

Focus on the Kingdom

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The dogmatic insistence in some contemporary fundamentalist churches that one *must* subscribe to the belief that “Jesus is God” in order to be a Christian suffers from a considerable element of disinformation about the origins of the Trinitarian dogma. What if Jesus was not a Trinitarian? How welcome would he be in your church?

“It must be admitted by everyone who has the rudiments of a historical sense that the Trinity, as a doctrine, formed no part of the original message. St. Paul knew nothing of it, and would have been unable to understand the meaning of the terms in the theological formula on which the Church ultimately agreed” (Dr. W.R. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral, *God in Christian Thought and Experience*, p. 180).

“No responsible NT scholar would claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was taught by Jesus, or preached by the earliest Christians, or consciously held by any writer of the NT. It was in fact slowly worked out in the course of the first few centuries in an attempt to give an intelligible doctrine of God” (A.T. Hanson, *The Image of the Invisible God*, p. 87).

Cutting Up Matthew 24

Students of Jesus’ precious Olivet Discourse have been unable to agree as to whether Jesus spoke mainly of the events of AD 70 or of his yet future coming in glory to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. A solution to the “problem” may be found when we recognize that the disciples’ question indicates *no chronological distinction* between trouble in Jerusalem and “your Parousia (Second Coming) and the end of the age” (Matt. 24:3). Jesus’ answer does not correct the disciples’ assumption. He proceeded to answer their question — about “the second coming and the end of the age.” He went on to say that “*the end* is not yet” (24:6). Before the end, “this Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached amongst all the nations as a witness, and *then* the end will come” (24:14). He did not confuse his audience by speaking of *two ends*. *Switching the meaning of a word (“end”) within the same context is bound to lead to a breakdown in communication.* The “end of the age” for Jesus was the harvest to be reaped (certainly not in AD 70) when he returned in power (see Matt. 13:39, 41, 49). He promised to be with his

disciples not until AD 70 but until the future “end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). With that single end of the age in mind, Jesus gave an account of what could be expected just prior to his Second Coming. *The end* consists of a closely connected sequence of events beginning with the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation (24:14, 15). All attempts to spread these events over long periods of time, or create *two ends*, obscure Jesus’ teaching. Hence the following strong statements that the *chronological markers* given by Jesus must not be interfered with:

Benjamin Newton: “Our error in stating the unequalled season of tribulation to be past is the result of unpardonable carelessness...We have virtually said that **immediately (24:29)** does not mean immediately” (*Babylon and Egypt, Their Future History and Doom*, p. vii).

James Buswell: “The time expression ‘**immediately after**’ (24:29) represents a chronological transition so sharp and clear and forceful that to ignore it would be a major error in hermeneutics” (*Systematic Theology*, p. 396).

Heinrich Meyer: “**It is exegetically certain that Jesus spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem as an event that was to take place immediately before his Second Coming (24:29).** The attempts to twist this word ‘**immediately**’ from its proper meaning are inconsistent with the laws of purely objective exegesis...**A whole host of strange and fanciful interpretations** have been given in consequence of its having been assumed that Jesus could not possibly have intended to say that the second advent was to follow **immediately upon** the destruction of Jerusalem. **This attempt is contrary to all exegetical rule**” (*Commentary on Matthew 24*).

Godet (Swiss reformer, 1812-1900, tutor to Crown Prince Frederick William of Prussia and Pastor at Neuchatel, Prof. of Theology of Free Church Theol. Academy): “**Matthew combines in the answer of Jesus the two subjects indicated in the question as Matthew has expressed it [24:3], and he unites them in so intimate a way that all attempts to separate them [i.e. create two ends] in the text, from Chrysostom to Ebrard and Meyer, have broken down.**”

Millennium Bible: “There are arguments of considerable worth in favor of referring the Tribulation (Matt. 24:21) to the period **just before the coming of the Lord**. Dan. 12:1 says ‘at that time your people shall be delivered,’ and most assuredly they were not delivered in the days of Titus when Jerusalem was destroyed — they were massacred by the millions and dispersed in every direction. It must be true therefore that Daniel speaks of **an end far later than that of the destruction of Jerusalem [in AD 70]**. The difficult connection, ‘immediately after’ (24:29), is altogether resolved by this explanation.”

