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ABOUT THE COVER

The new millennium has arrived; the Y2K bug didn’t bite us; and here we are, getting well into a brand new year. While those who put too much stock in predictions of turn-of-the-millennium disasters were proved wrong—not to worry. It isn’t over yet. The Lord has repeatedly warned us not to try to pinpoint the day or hour of His coming. But He did say to watch. And with his cover depiction for this issue of Israel My Glory, Art Director Tom Williams calls our attention to the Lord’s command for watchfulness. We do not know the day or hour, but we do know it is getting late. Therefore, we should take heed and live as those who redeem the time.

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Can Israel and Syria Make a Deal?

In spite of all the optimistic talk in Washington, Jerusalem, and Damascus about peace being on the horizon, there are serious questions about how much, in the long run, can actually be achieved. Behind all the public façades of civility lurk some exceptionally difficult issues. Though not often addressed in any detail by the participants or the press, these problems portend some rough going before any meaningful agreement can be reached.

Hafez al-Assad and the Golan Heights

For now, Syrian President Assad is still demanding Israel give back every inch of the Golan Heights. This would mean a return to the pre-1967 armistice lines and would put Syrian troops back into bunkers overlooking the Sea of Galilee and Israeli kibbutzim along the border. Assad’s tough stand against compromise with Israel may well be related to his political survival. He holds a very slim margin of power in his country; only 10% of the Syrian population is associated with his ruling party. If Assad wins big on a total return of the Golan, it will strengthen his hand and that of his son, who is being groomed as his successor. This is of utmost importance to a leader who is in ill health and presiding over a poverty-stricken people.

In Israel, massive demonstrations have been held protesting a Syrian takeover of the Golan Heights. A big issue is security. In 1973 Israel’s possession of the strategic Heights proved to be a buffer that gave the nation time to recover and repulse the initial onslaught of Syrian forces. Without the Golan, Syrian tanks would have penetrated the heartland of Israel before the Israeli Defense Force had time to respond.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has promised a national referendum on the issue. The vote will give Israelis an opportunity to express themselves on giving up all of the Golan. At the moment, public opinion polls are running 70% against to 30% in favor of relinquishing the plateau.

Displacement of Israeli Citizens

Thousands of Jewish people have made their homes on the Golan since 1967. In Katzrin, the largest of the Jewish communities on the Heights, emotions are in a state of near eruption. Fourteen thousand people, who have made a declaration of solidarity and have sent a message to Jerusalem declaring that they don’t intend to go anywhere, recently attended a town meeting in Katzrin. Katzrin is a beautiful, modern community, where these Israelis have put down roots, reared families, and settled in for life. Residents of the town, along with fellow citizens from numerous kibbutzim on the Golan, argue that they came at the request of the government and do not plan to be uprooted again.

There is another huge problem if Israel relinquishes the Golan. Assad has said that he plans to settle 500,000 Palestinian refugees in the areas vacated by Jews. Is it possible that these Palestinians, who claim the whole of Israel as their own, can be good neighbors? The Jewish people who will be expected to live on the border with the Syrians tend to think not.

Whose Hand Will Be on the Water Tap?

Another volatile issue in the ongoing saga of possible peace between Israel and Syria is the question of who will control the abundant water sources on the Golan. One site, Banyas, familiar to New Testament readers as Caesarea Philippi, where Peter made his great confession of the Christ, has a perpetual wall of water flowing out the side of a mountain. Should a deal be struck, Banyas and other rich sources of water will be turned over to the Syrians. Assad promises to be a benevolent distributor of water after he gets what he wants. The majority of Israelis are not so sure. They remember when Syria attempted to divert water from Israeli territory when Syria controlled the Golan before 1967. Only severe military action by Israel prevented it.

Water-hungry Turkish leaders also have their doubts. Recently Turkish representatives discussed the problem with the Israelis. It is no secret that there is no love lost between Turkey and Syria, and the Turkish leaders feel that water in the hands of a Syrian dictator is not a happy prospect.

Religious Commitment to the Golan

Perhaps the most emotional dilemma confronting negotiators is the religious commitment to possess the land given them by God. Many residents of the area regard their rights on the Golan in much the same way as religious settlers on the West Bank. To them, it is not the West Bank; it is Judea and Samaria. Thus they firmly believe that they have a biblical mandate to stay put. Religious residents of the Golan make the same argument. They point out that the area was, since ancient times, the property of the tribe of Dan. Therefore, they see themselves as possessing a title deed from as far back as the days of Moses. Indeed, there is abundant evidence of the Jewish presence on the Golan Heights. Many ruins of ancient synagogues have been discovered there.

The major religious parties in Ehud Barak’s coalition have already served notice that they will leave his government and work to bring it down if a complete withdrawal arrangement is made with the Syrians. No assurances of money from the U.S. and the West will solve this problem. These people are definitely not for sale. They see the Golan as their birthright.

There is no question about it: Ehud Barak, American President Bill Clinton, and Hafez al-Assad have their work cut out for them. For Assad and President Clinton, time is running out. The question for Ehud Barak is how much latitude the Israeli electorate will give him before saying, “It’s a go” or “That’s enough.”
Herzig Tour
AD by BSC
There is a wonderful old spiritual that tells a classic story embodying the great issues set forth in the book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar has built his golden image and has commanded everyone in his kingdom, including the captive Israelites, to fall down on their faces before the idol when a signal is given. But three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, refuse to fall down. So a furnace is heated “seven times greater than it ought to be,” and the three young captives are cast into the flames. When the king
The Spirit of God is prompting us to look and learn from those who have gone before us.

The immediate aftermath of Daniel’s night with the lions, we are told that King Darius made a decree.

“I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and steadfast forever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end” (Dan. 6:26).

What an encouraging revelation this is. For after the greatest imperial forces on the planet had been pitted against them, the God of these simple men of faith had the last word. They not only endured, but they emerged victorious. Darius was right. History confirms that his kingdom would be devastated, but God’s kingdom “shall not be destroyed.”

Now we arrive at the last days. And what do we see? Little Israel is again under siege by the greatest powers and personalities ever mustered on this planet. However, Daniel chapters 7 through 12 have recorded the history of the final epoch before it has even unfolded and provide big pictures of what lies ahead. We cannot, therefore, neglect to study the prophetic portraits set before us in Daniel’s amazing record.

Antichrist Will Lead an International Colossus

A stabilizing factor in dealing successfully with the temper of our times is the Lord’s provision of a broad, historical perspective. In the visions of the golden image and the ravenous beasts that are seen devouring one another in chapter 7, we are given a concise description of the four Gentile entities that would rise and fall. Of these, three have come and gone. Babylon, Medo-Persia, and the Grecian Empire have
gone to their graves. Rome, the fourth and final ancient power described in Daniel’s prophecy, awaits an inevitable resurrection.

For centuries, biblical scholars have examined Daniel’s writings and have drawn parallels between the text of these Scriptures and the historical record. At this point, the final form of planetary imperialism manifested in revived Rome, these teachers have explained, alone awaits fulfillment. And while the details of the final era are laid out in Daniel, until very recent times their historical fulfillment seemed somewhat obscure. But here we are, in the infancy of the new millennium, and we are being allowed to see what these men did not. Like pieces of an intricate puzzle, things now appear to be falling into place.

Western Europe has stirred and is coming together as one entity at an incredible rate. Politically, economically, and militarily, Europe is beginning once again to dominate the Western World. In its quest to maintain international relevance, it appears that the United States is running to ride with the new colossus. The big word today, one almost universally accepted by Western political leaders, is globalization—a one-world worldview. National sovereignty is being deliberately eroded in the name of becoming a major player on the world stage. Even grave military decisions are being based on how they will impact the international marketplace.

While the West is coalescing around Europe, other global powers are asserting themselves. Russia still has monumental imperialistic ambitions and refuses to play second fiddle to the likes of the U.S. or Europe. In actuality, as we are told in the Scriptures, the two giants are heading for a collision. In addition, China is becoming an increasingly threatening force to be reckoned with. One can be certain that all the concessions being made to the tyrannical leaders in Beijing because of the potential Chinese market will not sate their appetite for dominion.

A struggle is being waged among major Western leaders. At issue is the question of who will lead. Beneath the politically correct façade of civility lurks the obsession to come out on top. Arguments along this line have already surfaced among European leaders. Where will it end, and who will, in fact, come out on top of the heap? The answer is found in Daniel and further clarified in other passages. A personage named Antichrist waits in the wings for the appropriate moment to make his appearance. As the world becomes an increasingly chaotic and unsafe place, people hunger for someone who will take control. Satan has that someone in mind.

It is regrettable that irresponsible, self-appointed, prophetic gurus have demeaned the subject of the Antichrist by repeated attempts to name him and sensationalize his life and times. The Scriptures have enough to say about him and, for our encouragement, how he will be dealt with.

Israel at the Epicenter

A three-day conference was held in California last November under the banner of “Middle Eastern Christians in the Islamic Context: Lessons From the Past, Prospects for the Future.” The leadership consisted of religious theologians and personalities who are all convinced that a “New Israel,” namely, the church, has replaced the seed of Jacob. Islamic participants, of course, believe that both Israel and the church have been sidelined in favor of Islam and that an alliance of sorts with Islam is the only religiously correct position to take.

