 3 ½ years of the “seventy sevens” prediction in Daniel 9:24-27 assures us that the final burst of agony will be short-lived. Jesus was confident of this also as he directed us to this precious information about the Abomination of Desolation and its duration. The span of 1290 days provides an extraordinary yardstick for measuring the period of time following the appearance of the final Abomination. Relief will not be long postponed. The Kingdom of God will arrive with the returning Messiah and the resurrection of the dead (Dan 12:2), and peace will come to all mankind. ✧

Comments

“Greetings in the Name of Yahweh our Father, and in His Beloved Son, Yeshua our Savior. I came across your website and I have to say that I like your topics. My friend showed me your book on the Kingdom of God and I have to say that I also agree! However most Christians cannot see that Jesus Christ or Yeshua is to return again in the Second Advent and sit on the Throne of Israel! This is Biblical prophecy, but why do they not see this? I see clearly that the Throne of Israel is his.” — *Pennsylvania*