The Abomination is to appear *before* the destruction of the temple and as a sign for flight. It is also a person (Mark 13:14, “standing where *he* ought not to”). Did Titus appear standing in the holy place? And was this the time when the disciples fled? The disciples fled in 66 AD long before the appearance of an individual in the temple. Jesus’ prophecy was not fulfilled in AD 70. He was speaking of a single “end” — the end of the age. ✧

The Earliest Church Fathers and Prophecy

The earliest post-NT writers on prophecy were premillennial (they believed the millennium would begin only at the Return of Christ), post-tribulational (they did not believe in a secret pre-tribulation rapture of the church) and futurists: “Until Augustine in the fourth century, the early church generally held to the premillennarian understanding of biblical eschatology [views of the future]. This millennialism entailed a *futuristic* interpretation of Daniel’s seventieth week, the Abomination of Desolation and the personal Antichrist. And the early Church was post-tribulational” (Dr. Robert Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, Zondervan, 1973, p. 173).

It is interesting to note that the distinguished premillennialist, Theodore Zahn (c. 1900), states that the final evil ruler in the book of Revelation (much of which is based on Daniel) is “without question” derived from “the Graeco-Macedonian [kingdom] and its typical pre-Christian antichrist, Antiochus Epiphanes” (*Introduction to the New Testament*, Vol. III, p. 441). In Daniel 11 and 12 it seems clear that Antiochus is a “type” of the yet future tyrant. Antiochus was a Syrian king. A Latin church father, Lactantius (c. 250-330 AD), clearly expected the Beast (antichrist) to arise in Syria: “Another king shall arise out of Syria, born from an evil spirit...and he will constitute and call himself God, and will order

himself to be worshipped as the Son of God, and power will be given him to do signs and wonders. Then he will attempt to destroy the temple of God and persecute the righteous people; and there will be distress and tribulation such as there never has been since the beginning of the world” (*Divine Institutes*, bk. 7, ch. 17). In ch. 16 Lactantius speaks of the tyrant arising “from the extreme boundaries of the northern region.” Another ante-Nicene father, Victorinus (c. 280 AD), refers Micah 5:5 to the antichrist: “There shall be peace for our land...and they shall encircle Asshur [Assyria], *that is antichrist*, in the trench of Nimrod” (*Commentary on the Apocalypse*, ch. 7). Assyria is the approximate equivalent of modern Iraq. (Victorinus also speaks of Babylon as the Roman state.)

It is not always recognized that the seventieth week of Daniel 9:24-27 is taken by Jesus to be a period *just before his return*. Jesus places the Abomination shortly before his Second Coming (Matt. 24:15ff). Matthew 24:29 says that “**immediately after**” the tribulation initiated by the Abomination (24:15), he will come back in power and glory (24:29-31). This fact is crucial to a fair reading of prophecy. Daniel expected the Abomination to appear in the seventieth “week” (Dan. 9:27). Jesus expects the Abomination (and therefore the seventieth week) *just before* his Return.

That the seventieth “week” was **future** and close to the end of the age was understood in 243 AD by **Hippolytus** (*De Pascha Computus*). This fact is noted in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. III, p. 606: “**The final one ‘week’ [of Daniel 9:24-27] is taken off as belonging to the eschatological period in the future.**” Irenaeus also expected a **3½-year tribulation and a rebuilt temple** (*Against Heresies*, bk. 5, chs. 25, 26). “In which [temple] the enemy shall sit, endeavoring to show himself as Christ the Lord also declares: ‘When you shall see the Abomination of Desolation standing in the holy place, as Daniel spoke of it...’ “Everything will be given into his hands until a time of times and half a time: that is **for three and a half years**, during which time, when he [Antichrist] comes, he will reign over the earth.” “The Abomination shall be brought into **the temple**, even until the consummation of the time shall the desolation be complete [Dan 9:27]. Now **three years and six months constitute the half ‘week.’**” Irenaeus sees the Antichrist, not just Antiochus, in the **eighth** chapter of Daniel and quotes **Daniel 9:27** as a prophecy of the final reign of the Antichrist “for three years and six months.”