It goes without saying that in the past few years, Muslim leaders have campaigned vigorously to mute Christian support for Israel by forging a vocal union with religious groups that espouse a kind of theological anti-Semitism. In the minds of these groups, Israel’s resurrection in the twentieth century has been a theological embarrassment and has raised a considerable number of questions among their constituents. Joining Muslims to take a slap at Israel must seem like an opportunity to enhance their credibility and demonstrate unbiased compassion.

At issue here is not personal salvation or discriminatory practices against Muslim or Arab peoples. Responsible evangelicals believe that Muslims and Arabs need to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior—and that Israelis and Jewish people need to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. This conviction, however, does not relegate God’s program for Israel’s national destiny to the dustbin of history. Any serious study of the book of Daniel makes this exceedingly clear. God is not through with Israel. Thus, if one sincerely wishes to make sense of prophecy or history, Israel must be given its place. There is no other viable option. As a matter of fact, Scripture has much to say, Old Testament and New, about rejecting or abusing Israel and the Jewish people.

The Fifth and Final Kingdom

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and
they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14).

Those who interpret Scripture in a literal and historical manner have a significant advantage over those who don’t. Those who don’t, hold a kind of gossamer view of scriptural texts, including texts related to prophecy. A premier expression of this attitude is to claim, with a disparaging chuckle, to be a “pan-dispensationalist.” That is to say, everything will pan out all right in the end. That may get a laugh and defer further inquiry, but it does not address the issue or answer questions that hosts of believers want to have answered.

The Bible, thankfully, is a Book of certainties. If it is allowed to speak for itself, it will provide satisfactory conclusions. With respect to the question of the essential elements of the coming Kingdom, there is no reasonable room for misinterpretation. One may deny it, as some choose to do. Denial, however, does not negate what the Scriptures have to say about the King or His Kingdom. There will be a future theocratic Kingdom. The Messiah will reign in triumph from Jerusalem over reconciled Israel and a subdued Gentile world. Only the redeemed Jews and Gentiles will enter the Kingdom age, during which “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). If we grasp this, the deterioration of modern society that we are witnessing, if not less painful to accept, is more easily understood. We are moving toward an objective consummation. God is competent and in control.

**What’s in It for Me?**

This seems to be the question of the hour. Members of the Me generation are compulsively asking this of God (if they believe at all) and the society that has spawned them. The query is not altogether foreign to the world of believers. You will remember that the apostle Peter asked the Lord the same thing. “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee. What shall we have, therefore?” (Mt. 19:27). Jesus was careful to give His somewhat spiritually underdeveloped follower a sensitive answer.

The material covered in Daniel’s treatise personalizes some otherwise complex matters and speaks to what we may legitimately expect for ourselves. Here are very broad prophetic strokes that give us magnificent panoramas of the future and direct us to spiritual higher ground.

1. A godless world will become increasingly more godless.
2. The Antichrist will appear and, for a brief period of time, wreak havoc on Israel and among the nations.
3. Israel is the central focal point of all prophetic revelation. Keep an eye on Israel, and you can know approximately where the hands on the prophetic clock are positioned.
4. The King is coming. And when He does, He will set things right.

Consequently, what we will learn from the articles to follow will flesh out these truths and offer us the courage, as it did our eloquent, spiritual forebears, to go struttin’ on through the fire.

Elwood McQuaid is the Executive Director of The Friends of Israel.
The United States of America clearly leads the world. From technology to debauchery, this one nation stands above the rest. But it will not continue forever. History clearly teaches that empires rise and fall. America’s two-hundred-year history is brief compared to Egypt, whose kingdoms endured for almost three thousand years. What is the reason for such ebb and flow of nations? The answer is simple: Kingdoms rise and fall because God is in control.

The prophet Daniel recorded amazing prophecies of God’s sovereign control of history. He lived during two great kingdoms, the Babylonian and Persian empires. He was a political statesman whose career spanned the demise of the former and the rise of the latter. Daniel was also a prophet. Through him, God revealed to His people Israel a vast vision of the future. In the following two dreams, Daniel recorded the rise and fall of all human empires and the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom.

**THE PROPHECY Delivered**

The King’s Dream—Daniel Chapter 2. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon faced a night of turmoil that continued into the next day (Dan. 2:1-30). A frightening dream kept haunting him. His counselors offered to interpret the dream if the king would tell them its details. The king refused. The wise men would have to prove their wisdom by providing both the dream and its interpretation—or die. The advisors realized their doom. But their hopes awakened when word came from a young Jewish man who offered to reveal the contents of the dream as well as its interpretation, but only because his God had revealed it to him. As Daniel approached the king, Nebuchadnezzar listened in utter amazement.

In the dream stood a huge statue (Dan. 2:31-35). Daniel described it thoroughly. Its head was made of pure gold, shining in all its splendor. It had a chest and arms of silver. The belly and thighs were made of bronze. The statue had iron legs, and the feet were a combination of iron and clay. Suddenly a stone smashed the statue’s feet, causing the entire image to crumble and be blown away. The stone then became a great mountain that filled the entire world.

Then Daniel told the meaning (Dan. 2:36-45). Daniel declared...
that Nebuchadnezzar himself, the king of Babylon, was the head of gold. The remaining parts of the statue represented successive kingdoms whose identities in history are now known. The silver chest stood for Medo-Persia, the bronze thighs for Greece, and the iron feet for Rome. The mixed iron and clay represented a kingdom that would be divided—strong yet fragile. The Lord apparently revealed a twofold appearance of the Roman Empire. There is a difference between the Rome of old (the iron legs) and the Rome to come (the iron and clay feet). The strong yet fragile feet represent the second phase of the Roman Empire.

This dream recorded a humanistic vision of mankind. The governments of the world seemed like a colossal statue of man’s greatness. Yet the progress of that greatness diminished. As the value of the metal decreased, its strength increased, except for the feet. Humanity’s achievements are top-heavy with pride and will eventually collapse. The dream also revealed that the Gentile world would, for a time, rule the people of Israel. Israel could have been the head; it has instead become the tail (Dt. 28:13, 44). Disobedience caused this reversal, but it is temporary. Notice how the dream continues: “The God of heaven [will] set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2:44).

The stone that smashed the kingdoms of mankind represents the Kingdom of God. This cataclysmic event will signal the end of man’s rebellious kingdom, and God’s righteous reign on earth through His Messiah will begin. Daniel ended his prophecy to the king with these words: “God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter; and the dream is certain, and the interpretation of it sure” (Dan. 2:45).

**The Prophet’s Dream—Daniel Chapter 7.** Not only did the pagan king have a dream, but the holy prophet Daniel experienced one also (Dan. 7:1-8). He saw four huge beasts coming up from the wind-tossed sea. The first was like a lion with eagle’s wings. The second appeared to be a bear with three ribs in its mouth. The third resembled a leopard with four wings on its back. The fourth beast was incomparable to any other. Daniel could only describe it as “dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly” (Dan. 7:7). He also noted that it had iron teeth and trampled the rest of the beasts. It did have one notable feature—ten horns. Yet, while Daniel was watching, another little horn emerged and uprooted three horns. This “little horn” had two human features: two eyes and a boastful mouth.

Daniel’s dream also included a scene in heaven (Dan. 7:9-14). On a blazing throne sat the Ancient of days. With thousands of beings attending Him, a judgment scene unfolded. Then the little horn’s boastful words were heard, and the fourth beast was slain and burned with fire. Daniel then saw a person, the “Son of man,” standing before the Ancient of days. This one was to receive authority over God’s kingdom, “that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:14). Daniel clearly saw the Messiah, who would be both human and divine.

These images perplexed the prophet (Dan. 7:15-28). A heavenly messenger provided the interpretation. The four beasts symbolized four kings and their kingdoms. The ten horns of the last beast represented ten kings. The little horn will be another king who will oppose God and oppress His people. He will change established times and laws. Yet his persecution of the saints will last only for a designated period of time. Then God’s heavenly court will convene and condemn the great persecutor. He will be destroyed forever. Finally, “the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him” (Dan. 7:27).

**Humanity’s achievements are top-heavy with pride and will eventually collapse.**

God revealed similar truths to both Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel. The king’s dream visualized human empires in an imposing statue representing man’s greatness. The prophet’s dream revealed God’s viewpoint of these humanistic attempts at selfish rule—wild beasts. Even the level of animals descends from the stately lion to an ugly, unknown creature. The two dreams
share the identical interpretation from two different perspectives. The four metals of the statue and the four beasts from the sea represent the same kingdoms. Babylon ruled from 626 to 539 B.C. Then Medo-Persia dominated the world from 539 to 330 B.C. The Greek empire of Alexander the Great defeated the Persians and ruled from 330 to 146 B.C. Then Rome gained world power and ruled until the western branch of the empire fell in 476 A.D., and the eastern branch fell in 1453. In an amazing way, God unveiled the future to Daniel’s generation, and we have the privilege of looking back on prophecy fulfilled in history.

**THE PROPHECY To Be Fulfilled**

A final stage of the Roman Empire will appear near the end of Gentile domination of world history. The stereoscopic prophecies painted this future empire as two figures: first, as iron and clay feet having ten toes (2:33, 41-43) and second, as an indescribable beast having ten horns and one little horn (Dan. 7:7-8, 19-25). No historical evidence exists that matches these descriptions. When the elements of this prophecy are compared with other Scriptures, it is clear that the final Rome is yet to come.