The seventieth week of Daniel 9 was seen as future and close up to the Second Coming by the earliest church fathers who wrote in detail on prophecy. Montgomery (*International Critical Commentary on Daniel*, p. 394) notes that this “apocalyptic” (end-time) reading of the last period of seven years **is the one found in the gospels, and it is adopted by Irenaeus and Hippolytus. Commodianus** refers to a future and final Antichrist in these words: “Isaiah said, ‘this is the man who moves the world and so many kings and under whom the land will become a desert’...Then, doubtless the world will be finished when he appears. He himself will divide the globe into three ruling powers, when however, Nero will be raised up from hell, Elijah will first come to seal the beloved ones; at which things the region of Africa [King of the South?] and the northern nations [King of the North?], the whole earth on all sides will tremble **for seven years**. But Elijah will occupy **half of the time** and Nero the other half. Then the whole Babylon, being reduced to ashes, its embers will then advance to Jerusalem; and the **Latin conqueror** will then say, ‘I am Christ whom you always pray to.’ And indeed the original ones who were deceived combine to praise him. He does many wonders since he is **the false prophet**. Especially that they may believe him his **image** will speak. The Almighty has given it power to appear such. **The Jews, recapitulating Scriptures from him, exclaim at the same time to the Highest that they have been deceived**...Moreover, when the tyrant will dash himself against the army of God, his soldiery are overthrown by the celestial terror; the false prophet himself is seized with the wicked one, by the decree of the Lord. They are handed over alive to Gehenna” (*The Instructions of Commodianus*, chs. 41, 42). ✧

The Assyrian in Messianic Prophecy (first written May, 1986)

“The prophet Isaiah is convinced that the Assyrians, the instruments of God’s punishment, will overthrow not only Samaria but *Jerusalem*. As a state Judah will be destroyed” (“Remnant,” *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, p. 315).

“The very earliest messianic prophecies of the OT represent **the golden age** [the Millennium, the first stage of the worldwide Kingdom of God] as preceded by a time of conflict — the conflict which will destroy the particular oppression of Israel at the time, and wipe out the ungodly in Israel itself. The power to be overcome is in each case an actually existing empire — Assyria, Babylon, and Persia — whose downfall

will *immediately* usher in the glorious reign of peace” (“II Thessalonians,” *Ibid*, p. 372).¹

In history, Assyria never defeated Judah and Jerusalem. The golden age has never yet followed the defeat of Assyria.²

“Micah 5:6 states that the armies of the Messiah will waste the *land of Assyria*...the important fact to maintain in the *still unfulfilled* Micah passage is that whatever be the particular weapons, **there will be a conflict at the time and place identified**, and with the results that are indicated” (Barton-Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, Baker, 1973, p. 81, emphasis added). Barton-Payne then says: “A.B. Davidson grants that **‘the Scriptures represented the Assyrian as existing in the time of the Messiah’** (*OT Prophecy*, pp. 164-166), but Davidson goes on to say that ‘we must distinguish between the general idea and the particular form *not now likely to be realized.*’ What then is the effect of this on the truthfulness of the Scriptures? Davidson is forced to say: ‘It makes them share in the imperfection of the dispensation to which they belonged’” (*Ibid.*, p. 169).

These quotations sum up the conflict over prophecy, which has often prevented the simple predictions of the prophets from being heard. In some circles the devastating effects of “criticism” mean that anyone who thinks the Bible predicts anything is suspect! Barton-Payne, however, was among those conservative scholars who admit **that Assyria is to be on the scene when Jesus returns**. Davidson also admits that this is so; he then circumvents the information by saying that we cannot expect the prophecy to be fulfilled as the prophets say. He believes that the prophets wrote imperfectly.

But should believers in the inspiration of Scripture accept such a “low” view of the words of the prophets of Israel? This writer agrees with Barton-Payne that “the New Testament along with the Old speaks of an **eschatological military campaign in the same area east of the Euphrates River** (Rev. 16:12). It would appear best to recognize that while the particular

¹ Cp. also Hofmann’s *Weissagung und Erforschung I*, p. 314, cited by Keil, *Commentary on Daniel*, p. 479: “Isaiah spoke of the approaching assault of the Assyrians as of the **last affliction** of the city.” Similarly Daniel speaks of the activity of the king of the North as the **final oppression** of Israel just before the resurrection of the dead (Dan. 11:21-12:3).

² I.e. modern Iraq or Syria. Subsequent events in 1990 (and now later in 2002) show that the Middle East continues to be a troubled area, with power to disturb others on a gigantic scale.

people, the Sargonid dynasty of the 8th-7th centuries BC has come to an end, *the land still remains*: and it is the land (i.e. of Assyria) which will experience precisely the events which Scripture forecasts in its regard” (*Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, p. 81).

What information does Micah convey to us in Micah 5:5ff?

“This one [the Messiah, see v.2] will be our peace when the ASSYRIAN invades our land, when he tramples on our citadels. Then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight leaders of men. And they will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and thus he will deliver us from the ASSYRIAN when he attacks our land and when he tramples our territory. *Then* the remnant of Jacob will be among the peoples like dew from the Lord.”

It would be hard to imagine a more obviously Messianic end-time prophecy than this. We surely must agree with Barton-Payne (*Ibid*, p. 433): “*Such a Messianic deliverance has never been accomplished in the past.*” It is indeed a “*still unfulfilled*” passage.

In Numbers 24:23, 24 “Ships from the coast of Kittim will afflict Assyria and Eber.” “This prophecy is elaborated in Daniel 11:30” (Barton-Payne, *Ibid*, p. 204): “**Assyria represents the Mesopotamian power.** In Ezra 6:22, the King of Assyria designates the king of Persia” (*Ibid.*). It is important to remember that Rome was not a *Mesopotamian power*, its main geographical theatre being Europe, not western Asia. Prophecy focuses on the “northern,” Mesopotamian power.

The Assyrian in Isaiah

The Assyrian power of the end receives full treatment in Isaiah. Through the description of his destruction in Isaiah 11:4 *he appears again in Paul’s NT picture of the Antichrist in II Thessalonians 2:8. Paul quotes directly from Isaiah 11:4 when describing the destruction of the antichrist in II Thessalonians 2:8: “The lawless one will be at once revealed. Then the Lord Jesus will come in all his splendor; he will breathe upon him and destroy him and take away all his power. The coming of the Lawless One will be accomplished through the power of Satan.”* Paul has in mind the Assyrian material presented by Isaiah. In this “evil one” he sees the final Antichristian figure (note “slay **the evil one,**” LXX of Isa. 11:4).

Let us look first at the Isaianic material on ASSYRIA. It is fully granted, of course, that the Assyrian attacked Judah in 701 BC. His army was

supernaturally dealt with. 185,000 died at the hands of an angel and the king escaped to Nineveh, where twenty years later he was murdered by his two sons (Isa. 37:36-38).

Can we say that this is the end of the story of the Assyrian? Several passages make us think not. In Isaiah 11:4 the king of Assyria is to be punished in a way hardly compatible with the demise of the historical king of Assyria. We pick up the story in Isaiah 10:16:

“Therefore the Lord God of hosts will send a wasting disease among his [the ASSYRIAN’S] stout warriors and under his glory a *fire* will be kindled like a burning flame. And the light of Israel will become a fire and His Holy One (Messiah) a flame, and it (or he) will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day...Now it will come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel, and those who have escaped, will *never again* rely on the one who *struck them* [Assyria, v. 5], but will truly rely on the Lord and the Holy One of Israel. A **remnant** will return, the remnant of Jacob to the Mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant within them will return. A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. **For a complete destruction, one that is decreed,** the Lord of Hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land. Therefore, O my people, who dwell in Zion, do not be afraid of the ASSYRIAN who strikes you with the rod and lifts up his staff against you, the way Egypt did. For in a very little while my indignation against you will be directed to their destruction” (Isa. 10:16-25).

The same ASSYRIAN is then described as approaching Jerusalem *from the north* (Isa. 10:28-32). Commentators are found in some embarrassment explaining why Isaiah’s geographical sense was so poor! The historical attack by Assyria in 701 BC was not from the north but from Lachish, southwest of Jerusalem (Isa. 36:2). According to Isaiah 10:32 the ASSYRIAN will “shake his fist at the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.” Then (ch. 11) “a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse.” A clear millennial scene follows, initiated by the destruction of the ASSYRIAN when “he [the Messiah] will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked (one)” (Heb. *rasha*, LXX *asebe* = “wicked one,” singular, Isa. 11:4, II Thess. 2:8. Cp. the masculine participle in Mark 13:14 designating a single individual — “the abomination of desolation standing where **he** ought not to stand.” See the Greek original, and cp. NEB,

“usurping a place which is not his.” Also Weymouth: “standing where he ought not to”).