Notice the following parallels: Jesus Christ referred to Daniel’s prophecies as future. He predicted that “Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk. 21:24). That unique phrase, “the times of the Gentiles,” refers to the period of history that began when Jerusalem was conquered by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Since then, Gentile domination of Jerusalem has continued and will do so in the future. Only at Jesus’ return will the holy city return to the unqualified control of the Jewish people under their Messiah.

Jesus also described the great event after the future Tribulation. “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory” (Lk. 21:27). He applied the phrase from Daniel 7:13, “the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven,” to Himself! Jesus Christ, the Son of man, will someday return from heaven and establish His Kingdom on earth. (See also Revelation 19:11-21.)

The apostle John introduced the last book of the Bible with words from the prophet Daniel, “Behold, he cometh with clouds” (Rev. 1:7). The book of Revelation ends with a description much like Daniel’s dream. Notice the mention of thrones, a court for judgment, and the reign of the saints in Revelation 20:4. “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them…and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

The New Testament supplies more details about the ten horns and the little horn of Daniel’s dream. Revelation describes the ten horns as ten kings, correlating with Daniel’s prophecy. “And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings one hour with the beast” (Rev. 17:12). (See also 12:3 and 13:1.) During the future Tribulation period, ten kings will emerge simultaneously and support one who will rule the world. That one is known as Daniel’s “little horn.” John referred to him as “the beast” (Rev. 13:1). Paul called him “the man of sin” and “that wicked one,” who is destined for destruction by the Lord (2 Th. 2:3, 8-9). This Satan-inspired enemy of God is also known as the “antichrist” (1 Jn. 2:18). Daniel’s time reference (a time, times, and half a time) is repeated in Revelation 12:14 and equated with other time designations (1260 days in Rev. 11:3 and 12:6; forty-two months in Rev. 11:2 and 13:5). These all indicate three and one-half years—exactly one-half of the seven-year Tribulation period.

While no one knows when these prophecies will be fulfilled, ominous signs in the present world may foreshadow this coming, evil empire. Europe’s fragmentation is giving way to unification similar to ancient Rome’s. Technology and the Internet are binding the people of many nations together, and formerly independent economies have grown interdependent. Meanwhile, Israel grows increasingly isolated in world opinion, while Christians endure persecution as the new, silent minority. These shadows portend a future reality that matches Daniel’s prophecy of a new world order, led by the “little horn,” against the God of heaven.

God spoke through Daniel to give comfort and hope to His people in exile. Today that Word continues to enlighten and encourage believers to be watchful for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is in control. The times of the Gentiles will one day give way to the Kingdom of the Messiah! In the future time of Tribulation, God will pour out His wrath upon the great statue and the beast that have stood in defiance against Him. God will then send His Son to declare victory. “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

William L. Krewson is a Professor at the Institute of Jewish Studies.
Recently a spate of books have been speculating on various end-time scenarios involving the person of the future Antichrist and what is referred to as the Tribulation period. While these scenarios are somewhat similar, many variations still exist concerning the rise and demise of this final end-time ruler. Writing 2500 years ago, Daniel supplied a brief sketch of the character and career of this king who “shall do according to his will” (11:36).

The prophet Daniel, exiled in Babylon almost all his life, was shown by the Lord the future of his people Israel. In the revelations recorded in Daniel chapters 2 and 7 through 9, Daniel learned that because of their sin, the people Israel would be kept under Gentile domination for “seventy sevens” of years. These Gentile nations were pictured as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, after which the Messiah would destroy these kingdoms and institute a righteous kingdom with Israel back in its place of blessing. After the fall of Babylon to King Cyrus of Persia (539 B.C.), Daniel received another revelation concerning Israel in the “latter days” (10:14). This one caused him much anguish (10:16) because it depicted severe persecution for Israel.
From Daniel’s point in history in 536 B.C., the revelation of Daniel chapter 11 was totally prophetic. But from our vantage point in the year 2000, the prophecy of Daniel 11:1-35 is historical fact. It has already been fulfilled, with 11:36-45 yet to be fulfilled. The main focus of Daniel 11 is the rivalry between the king of the south (the Ptolemies of Egypt) and the king of the north (the Seleucids of Syria) over the land of Israel during the time of Greek rule (323-198 B.C.). This culminated in the person of the Seleucid despot Antiochus IV, described in 11:21 as a “vile person.” Antiochus IV sought to Hellenize Judea by outlawing the practice of Judaism and proclaiming himself as “Zeus manifest.” To that end, he erected an image of Zeus in the Temple in Jerusalem in 167 B.C. and demanded that everyone worship the image. This is “the abomination that maketh desolate,” referred to in Daniel 11:31. The Jews resisted this Hellenization, resulting in the Maccabean revolt that reclaimed the Temple three years later and produced the Feast of the Dedication, commonly known as Hanukkah.

Daniel 11:21-35, describing the persecution of the Jews under Antiochus IV, relates to 11:36-45 in that Antiochus is a type of the Antichrist who is to come. Just as Antiochus persecuted the Jews and magnified himself as God, so will the Antichrist. And just as Antiochus was eventually defeated, so the Antichrist will come to an inglorious end.

The Character of the Antichrist
(Daniel 11:36-39)

1. He Will Arrogantly Blaspheme (v. 36). While it would seem most likely that 11:36-45 would continue to prophesy concerning Antiochus IV, the descriptions in these verses do not correspond to Antiochus’s religion or career. Since the king in these verses is distinguished from the kings of the north and south (11:40), he must, therefore, be a king from a different region. Since an analogous figure, the “little horn,” is found elsewhere in Daniel as the final leader of rebellion against God, the king here must be none other than Antichrist himself.

Antichrist...will conquer Israel, erect an image of himself in the Temple, and demand the worship of the world.

As pictured in Daniel 7:8, 11-20, Antichrist will exalt himself above God, which is blasphemy. But he will not restrict himself to only reviling the true God; he will exalt himself above all gods. This pictures a situation similar to Revelation 17, when the Beast (representing the Antichrist) turns on the harlot (representing pagan religion) and destroys her in order to set himself up as God, to be worshiped alone. The sense is that the Antichrist will ridicule all known religion and proclaim something new, with himself at its head.

2. He Will Exalt Himself as God (v. 37). The Antichrist will disregard the “gods of his fathers” (meaning traditional worship) and will initiate something previously unheard of. He will also disregard the “desire of women.” The interpretive question in this phrase is whether it means that the Antichrist will hate women or hate what women desire. If the verse means the latter, it suggests he will hate a child, either Tammuz in the pagan context or Messiah in the Jewish. Since the context of verse 37 concerns Antichrist’s exaltation of himself over all gods, whatever the “desire of women” is will somehow relate to this self-exaltation above all gods. Consequently, it fits better to interpret this “desire” as the Messiah, who would fall into the same category as “other gods.” This also correlates with Revelation 13:15, which pictures the Antichrist setting up an image of himself in the Temple in Jerusalem and demanding worship—a future “abomination of desolation” (Mt. 24:15).

3. He Will Worship Military Power (vv. 38-39). While Antichrist will exalt himself above all gods, he will, nevertheless, worship a god—“the god of fortresses.” This may mean that as an arrogant dictator, he will trust only in military might. Or, as verse 39 implies, he will trust in a “foreign god” (Satan himself [see Rev. 13]), whom he will proclaim to reveal incarnately (as Antiochus did of Zeus). Either way, the result will be military conquest. As pictured in Daniel 7:8, the Antichrist (“little horn”) will uproot three horns of the ten-horned kingdom/beast, which represents the worldwide Roman Empire. This suggests that the ten-kingdom final form of the Roman Empire will already be in place before Antichrist appears and makes his move to dominate. The world war that will erupt from this effort will produce the effects pictured by the four horsemen of the Apocalypse (Rev. 6:1-8).
Thus the character of the Antichrist can be summarized as one who will try to establish himself as God, seeking to rule the world strictly for his own glory and desire for power. In doing so, he will deride all known religion and proclaim a new order for the world, with himself at its head. All who do not submit will be crushed. As revealed in Revelation 13, the Antichrist ultimately will receive his power from Satan, who will seek to rule the world through him much as God the Father rules the world through his Son, Jesus Christ.

The Career of the Antichrist
(Daniel 11:40-45)

1. Invasion of the Middle East
(vv. 40-43). Verse 40 places these events “at the time of the end.” This most easily describes the last half of the seven-year Tribulation period. Antichrist will invade the Middle East and conquer Israel, breaking the covenant he confirmed with the nation (Dan. 9:27). He will capture half the city of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:2), including the Temple (Rev. 11:1-2), and will try to exterminate the rest of the people of Israel. But God will protect them (Rev. 12:6, 13-16). It is significant that Antichrist is distinguished from the king of the north and the king of the south. Although he is typical of Antiochus IV, a king of the north (Syria), he will not be Syrian. Since the ten-horned beast of Daniel 7 and Revelation 12-13 represents the Roman Empire, Antichrist most likely will be a Westerner who will invade Israel in order to proclaim himself God in the Temple. In reaction to this invasion, Egypt and Syria will counterattack. Egypt and North Africa will fall before him, and his troops will occupy much of the Middle East.

2. The End of the Antichrist
(vv. 44-45). Not only will Antichrist’s invasion of Israel spark resistance from the Middle Eastern nations, but other nations to the north and east apparently will come to attack him. This gathering of the armies of the world is reflected in Revelation 16:12-16. There the sixth bowl judgment will open the way for the kings of the east to move toward Israel. Then the “three unclean spirits, like frogs” (demons) will perform supernatural signs to gather all the nations of the world to Israel, where they will camp in the valley of Armageddon. Apparently these armies initially will gather in Israel to oppose the Antichrist. But through demonic influence, they will unite instead to fight against Israel and the true and living God.

As pictured in Daniel 11:45, Antichrist will pitch his tent on the “holy mountain,” the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. There he will come to his end. The Lord Jesus Himself will descend, destroy the armies at Armageddon, and stand on the Mount of Olives to rescue the Jewish people in Jerusalem who, by this time, have recognized Him as the Messiah (Zech. 12:1-14; 14:1-5; Rev. 19:11-21). Thus the stone made “without hands,” pictured in Daniel 2:44-45, will destroy this Gentile rule over Israel and crush this last-ditch Satanic rebellion against God. Then God will set up a Kingdom of righteousness on earth that will endure for 1000 years (Rev. 20).

Thus the Antichrist will use Western military might to invade Israel and the Middle East. There he will conquer Israel, erect an image of himself in the Temple, and demand the worship of the world. In doing so, he will blaspheme not only the true God, but also all other gods, in order to establish a dictatorship that worships him alone. Although nations will resist him, demonic influences will gather these nations together in Israel to fight against the true God. There the Antichrist and the armies of the world will be destroyed.

Conclusion

Since Adam fell and lost man’s God-given authority to rule the world, Satan has led the nations in opposition to the work of the Lord. As Psalm 2 says, the nations rage against the rule of the Lord’s Son, the Messiah. Consequently, the Lord must establish His righteous rule by force, and He must rule with a “rod of iron.”

The world has entered a new millennium. Yet it is evident that the nations do not honor the Messiah as Lord. When Antichrist appears, a selfish, sinful world will readily accept him as God in a final attempt to break free from the rule of the true Messiah. The Bible is very clear that these nations will not succeed. The rebellion will be crushed, and the Lord will rule from Mount Zion.

Much has been published concerning the coming of Antichrist. He is a formidable figure in Scripture, and his prophesied reign of terror often generates fear. But there is no need to fear. God is sovereign. Though Satan, Antichrist, and the whole world shake their fists at Him, He laughs (Ps. 2:4). Their fury is insignificant; their rebellion, absurd. As Daniel wrote, he (Antichrist) “shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done” (11:36). For all Antichrist’s claims and all his conquests, he still will be utterly and irrevocably subject to God.

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have a glorious tomorrow; and He consoled him with three important truths: There will be a tribulation for the nations; there will be a resurrection of the dead; and there will be a glorification of all who lead others to righteousness.

Tribulation for the Proud

Daniel was told in an earlier vision (9:24-27) that seven years of tribulation will come upon Israel:

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week [prophetic time comprised of seven years] he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate (9:27).

Thus the “week” will start when a future world ruler known as Antichrist confirms a seven-year peace covenant with Israel. (See Randall Price’s article, p. 20.) The period is divided into two parts of three and one-half years each. The first half, referred to as the “beginning of sorrows,” is compared to the early labor birth pains of a woman (Mt. 24:8). The second half is called the “great tribulation” (Mt. 24:21). Although Israel will enjoy peace for a while, it tragically will turn out to be a false peace.

There are some distinguishing features associated with the Great Tribulation.

There is a Jewish tradition that asks, “Why is Israel likened unto an olive? Because as the olive does not yield its oil until it is pressed, so the people of Israel do not repent until they are afflicted” (Talmud Menahot 53b). Tribulation! Affliction! Sufferings! Nobody wants them. Yet sometimes they are the only way to get our attention.

According to the Word of God, a time is coming when the Lord will get the attention of the nation of Israel by pressing it through unprecedented suffering. And when that time is ended, Israel will shine with faith like the noonday sun to enjoy a future that is wonderful, forever sure, and full of God’s promised blessings. Daniel chapter 12 reveals what will happen during this time referred to as the last days.

While exiled in Babylon, the prophet Daniel received a vision that distressed him greatly. Since it concerned the destiny of his nation, Israel, he desperately wanted to know its meaning. God assured him that though the immediate future would be dismal, Israel will
And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days (12:11).

The first feature comprises three specific events that will occur in the middle of the seven years, causing the peace to end abruptly and ushering in the Great Tribulation. The first event will be the desecration of the Temple, probably by the setting up of an idol. The Bible clearly teaches that a Temple will exist in Jerusalem during this seven-year Tribulation period. Next will be the order to stop the animal sacrifices offered at the Temple. The third event, according to 12:1, involves the archangel Michael, who will stand up to protect Israel from the persecution of the Antichrist and his cohorts:

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people, and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book (12:1).

Those three events will start the time clock for Israel’s last three and one-half years of great and unparalleled trouble.

The next feature is a strict time frame consisting of 1,260 days. According to Bible scholars, the calendar in biblical times was based on a lunar system having 360 days rather than the 365 we have today. Using the lunar calendar, 1,260 days equals three and one-half years.

Amazingly, Daniel heard why all this suffering will be allowed to afflict his beloved people. He is told in 12:7 that the purpose is to break Israel’s hard heart: “and when he shall have accomplished the breaking up [scattering] of the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.” The verb for “breaking up” is the same verb used in Psalm 2:9, which explains how the heathen nations are like pottery vessels being dashed into pieces. Over the centuries, unbelieving Israel has displayed a self-sufficiency by trusting in itself for righteousness, national protection, and life in the hereafter.

An old Jewish axiom states that “there is no suffering without iniquity.” While this is not always true, it suits this situation regarding Israel. Daniel was told that the purpose for the Great Tribulation is to break Israel’s pride—a trait that constitutes rebellion against God. Once this rebellion is removed, the nation’s suffering will end, and God’s purpose will have been fulfilled:

Many shall be purified, and made white, and tested, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand (12:10).

Thus Daniel is told in verse 10 that Israel’s suffering will have a twofold effect: It will purify some hearts and harden others against God. Many Jewish people will be purged and purified by their suffering. Others will refuse to believe and will not understand why God would do this to them.

Certainly nobody wants tribulation, but mankind is often too stubborn to come to God for redemption without it. Unfortunately, many people need to have their hearts broken in the sight of God before their knees will bend before Him. The ancient rabbis wrote in the Talmud that “the people of Israel do not repent until they are afflicted.” Indeed, the Lord will do what it takes to get His people to cease trusting in their own works of righteousness and to accept the righteousness provided through Jesus, the Messiah.

**Resurrection of the Dead**

Daniel was told of the tumultuous storm that will soon come upon Israel. All this bad news would make even the strongest in faith flounder and question God. God loved His prophet, Daniel. So in chapter 12, He assured him of the hope of a physical resurrection of the dead.

During Jesus’ time on earth there was a Jewish sect called the Sadducees. Among their distinct beliefs was the denial of the resurrection. They claimed that the soul
became extinct when the body died, and death was the final end for human beings. The truth of the matter, however, is that the hope of the resurrection is predicted in passages of the Old Testament such as Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:13, 14; and, most specifically, in Daniel 12:2:

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2).

Here Daniel is told that many will awake to life, while others will rise to shame and contempt. Quite simply, this means that some will rise from the dead and be with God, and others will rise and will not be in His presence. During the Great Tribulation many of the righteous will suffer and even die because of their faith in God and their obedience to Him. Daniel is told that for justice to be served, the dead must be raised so that all men can receive their just reward. However, each group will rise at different times. It is taught that the righteous will rise at the end of the Great Tribulation, and the wicked will rise at least 1000 years later to stand before God in judgment (Rev. 20:5, 11-15).

For now, Daniel was told in verse 1 that God promises deliverance (either in life or through death) to His people, whose names are found in the book: “and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (12:1b). There is a tradition associated with the celebration of Rosh Hashanah (Israel’s civil New Year). It states that on Rosh Hashanah, God opens three books in heaven: one for the wicked, one for the semirighteous, and one for the righteous. Exodus 32:32 mentions that there is a book in heaven in which names are recorded. The New Testament is more specific and calls it the “book of life” (Rev. 20:15). During the Great Tribulation many Jewish people will accept Jesus as their Messiah and Savior and will become martyrs because of their faith. Therefore, Daniel was encouraged with the fact that the saved will have their names recorded in the book of life.

Glorification for the Wise

Daniel must have wondered how all this would end. The final words of the vision revealed that faithfulness will be rewarded for eternity. Two groups will be recognized: those who are wise (literally, “the teachers”) and those who witness, who turn many to righteousness:

And they that be wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever (12:3).

During the Great Tribulation some Jewish people will understand the message of salvation in the Messiah, Jesus, and will share it with others. Because of their steadfast faithfulness to the Lord in the dark days of persecution and opposition, God will grant them the privilege of shining forth the glory of God like the stars forever and ever (Mt. 13:43).

Final Admonition

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased (Dan. 12:4).

The angel that had been showing Daniel these things then turned away from the subject of the righteous and wicked of the Great Tribulation to address the prophet Daniel himself. At this point Daniel was old and had lived through many difficult times. Yet the angel assured him that he need not worry about the fate of his beloved people, Israel. God will fulfill His divine purpose and, in faithfulness, watch over Israel.