Connections with Daniel and II Thessalonians

Remarkably, Paul cites this Assyrian text from Isaiah when he describes the death of the Antichrist at the hands of the returning Messiah (II Thess. 2:8). It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Paul saw in the evil ASSYRIAN of Isaiah 10-11 the final antichristian tyrant. We have no difficulty in recognizing Paul’s quotation of Isaiah 10:22, 23 in Romans 9:27, 28 — “the remnant will return” — as a prophecy of the future restoration of Israel. There is no good reason to overlook his quotation of the destruction of the ASSYRIAN as the destruction of the eschatological antichrist. The “114—228 connection” (Isa. 11:4; 2 Thess. 2:8) deserves careful examination. The secret of much good Bible study is discovering *the links* between the Old and New Testaments. Most mistakes occur when the connections are broken, especially when the Old Testament is neglected. Much of traditional Christian orthodoxy is based on a Greek philosophical reading of the New Testament severed from the Old. But when Jesus explained the Bible, he “**began** with Moses and with all the prophets, expounding the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27).

Another remarkable fact emerges from Isaiah 10:23: “*a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord will execute.*” This prediction is almost word for word identical with an end-time statement in Daniel 9:27b, where the Abomination of Desolation (identified as “he” in Mark 13:14, NEB, Weymouth, GNB) will cause desolation until “*a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the desolator.*” The destruction of the ASSYRIAN which Paul sees as the destruction of the Antichrist (Isa. 11:4; 2 Thess. 2:8) is seen by Daniel as the destruction of the final desolator.

Further Material in Isaiah

There is more data concerning the ASSYRIAN in Isaiah 30:25ff. It is very hard to see how this material has ever been accomplished in history. It must therefore lie ahead of us.

“And on every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter when the towers fall. And the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, *on the day* the Lord binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted. Behold, the name of the Lord comes

from a remote place; burning is His anger and dense is His smoke; His lips are filled with indignation, and His tongue is like a consuming *fire*; and His breath is like an overflowing torrent which reaches to the neck, to shake the nations back and forth in a sieve, and to put into the jaws of the people the bridle which leads to ruin...And the Lord will cause the voice of His authority to be heard; and the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger, and in the *flame* of consuming *fire*, in cloudburst, downpour and hailstones. For at the voice of the Lord ASSYRIA will be terrified, when He strikes with the rod. And every blow of the rod of punishment which the Lord will lay on him [the Assyrian] will be with the music of tambourines and lyres; and in battles, brandishing weapons, *He will fight them.* For Topheth [the place of human sacrifice to Molech, Jer. 7:31] has long been prepared. Indeed it has long been prepared for the king [of Assyria]. He [the Lord] has made it deep and large, a pyre of fire with plenty of wood; *the breath of the Lord like a torrent of brimstone sets it afire*” (cp. “the beast and false prophet were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with *brimstone*,” Rev. 19:20). Then in the same context:

Isaiah 31:4-32:4: “So will the Lord of Hosts come down to wage war on Mount Zion and on its hill. Like flying birds so the Lord of Hosts will protect Jerusalem. He will protect and deliver it; He will pass over and rescue it. Return to Him from whom you have *deeply defected*, O sons of Israel [cp. the *Apostasy* of II Thess. 2:3]. For *in that day* every man will cast away his silver idols, which your hands have made as sin. And the ASSYRIAN will fall by a sword *not of man* [cp. Dan. 8:25, “the little horn will be broken without human agency”]. And a sword not of man will devour him. So he will not escape the sword, and his young men will become forced laborers. And his rock will pass away because of panic, and his princes will be terrified at the standard, says the Lord, whose *fire* is in Zion and whose *furnace* [lake of fire] is in Jerusalem. [Then follows the Kingdom of God.] Behold a King will reign righteously, and princes will rule justly [cp. Rev. 20: “the saints began to reign with Christ for a thousand years.”] And each will be like a refuge from the wind, and a shelter from the storm, like streams of water in a dry country, like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land. Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded, and the ears of those who hear will listen. The mind of the hasty will discern the Truth, and the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clearly.”

Can we seriously doubt that the ASSYRIAN is active in the punishment of Israel just before the Messiah intervenes; and that he will be supernaturally destroyed by fire in Messianic times?

Since Paul takes his Antichrist data from the Assyrian material in Isaiah 11:4, as well as from Daniel 11:36, it is reasonable to conclude that the final “Beast” is not only the ASSYRIAN but the King of the North of Daniel 11:21ff. Of the Antichrist Paul says, “he will exalt 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. 2:4). This is a direct citation of Daniel 11:36. It is hardly surprising to find Jesus elaborating his end-time prophecy in Matthew 24 by working from the same text-plot, Daniel 11.