Daniel is instructed to “seal the book, even to the time of the end” (v. 4). This meant that this final vision completed the revelation of the book of Daniel. His responsibility was to preserve it for future generations. He was told that as the seven-year period approaches, many subsequent generations will study the vision and understand more of its meaning.

Finally, God told Daniel, “But go thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days” (12:13). He was to go his way, to his work and walk of life, without further inquiry. These events were to occur after his death. Daniel was not to worry, because the vision ended with the consummating truth of the hope of the resurrection from the dead.

Though the people of Israel are destined to experience great future trauma, the sovereign God of the universe will give them a glorious tomorrow. There will be a Tribulation, but its design to purge Israel will be accomplished. Then there will be a resurrection of the dead, and the righteous, like Daniel, will be rewarded with glory, because God is faithful. The practical side of these three truths is a motivation to godly living, even when godliness brings persecution.

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God's Future Program for Israel

No book ever written is as enigmatic, yet essential, to unlocking the mysteries of God’s future program for Israel than the book of Daniel. The late seminary president and author Alva J. McClain once declared, “With reference to its importance, I am convinced that in the predictions of [Daniel’s] Seventy Weeks, we have the indispensable chronological key to all New Testament prophecy.”

Daniel’s great prophecy of the seventy weeks (Dan. 9:24-27) is key to understanding the larger program of future restoration that God has promised to national Israel (Isa. 40-66, Jer. 30-33, Ezek. 33-48).

Daniel received the prophecy near the end of Israel’s captivity in Babylon. Because of disobedience, God had stripped the nation of its homeland and had sent it into exile. When the Persian Empire overthrew the Babylonians in 539 B.C., as prophesied, Daniel realized that the day of Israel’s release was at hand (Isa. 41:25-26; 44:26-45:3; Dan. 5:25-31). He had read the prophecies of his contemporary, Jeremiah, who had said the exile would last for seventy years, and he began to petition God (Jer. 25:11; 29:10, 14; Dan. 9:2). Recognizing that Israel’s restoration depended on her national repentance, Daniel interceded for his nation through a penitent prayer that entreated the Lord to restore Jerusalem and the Temple Mount (Dan. 9:3-19).
Daniel apparently expected immediate and full restoration at the conclusion of the captivity. However, he learned differently. The angel Gabriel arrived and revealed that complete fulfillment of the restoration program would be yet future and progressive. Gabriel revealed this by describing specific divisions of time, each involving specific events designed to prepare Israel for the final fulfillment of God’s restoration program.

Discerning Daniel’s Divisions

Gabriel revealed that it would take seventy weeks to accomplish six goals:

- These “weeks” are weeks of seven years each. According to verses 25 through 27, the 490 years (70 x 7) are divided: There is one period of seven weeks (49 years), one period of sixty-two weeks (434 years), and one remaining week (7 years):
- Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah, the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two [62] weeks...And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary (9:25-26).
- This passage is widely held to be Messianic, because the death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans came directly after the 7 + 62 weeks—or at the end of the 69th week (483 years). That leaves one remaining week:
- And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate (9:27).
- The last week of seven years will begin when “he shall confirm the covenant.” This has not yet occurred in history. When it does, however, a rebuilt Temple will then be desecrated during the coming Tribulation period.

The Prophetic Plan for Israel

Some commentators argue that God’s goals in 9:24 were all fulfilled in the First Advent of Messiah. They view the entire seventy weeks as having been fulfilled consecutively, without interruption, within the first century. However, if all seventy weeks have elapsed, then where was the end to Israel’s captivity? This view must find an end to the exile in temporary Jewish revolts, all of which were unsuccessful and ultimately led to the destruction of the city, the Temple, and further exile. This, of course, offers no solution to Daniel’s specific petition for his people’s restoration.

Furthermore, the climax of Gabriel’s promise to Daniel was that the one who will one day desolate the Temple will himself be desolated completely. This did not occur historically with the Roman general Titus, who destroyed the Second Temple. Rather, he and his emperor father, Vespasian, enjoyed the triumph of parading the Temple vessels through the streets of Rome.

On the other hand, a number of factors support the argument that it will require both advents of Messiah to accomplish God’s goals. First, the seventy weeks prophecy must be fulfilled exclusively with Daniel’s people and city—national Israel and the city of Jerusalem (9:24). No universal “salvation history” is being addressed here, but the future history of the Jewish people in their historic land. Because a Jewish remnant did, in fact, return to Judah as a nation and resettled the land and rebuilt Jerusalem, in direct answer to Daniel’s prayer, and because a Jewish Messiah did come to the land of Israel to “make reconciliation for iniquity” (Dan. 9:24), these future goals must also be interpreted literally. They cannot be fulfilled with any people other than the Jewish people. The church does not fulfill them.

Messiah’s Mission to Israel

The first three goals relate to the sins of national Israel; the final three regard her salvation. Thus the period for the fulfillment of all the goals must be seen in conjunction with Messiah’s mission to Israel, which historically encompasses both advents.

Although Cyrus released the Jews from captivity in the year that the seventy weeks prophecy was given, the remnant that returned to Judah found that idolatry and transgression continued (cf. Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 9:2). Therefore, the prophetic
plan was unfulfilled by Israel’s return at the end of the seventy years and required the coming of Israel’s Messiah to fulfill it in the future. Interestingly, Jewish commentators also held that these goals were not accomplished with the return and restoration under Zerubbabel in 538 B.C. According to the Jewish commentator Abarbanel, the nature of Israel’s sin required not seventy years, but 490. Abarbanel noted that the return to Jerusalem and even the rebuilding of the second Temple did not bring the expected redemption nor atone for past sins, since they were themselves a part of the exile and atonement. He held that the real and complete redemption was still far off in history, and thus not yet fulfilled according to Daniel’s prophecy.

Daniel’s prophecy clearly reveals that Messiah came and accomplished the first part of His mission exactly when predicted in verses 9:25-26, that is, 483 years into the 490 years. This was precisely when the rabbinical sources expected him to arrive. (See the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sanhedrin 97a-b.) Furthermore, Daniel 9:26 speaks of Messiah’s death:

And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

Messiah’s “cutting off” must refer to a death that occurred during the same time period as the destruction of “the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary [Temple],” that is, in the late second Temple period. Therefore, Messiah’s death was to “make an end [atone] of sins” and “make reconciliation for iniquity,” as stated in verse 24. This act serves as the basis for Israel’s future salvation at the Second Advent (Zech. 12:10; Mt. 24:30-31; Lk. 21:27-28; Rom. 11:26-27).

Messiah died, of course, without inheriting the Messianic Kingdom. This will come later as Jesus Himself declared following His resurrection (Acts 1:6-7). It will occur at the end of the final “week,” when the prerequisite for the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom—the overthrow of the Temple desolator (the Antichrist)—is completed (Dan. 9:27).

Fulfillment of the last set of goals also awaits the time of the end. The phrase “to bring in everlasting righteousness” refers to the predicted millennial restoration, or “age of righteousness,” that will reverse Israel’s national rejection of her Messiah (Isa. 1:26; 11:2-5; 32:17; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-18). This future restoration may also “seal up the vision and prophecy.” The final goal, “to anoint the most Holy,” must also look to the future, specifically, to a future dedication of the Temple’s Holy of Holies. Many revered rabbis also interpreted the passage as referring to a future third Temple, maintaining that the last and second Temple (destroyed in 70 A.D.) had never been anointed because it had lacked both the Ark of the Covenant and the Shekinah (the Divine Presence). According to rabbinical thinking, the Ark will be revealed by the Messianic King, who will also build the Temple (Zech. 6:12). When Messiah returns in glory, He will build the millennial Temple (Ezek. 40-48); it will be filled with the Divine Presence (Ezek. 43:1-7) and will be consecrated for use throughout the Messianic age (Ezek. 43:11, 18-27; 44:11-28; 45:13-46:15; Isa. 56:6-7; 60:7; Jer. 33:18; Zech. 14:16-21). Therefore, Daniel described Messiah’s mission to Israel beginning with His crucifixion as Israel’s Savior and culminating with His reign as Israel’s King. Thus Daniel’s prayer for an end to exile can only be fulfilled when all of the elements of his petition will be realized, and this can only be accomplished in the coming age of Messiah’s reign.

**The Program of the Seventieth Week**

Daniel also learned that in the seventieth week, a leader related to the people (the Romans) who were destined to destroy the second Temple will confirm a covenant with the leaders (the “many”) of Israel (9:27). While the specific nature of this covenant is unclear, it no doubt relates to the Temple in some way. Dr. Harold Foos has written that “it is the conviction of this writer that the repossession of the Temple site and the rebuilding of the Temple with its renewed worship will be in direct consequence of the covenant that the Antichrist makes with Israel for the ‘one week,’ the seven years of the Tribulation period.”

First, the second Temple was rebuilt by the permission and power of a Gentile ruler (Cyrus), setting the precedent for the rebuilding of the third Temple. Second, if a political power or leader could guarantee the rebuilding of the Temple, any covenant made with Israel would be expected to include this. Third, a pivotal event marked both the beginning and end of the first sixty-nine weeks and the interval between the end of the sixty-ninth and the beginning of the seventieth (Dan. 9:25-26). Thus it would be reasonable to expect that such an event might also mark the beginning of the seventieth week, particularly since it would signify a revival of God’s direct dealing with the nation. Finally, the Tribulation is meant to prepare Israel for its glorious Millennium restoration, where
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the Temple will be prominent; yet the Temple suffers with the nation during the Tribulation. Thus it seems extremely plausible that the rebuilding of this structure so important to Judaism may well be connected to the beginning of this painful time known also as “the time of Jacob’s trouble.”

The Temple plays a key role in future events. Jesus announced that its desecration in the middle of the seventieth week will be a signal to Israel that the time of Great Tribulation has begun (Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14). The apostle Paul also pointed to the desecration as evidence for the unmistakable rise of the “man of sin” (the Antichrist) and the arrival of the judgments of God (2 Th. 2:4-12). Eventually Messiah will return to destroy Antichrist and his armies (Rev. 19:20). Then national Israel will repent (Rom. 11:26-27), and the final restoration Daniel sought for the nation will be at hand.

Daniel searched the prophets and prayed for an answer to the mystery that surrounded the desolation of the Temple in his day. The answer he received by divine revelation was that the times of the Gentiles, imposed from the captivity of his day, will not end until the world is brought together in an international empire headed by a coming wicked ruler (Antichrist). Daniel was told this will occur in the end-times, and that the final act of Temple desolation will herald the final judgment of God against the Gentile powers. Then Israel will realize the promises of God.

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How many people would be willing to buy back their own possessions? In all probability, not many. The average person today, it seems, would be more likely to spend twice as much money going to court just to prove that he shouldn’t have to buy back something that was his to begin with. Then again, the average person knows very little about the sacrificial nature of true, redeeming love.

Following the birth of her second son, Gomer walked out on her three small children and her husband, Hosea, to become a prostitute. The main theme of chapter 3, however, is not about Gomer, but Israel. Hosea brings into focus Israel’s past rebellion against God, her current state of isolation, and God’s plan to redeem her in the future.

In a simple yet touching way, God uses the story of Gomer, the wayward wife of a faithful prophet, to reveal the depth of His love for wayward Israel and for all who have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

**Command from God**

“Go yet,” God told the prophet Hosea, “love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love cakes of raisins. “So I bought her for myself for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley” (Hos. 3:1-2). Some teach that God commanded Hosea to marry another woman. This position, however, cannot be supported from Scripture. It is clear from the text that chapter 3 provides a natural progression in the story of Hosea’s marriage to Gomer. The word yet can also be translated “again,” indicating that Gomer is to be the object of Hosea’s love. The woman referred to in the text is the “adulteress,” Gomer. If this were a reference to someone other than Gomer, the typological application to Israel as the wife of Jehovah would be lost or confused at best.

Hosea’s love for Gomer was to be modeled after God’s love for Israel. Gomer, like Israel, was living in blatant sin when Hosea went to find her. And, like Israel, she expressed no contrition concerning her adultery and no desire to be restored to her husband. Instead of responding to God’s love, Israel worshiped the Canaanite god Baal with “love cakes of raisins.” These raisin cakes were made from pressed grapes; and like the Canaanites, Israel used the cakes in its sacrificial feasts to worship and
honor the “queen of heaven” (Jer. 7:18; 44:19). Such pagan customs polluted Israel’s worship and greatly grieved the heart of God.

### Cost of Gomer

Hosea did not think twice when God commanded him to purchase Gomer. He was willing to pay the fifteen pieces of silver and the homer and a half of barley to be able to bring her home. Fifteen pieces of silver was half the price of a common slave (Ex. 21:32). Some believe that the barley (a month’s supply of food for a poor slave), along with the fifteen pieces of silver, made up the price of a female slave. Many in Israel probably considered Hosea a fool for paying such a price for a worthless woman. A wife guilty of infidelity was divorced or executed (Lev. 20:10; Dt. 22:22); but Hosea’s goal was restoration, not divorce. In like manner, God has had a legal right to disown or destroy Israel; but He too seeks redemption and restoration of the nation.

God is called the “redeemer” (go’el) of Israel (Isa. 41:14; 43:1; 44:6; 47:4) throughout the Old Testament. The word redemption means “to deliver or rescue something by paying a price.” It was used in reference to redeeming (1) Israel from Egypt (Ex. 6:6), (2) a person from slavery (Lev. 25:47-49), (3) the first-born males of man and beast (Ex. 13:11-16), and (4) recovering an estate that had been lost. All these physical acts of redemption are not devoid of spiritual significance. They are a foreshadowing of God’s redemptive plan through the Messiah.

The Old Testament concept of paying a redemption price is carried into the New Testament. Israel’s long-awaited redemption, both physically and spiritually, is found in the person of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus made Israel’s spiritual redemption possible through His death and resurrection (Rom. 4:25; 2 Cor. 5:18-19). His death paid the price to liberate man from the slavery of sin. Three Greek words are used in the New Testament to describe the work of redemption. First is ἁγοράζω, which means a price has been paid to buy a person in the slave market of sin’s bondage (1 Cor. 6:20). Second is ἐξαγοράζω, which means that the believer has been bought out of the slave market, or removed from the curse and bondage of sin (Gal. 3:13; 4:5). Third is λυτροῦ, which means to “loose,” or “set one free” from the slavery of sin (1 Pet. 1:18).

The story of Hosea’s purchase of Gomer from a life of sin is a beautiful illustration of what Jesus the Messiah has accomplished for mankind, both Jew and Gentile. God “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13-14).

Hosea told Gomer, “Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man; so will I also be for thee” (v. 3). Although Gomer had been redeemed from her harlotry, there was no indication that she had a change of heart toward her sin and past lifestyle. She still desired her lovers and had to be taken into seclusion for a long time to prevent her from returning to prostitution. The word abide means to “stay” or “sit in waiting” for many days. Thus Gomer was to remain isolated from her lovers during this time in order to force her to change her ways.

Although Hosea reclaimed Gomer at God’s command, he did not immediately become intimate with her again. It would take time to restore Gomer. The statement “so will I also be for thee” (v. 3), indicated Hosea’s total commitment to his wife during her isolation. At the proper time, he would woo Gomer back to the marital love that they once had for each other. God does not reveal the outcome of Gomer’s response to Hosea, but most scholars believe that her love for him was restored.

Gomer’s experience in isolation is a foreshadowing of Israel’s isolation to deliver her from idolatry. During this time Israel “shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim” (v. 4). What does this mean? First, civil leaders such as the king (ruling monarch) and prince (officers in the kingdom) were to be removed. Israel’s sovereign political system would be destroyed and remain so for centuries. Hosea was speaking about the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was established in rebellion to the Davidic dynasty (1 Ki. 12:19). Second, ceremonial religion was to cease, and Israel would be “without a sacrifice and without an image” (sacred stone or pillar). Israel’s sacrificial system was to be eliminated because it was illegitimate and embellished with Baal worship. Setting up sacred pillars was forbidden by Jewish Law (Dt. 16:22). Third, cultic objects, such as the “ephod” and “teraphim,” were to be removed. The ephod was a beautifully embroidered garment worn by the high priest, over which was placed the jeweled breastplate containing the Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:6-14). After Israel’s destruction the Israelites had no access to the high priest in Judah to discern the will of God. The ephod referred to in this passage, however, is not
that of the high priest, but an image or idol used to discern the future. (See Judges 8:27; 17:5; 18:14, 17-20, 24.) The teraphim were small idols used in an individual’s house for divination and necromancy. Israel was stripped of all her civil leaders, her ceremonial religious system, and cultic objects of worship. Like Gomer, she was to be isolated from her spiritual adultery and left in exile to meditate on her sinful ways. During this time, God has returned to His place (5:15) and waits for Israel to seek Him (6:1).

Commitment to God

When the period of Israel’s isolation is finally consummated, the nation will return to the Lord. “Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord, their God, and David, their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days” (v. 5). God will use the terrible period yet to come, the Great Tribulation, to bring Israel to a place of repentance and reconciliation. At that time a remnant within Israel will return to the Lord and receive Jesus as their Messiah (Zech. 12:10). The word return is used twenty-one times throughout Hosea’s prophecy. Israel’s return will result in God restoring “goodness” (v. 5), or covenant blessings, promised to the nation. Upon returning to the Lord, Israel will submit to the rule of “David, their king.” The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:4-17) explicitly states that David’s dynasty will be reestablished during the Millennium. David’s seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, will sit upon the Davidic throne and reign over Israel in that day (Lk. 1:32-33). King David will return with the Lord to rule under Him during the Kingdom age. The nation of Israel will “fear (tremble) the Lord” (v. 5), or hold Him in reverential awe, because of who He is and what they have suffered because of their rebellion.

In the first three chapters of this book, the marriage of Hosea and Gomer served as an impressive illustration of God’s grace and judgment. But as dramatically as Hosea and Gomer appeared, they pass from this prophecy. In later chapters, Hosea said nothing about his personal relationship with Gomer, but focused entirely on Israel’s relationship with God.

God used the story of Gomer to reveal His redemptive plan for the nation of Israel. Through his own experience with Gomer, Hosea, no doubt, personally came to understand and appreciate the depth of God’s love for Israel. She served as an object lesson to Hosea, illustrating God’s great love for Israel despite her spiritual adultery and, indeed, God’s great redeeming love for mankind.