It has been, in my view, a serious weakness of prophetic study to overlook the directed *link, authorized by Jesus himself*, between Matthew 24:15 — “When you see the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel” — and Daniel 11:31 — “they will set up the Abomination of Desolation.” Commentators seem to be determined to find an Abomination of Desolation *other than* the one to which Jesus directs us in Daniel 11:31, where a final **King of the North** terrorizes God’s people and Jerusalem. Jesus is our infallible commentator and he sees in Daniel 11:31 (with the additional chronological information of 12:11) the Abomination which will trigger the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:15-21). Daniel 11:31, 12:11 locks us into a terrible period of 1290 days, or its approximate equivalent of 3 1/2 “times,” which in Daniel appears to mean 3 1/2 years, this being half as long as Nebuchadnezzar’s seven-year madness (Dan. 4:16, 25, 32). By synthesizing this data we may safely say that the ASSYRIAN (Isa. 11:4 = 2 Thess. 2:8; Dan. 11:36 = 2 Thess. 2:4) will go on the rampage for 3 1/2 years just before the return of Christ.

Additional Evidence

It will not be surprising, then, that Micah promises deliverance from the ASSYRIAN through the Messiah at his Coming (Mic. 5:5) and that Zechariah predicts that God “will bring back [His people] from the land of Egypt and gather them from ASSYRIA...and the pride of ASSYRIA will be brought down” (Zech. 10:10, 11). This prediction was uttered in 520 BC. But the ancient Assyrian empire had fallen in 612 BC, a hundred years earlier! Its fulfillment must therefore lie in the future.

A similar prediction about the fate of ASSYRIA is found in Zephaniah 2:13. Its Messianic context suggests an eschatological fulfillment; moreover, it is parallel to the prophecy in Zechariah which has never been fulfilled. Zephaniah equates the North with the area belonging to Assyria.

Parallel also to the data we have collected so far is the remarkable prophecy in Zechariah 5:8-11 where “Wickedness” (Gk. *anomia*, cp. “man of wickedness” in II Thess. 2:3, 8) is sent back to Babylon and “set on her own pedestal” (5:11). This forecast of Babylon active at the end-time is confirmed by the reference in Revelation 16:10-13 to the Euphrates River in connection with the kingdom of the “Beast.” There is an obvious parallel between the plagues which ravaged Pharaoh’s Egypt and those which strike the Beast’s kingdom at Babylon on the Euphrates (Rev. 16). It should also be remembered that the prophecies of Babylon never being inhabited again have not been fulfilled in the way demanded by Jeremiah 50, 51, etc. This might also be the moment to question the commonly held view that the seven-hilled city of Revelation 17:9 is really Rome. The “mountains” are defined as “seven rulers” (v. 10); similarly the waters “where the harlot sits” (v. 15) are not to be taken literally, but are symbolic — so we are told — of multitudes and nations and tongues (v. 15).³

Zephaniah describes the ASSYRIAN as **the king of the North** (2:13). Daniel 11 similarly describes **the king of the North** at war with the king of the South, until the king of the North finally places the Abomination of Desolation in the temple (11:31). I submit that Jesus understood Daniel 11:31 (against many commentators) to be an event of the *future* in Messianic times (Matt. 24:15-31), and Paul found the same Antichrist in Daniel 11:36. The king of the North of that verse is the king whose wicked career begins in Daniel 11:21. In Daniel 11:40 we find that “at the time of the end” the king of the South will collide with him (i.e. the king of the North — the only antecedent of vv. 36-39) and the king of the North (so described to avoid the ambiguous “he” which might refer to the king of the South) will storm against him (the king of the South). The same wicked king of the

³ Cp. Keil, *Commentary on Daniel*, p. 278: “The reference of the mountains to the seven hills of Rome is to be rejected, because it is difficult to understand how the heads can represent at one and the same time both mountains and kings. Mountains are, according to the prophetic view, symbols of world government (cf. Ps. 68:17; 76:5; Jer. 51:25; Ezek. 35:2).”

North “comes to his end” in Daniel 11:45 as does the wicked prince of Daniel 9:26. Neither reference can be to Titus in AD 70. He died naturally; and he was not “king of the North.”