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**EYE On the Middle East**

JERUSALEM—In an attempt to enlarge an exit to an underground mosque, the Muslim Wakf has been illegally excavating underneath the Temple Mount and dumping the dirt by the truckload into the Kidron Valley. Israeli archeologists and other officials have protested loudly, calling the excavation a blatant violation of the law. Their protests, however, have been ignored. Some have gone so far as to accuse Israeli Jerusalem police of looking the other way and have demanded court action be taken against them.

It is a well-established fact that no piece of real estate in the world has more potential for inciting violence than does that approximately 30-acre plateau in the heart of the Old City of Jerusalem. Consequently, violations of the sanctity of the place always threaten a major confrontation between Israel and the Muslim world. This was the case not too many months ago when Israel opened a door at the end of the Rabbinical Tunnel that runs along the base of the Western Wall. The door was opened to provide egress from the extremely narrow tunnel and allow visitors to exit the passageway safely without doubling back.

This simple, common-sense decision to open an exit sparked a worldwide firestorm of controversy. In the middle of the fray were Western journalists, who joined the verbal stone-throwers in pillaging Israel and the Jerusalem authority. With about as much respect as is shown grave robbers, the news reporters and commentators dourly cited Israel for contempt of Islamic sacred places. They claimed that Israeli authorities had excavated under the Temple Mount at the risk of weakening the foundation of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The fact is, however, that no digging took place anywhere near the mosque. Never was the Western Wall breached. The tunnel, which was opened many years ago, runs outside the wall and away from the Muslim sanctuary. But these details did not stand in the way of the intercontinental condemnatory commentary against Israeli leaders. No one, it seems, bothered to look at the geography of the Temple Mount.

Yet the media have been virtually mute regarding what the Muslim Wakf continued on page 33
The obstetrician wanted to be sure. His patient had told him the date she expected her baby to be born. Taking into account her age, size, and weight gain, the doctor felt it prudent to get more accurate information. "Report to the radiologist for an ultrasound," he told her. "Then we'll see what's what."

So accompanied by her husband, she reported to the radiologist. During the procedure the technician asked, "Why did the doctor have you come here?" The woman explained the reasons.

Meanwhile, the husband was occupying himself by looking at the little screen filled with indiscernible images. The technician calmly pointed out a blinking light that indicated the beating heart of the unborn baby. Then suddenly, without warning, the technician blurted out, "There are two babies here!"

The couple shouted back, "Two babies!" The mother burst into tears, and the father laughed hysterically.

I know the story well, because I am the father of those two babies. My reaction to the announcement of my twins more than fifteen years ago was probably similar to that of Abraham’s wife Sarah thousands of years earlier. At that time she had heard the prophecy that she would bear a son (Gen. 18). She certainly must have said to herself, "at my age, from a husband as old as my Abraham?" Her reaction, like mine, was to laugh in disbelief. But it was not a joke, and a year later she named her newborn son Isaac, which means "laughter" in Hebrew—a clear reminder of his miracle conception. Interesting that one of our revered patriarchs was named Laughter.

It has been said that comedy is contrived; humor is lived. Humor can unquestionably relieve tension and stress. No doubt, that is why Abraham’s wife and I both...
laughed, demonstrating God’s wonderful gift of humor.

Webster’s Dictionary defines humor as “something that is, or is designed to be, comical or amusing, that quality which appeals to a sense of the ludicrous or absurdly incongruous.” In that context, God’s Word is filled with humor. In fact, the Hebrew Bible mentions laughter (zehok) fifty times.1 Depending upon the context, the word is translated as “play, enjoy, insult, mock, rejoice,” and “scoff.”

One cannot help but laugh when picturing the account of the prophet Elijah’s meeting with the false prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:27.

Elijah shouts to them, “Cry aloud; for he is a god. Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or, perhaps, he sleepeth, and must be awakened.” Today we could rephrase that something like this: “Why isn’t your god doing anything? Oh, I get it. He’s on the phone. Or maybe he’s on vacation!”

Equally as comical is the narrative in Numbers 22:28: “And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?” Even funnier is the next verse. Balaam answers her! Consider these from the book of Proverbs: “As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman who is without discretion” (11:22); “It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house” (21:9); “It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman” (21:19); “A slothful man hideth his hand in his dish, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again” (19:24); “The slothful man saith, There is a lion outside; I shall be slain in the streets” (22:13).

Clearly, God has stamped His sense of humor within the pages of His Word. And it is just as clear that He has infused it into His Chosen People as well. Jewish humor takes the definition of humor and narrows it to something comical or amusing created by Jews, about Jews, and reflecting the lives of Jews. In fact, the amusing verses from Proverbs clearly constitute Jewish humor, encompassing all three of these characteristics.

In the Big Book of Jewish Humor, editors William Novak and Moshe Waldoks define a Jewish joke as “one that no guy [Gentile] can understand and every Jew says he has already heard.”

A Jewish joke (is) “one that no guy [Gentile] can understand and every Jew says he has already heard.” As an example, they offer this old, yet timeless tidbit: “They say that when you tell a joke to a peasant, he laughs three times—once when you tell the joke, again when you explain it, and yet again when he understands it, for the peasants love to laugh.

“When you tell a joke to a landowner, he laughs twice—once when you tell him the joke, and again when you explain it, for he never really understands it.

“When you tell a joke to an army officer, he laughs only once—when you tell it. He never lets you explain it, and it goes without saying that he is unable to understand it.

“But when you tell a joke to a Jew—even before you’ve had a chance to finish it, he’s already interrupting you. First, he’s heard it before. Second, why are you telling it wrong? So he decides to tell you the joke—but in a much better version than yours.”

Jewish humor is always about something. That something can be food, business, family, anti-Semitism, health, wealth, or survival. Here are some examples: An elderly Jewish man is struck by a car and brought to the hospital. A pretty nurse tucks him into bed and asks, “Mr. Shapiro, are you comfortable?”

Shapiro replies, “I make a nice living.”

A Jewish boy comes home from school and tells his mother he’s been given a part in the school play. “Wonderfull!” she says. “What part is it?”

The boy says, “I play the part of the Jewish husband.”

The mother scowls and says, “Go back and tell the teacher you want a speaking part.”

Jewish humor is often quick and biting. You can easily miss it if you’re not really listening. What did the waiter ask the group of dining Jewish mothers? “Is anything all right?”

A man who dies asks that his ashes be scattered over Bloomington’s so that his wife will visit once in a while.

It can be sarcastic, complaining, resigned, or descriptive. “Sam, please close the window. It’s cold outside.”

Sam says, “So, and if I close the window, will it be warm outside?”

A classified ad reads, “Orthodox psychologist who knows how to live well, seeks woman to share bleeding ulcer.”
Sometimes the point of the humor is more powerful than the laugh it might deliver. In fact, the appropriate response might not be laughter at all. Instead, a simple nod or a sigh is all that is needed. Cohen and Katz used to play cards every day in a coffeehouse. One day they quarreled and Katz called out, “What kind of guy can you be if you sit down every day to play cards with a guy who sits down to play cards with a guy like you?”

Dr. Avner Ziv is chairman of the Tel Aviv University Department of Educational Sciences in Tel Aviv, Israel. In 1986 he chaired a conference that was attended by academics and comedians to examine Jewish humor. Dr. Ziv made this statement: “Jews, with their long history of pogroms, persecutions and killings, have developed a sense of humor known around the world—that is one of the few positive stereotypes about us.”

Indeed, just as Jewish music often takes a minor key—a reminder of the suffering that has framed the Jewish experience—so Jewish humor uses quick wit, self-deprecation, mocking, and biting sarcasm to cope with a seemingly ever-present heartache.

Shalom Aleichem (1859-1916) was inarguably the greatest humorist in all of Jewish literature. His most famous of writings was used to bring to Broadway and to the big screen the bittersweet musical Fiddler on the Roof. In an early scene, the Jews gather around their beloved rabbi in the village of Anatevka. “Rabbi,” one of the citizens cries, “is there a proper blessing for the Czar?”

The rabbi strokes his beard and responds, “May God bless and keep the Czar—far away from us!”

This kind of writing epitomized the Talmudic dictum, “Tears of sadness are bad tears, tears of laughter are beautiful” (Shab. 151b-152a). They depict the hard life the Jewish people have had to live.

The works of Shalom Aleichem, more than any other, epitomize the Jewish people’s desire to survive. He depicted Jewish society during a time of transition—a time between the old style of Eastern Europe and the advent into modern culture. He communicated with uncanny ability the Jewish struggle just to live and the incredible ability of the Jewish people to adapt to the new situations forced upon them. His characters faced death, shattered dreams, madness, and disintegration. Yet he always countered these tragedies of life with enthusiasm and humor.

Tevye the milkman, in the Fiddler story, talks to God on many occasions. He wonders why he is not rich, noting, “It is no shame to be poor. But it’s no great honor either!” In another situation, he makes this comment to God, “You help complete strangers—why not me?”

The freedom and opportunity found in America made life for the Jews much easier than the old days of Europe. Jewish humor rose in prominence as Jewish people from New York cooled themselves in the summer in what became known as the “borsht belt” of the Catskill and Pocono Mountains. Jewish people laughed at themselves as they identified with the hilarious tales told masterfully by a generation of Jewish storytellers. It was here that comedians such as Sid Caesar and Danny Kaye honed their skills so well that their names became known both in Jewish and Gentile households around the country.