Moreover the final king of the North meets his death at the time of the Great Tribulation and the resurrection (Dan. 12:1, 2). A quite specific piece of time information tells us that “from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the Abomination of Desolation is set up [11:31], there will be 1290 days” (Dan. 12:11). And the Abomination was set up by the wicked king of the North who does away with the daily sacrifice and desecrates the sanctuary in Daniel 11:31. The whole picture seems coherent when all the facts are gathered and the all-important ASSYRIAN material is not omitted. Crucially important are Jesus’ instructions for understanding the Abomination to which Daniel had referred. We follow him by finding that Abomination in Daniel 9:27, *and in 11:31 (12:11)*.

Francis Burnett dealt with the kings of the North and South at the Church of God Abrahamic Faith Ministers’ Conference of 1960, and Roy Johnson published several articles on the subject, notably “Prophecy for Today,” *The Restitution Herald*, May 24, 1949 and “The Latter Days,” *The Restitution Herald*, September 7, 1954. Johnson summed up his findings as follows:

“Thus will be born a super world-government, a composite of Babylon, Persia, and Greece, ruling the whole earth — truly a diverse ‘beast’ called Babylon, being located on the Euphrates River (Rev. 9:14). The ruler will be called the Assyrian because this ruler of Babylon, like Nebuchadnezzar of old, is **Assyrian by birth**. Isaiah 10:5, 25; 13; 14:23; 47, and Micah 5:5 confirm the fact that the super world-government will be located on the Euphrates and will be ruled over by a man of **Assyrian birth**. The ‘beast’ will have authority over the human race for 42 months and will make war with the saints.”

Conclusion

We have dealt with a fraction of the biblical material relating to the great end-time tyrant.⁴ The sheer volume of the biblical data suggests that the subject is of the utmost importance. We should

⁴ There is another remarkable prophecy of Assyria in Psalm 83:8. A confederation of **ten** Middle Eastern nations are here attacking Israel. The conspiring together “with one mind” reminds us of the ten kings of Revelation 17:12-14, who have “one purpose,” give their allegiance to the Beast and wage war with the Lamb at his coming.

remember that during the awful reign of the Antichrist “those who have insight will give understanding to many” (Dan. 11:33; cp. Dan. 12:3 and Isa. 53:11, where knowledge is indispensable for “making righteous the many”). May Bible expositors play their vital role in giving insight in every area of Christian teaching (including the important area of prophecy) to the many *now* and to many more in those terrible times which lie ahead. Our struggles to proclaim the Truth in the present evil age will be rewarded when we receive our “rest, when the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God” (2 Thess. 1:7), and when the Assyrian Antichrist will be eliminated by the brightness of Messiah’s glorious Advent. Prophecy is part of the “every word” by which man is to live, as a stimulus to holy living now in preparation for entrance into the Kingdom of the Age to Come, when the Messiah returns in glory. The chronology of such predictions is not given in Scripture and any application to contemporary events is speculative only. At least one can say that the political shape of the Middle East in 2002 makes possible fulfillment a reality. Who would have believed until recently that a small cadre of Middle Eastern origin could have so profoundly shaken the West?✧

Comments

“A few weeks ago it came into my mind to look up the Hebrew equivalent for the word *Logos* and after looking at *Davar* it seemed to me that the best word to describe it was PLAN. Now today I am reading your article ‘What’s in a Word?’ on your website and I was stopped in my tracks and decided to write you to say WOW!” — *Florida*

“I have been tremendously blessed with the *Focus on the Kingdom* newsletters. This most recent one (‘Mathematics Gone Mad’) was very clear and honest regarding the twisting of truth that plagues mainstream Christianity.” — *New York*

The annual Theological Conference at Atlanta Bible College will be Feb. 7-9, 2003. We expect participants from various countries, interaction with truth-seekers, instruction, rich fellowship. Accommodation is available at the Hampton Inn, Morrow, GA. The block rate of \$69 per night (1-4 persons) can be reserved by calling 770-968-8990 **by January 30** and mentioning Atlanta Bible College. The rate includes continental breakfast and shuttle service from Atlanta airport. Please arrange airport shuttle directly with the hotel. Shuttle from Hampton Inn to ABC will be provided. The conference will begin Fri., Feb. 7 at 9 a.m. and end Sunday with lunch. Cost of the conference is \$59 **before January 15th**, \$69 after. This price includes 3 lunches. Questions, please call 800-347-4261.