Other well-known Jewish comedians, such as Jack Benny, George Burns, Alan King, and the Marx brothers built their reputations by relating common, everyday situations in such a way as to elicit a smile and a laugh.

Jewish people have made it so easy for us to laugh at ourselves. And they certainly have shown they can laugh at themselves as well.

Yet as funny as those stories and jokes might be, they are only funny—or even acceptable, for that matter—when told by a person of the same background. Please, if you are not Jewish, don’t tell your Jewish friend a demeaning “Jewish joke.” It may be funny coming from a Jewish person, but it can be extremely offensive coming from a non-Jewish person.

In her book Bar Mitzvah, Sarah Silberstein Swartz says, “It is said that true Jewish humor mirrors the history of the Jewish people—their joys and tragedies, their aspirations and discouragements, their values.” Sometimes things hurt so much we just have to laugh. Perhaps that is why God says in His Book, the Bible, that “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine” (Prov. 17:22). And I think that is a good thing.

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Jesus Christ and the Future Kingdom of God

(Part 6)

Introduction

Introduction

In the previous article, we noted that Jesus Christ (Mt. 19:28) and the apostles Peter (Acts 3:19-21) and Paul (Rom. 8:19-22) foretold that nature will be restored to its original pre-fall condition when Christ will return from heaven and reestablish God’s theocratic kingdom-rule on this earth.

In his Acts 3 prophecy, Peter indicated that God used the Old Testament prophets to provide revelation concerning this restoration of nature, which takes place in the future Messianic age (v. 21). This article examines that revelation and the significance of Christ’s miracles in light of it.

The Old Testament Prophecies and Christ’s Miracles

The Old Testament prophecies told of miraculous changes that will come to the world when the Messiah will establish and rule over the future theocratic Kingdom of God. Comparing Jesus Christ’s miracles with these prophecies reveals that through His miracles, Jesus overtly demonstrated to the people of Israel that He was the Messiah—the One who had the powers necessary to fulfill those Old Testament prophecies.

First, the prophets foretold that the future theocratic kingdom will exhibit beneficial changes in the earth’s climate and natural elements (Isa. 30:23-26; Ezek. 47:1-12; Joel 2:21-26; 3:18; Zech. 14:8). The effectiveness of the moon and sun will be increased, and abundant rains will fall when needed. Special streams of water will flow from Jerusalem to cleanse polluted bodies of water, making waste places fruitful. Jesus demonstrated His power to control the earth’s climate and natural elements by walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee and calming two storms (Mt. 14:24-33; Mk. 4:35-41).

Second, according to the prophets, the theocratic kingdom will be characterized by unprecedented growth and fruitage of trees (Isa. 41:19-20; Ezek. 36:8; 47:6-7; Joel 2:21-22). Jesus displayed His power to control the growth and fruitage of trees by cursing a fig tree and causing it to wither immediately (Mt. 21:18-20).

Third, the prophets declared that there will be great productivity of animals, including a huge multitude of fish, during the theocratic kingdom (Ezek. 36:11; 47:8-10). Twice Jesus miraculously produced a huge draught of fish for His disciples after they had fished all night without catching anything (Lk. 5:1-11; Jn. 21:1-12). Here was evidence that He could produce the great productivity of animals, including the huge multitude of fish, prophesied for the future Messianic kingdom.

Fourth, the prophets proclaimed that the future theocratic kingdom will be blessed with a superabundant supply of food (Ps. 72:16; Isa. 30:23-24; Ezek. 34:25-30; Joel 2:21-26; Zech. 8:11-12). Famine will be unknown. Jesus exhibited His power to produce this superabundance by expanding five loaves of bread and two fish...
into more than enough food to feed five thousand men. After all these people were filled, there were twelve baskets of food left (Jn. 6:5-14). On another occasion, Christ increased seven loaves of bread and several small fish into enough to feed about four thousand people. After all of them were filled, seven baskets of food were left (Mk. 8:1-9).

Fifth, according to the prophets, wine will be abundant in the future theocratic kingdom (Joel 2:21-26; Amos 9:13). Jesus manifested His ability to create this abundance of wine in the future kingdom when He turned water into wine at a marriage celebration in Cana of Galilee (Jn. 2:1-11).

Sixth, the prophets predicted dramatic changes in the nature of animals in the future theocratic kingdom (Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25; Hos. 2:18). All animals will be completely tame and vegetarian in diet. Sheep, goats, calves, and cows will dwell together with wolves, leopards, young lions, and bears and not be harmed. Instead of being carnivorous, the lion will eat the same vegetation as the ox. Little children will be able to lead all these animals as pets. Poisonous snakes that today are deadly will no longer be harmful.

Jesus demonstrated His ability to change or exercise authority over the nature of animals. On His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He rode a colt that had never been sat upon by a human being. He had no trouble doing so, in spite of the fact that such an animal would normally have attempted to throw off a rider. Jesus changed the nature of that colt (Mk. 11:1-11). On another occasion, He caused a fish to have a specific coin in its mouth and to swim to a specific place, at a specific time, to be caught by Peter (Mt. 17:24-27).

Seventh, the prophets declared that the future theocratic kingdom will be characterized by the healing of physical diseases and deformities (Is. 29:18; 33:24; 35:5-6). The lame will be made to walk, the blind made to see, the deaf made to hear, and the dumb made to speak. No longer will anyone say, “I am sick.” Jesus gave overwhelming evidence of His power to produce that aspect of the future kingdom. He healed lame (Mt. 8:5-13; Mk. 2:1-12; Jn. 5:1-9), blind (Mt. 9:27-31; 12:22; 20:29-34; Mk. 8:22-26; Jn. 9:1-7), deaf (Mk. 7:31-37; 9:14-29), and dumb people (Mt. 9:32-34; 12:22; Mk. 7:31-37; 9:14-29). He also healed those at the point of death (Jn. 4:46-54); those possessed by demons (Mt. 9:32-34; 15:21-28; Mk. 1:21-28, 34; 5:1-20; 9:14-29); lepers (Mk. 1:40-45; Lk. 17:11-19); and those with fever (Mk. 1:29-31), withered hands (Mk. 3:1-5), issues of blood (Mt. 9:20-22), infirmity (Lk. 13:10-13), and dropsy (Lk. 14:1-4). He also replaced a severed ear (Lk. 22:50-51). In addition, He performed many other miracles of healing that were not specifically recorded (Mt. 4:23-24; 8:16; 9:35; 15:29-31; Mk. 1:34; 6:56; Lk. 4:40; 5:15; 6:17-19; 7:21).

Eighth, the prophets foretold that the future theocratic kingdom will be marked by great longevity of life (Is. 65:20-22). The 100-year-old person will be classified as a child; infancy will be measured by years, not days. Old men will live a full life, and the days of God’s people will be as the days of a tree. Jesus raised Lazarus, Jairus’s daughter, and the widow’s son from the dead, thereby lengthening their lives beyond their normal span (Mt. 9:18-26; Lk. 7:11-17; Jn. 11:1-45). This was evidence that He has the power to produce the longevity of life characteristic of the future theocratic kingdom.

The Significance of the Comparison

When the Messiah will establish and rule over the future theocratic kingdom, miraculous changes will come to the world. By comparing the miracles of Jesus with the Old Testament prophecies concerning the nature of the future theocratic kingdom, it is easy to see the relationship between Christ’s miracles and those prophecies.
The writer of Hebrews recognized and referred to that relationship. He stated that Jews who were eyewitnesses of Christ’s miracles thereby “tasted...the powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:5). Two things should be noted regarding this statement. First, Jesus used the word translated “powers” in reference to His miracles (Mt. 11:20-23). Other people used the same word for His miracles (Mt. 13:54, 58; 14:2; Lk. 19:37; Acts 2:22). Some used it specifically for His miracles of healing illnesses (Mk. 5:30; 6:5; Lk. 5:17; 6:19) and casting out demons (Lk. 4:36). Second, since the book of Hebrews was written during this present, pre-Messianic age, the writer’s expression “the age to come” refers to the future Messianic age, when Christ, the Messiah, will establish and rule over the future theocratic kingdom.

The combination of these two things prompts three conclusions. First, the writer of Hebrews indicated that Christ’s miracles were a foretaste of the powers He will exercise when He will transform nature, in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in conjunction with His establishment of the future theocratic kingdom.

The Primary Purpose of Christ’s Miracles

Christ’s miracles demonstrated conclusively that He is the Messiah who will fulfill the Old Testament prophecies concerning the future theocratic kingdom and its transformation of nature. This conclusion is based on several lines of testimony.

Jesus’ Testimony. When asked to state plainly if He were the Messiah, Jesus said, “I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me” (Jn. 10:25). Later He indicated that witnesses of His miracles had a solemn responsibility to believe His claims (Jn. 15:24).

The Apostle John’s Testimony. John declared that he recorded some of Jesus’ miracles in order that his readers might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (Jn. 20:30-31). (See also John 1:41.) John also expressed amazement that some eyewitnesses of Jesus’ miracles did not, as a result, believe His claim to be the Messiah (Jn. 12:37-38).

The Testimony of Jesus’ Response to John the Baptist’s Question. John’s imprisonment caused him to question if Jesus were the Messiah. He sent a question to Jesus, asking if He were the Messiah who was to come. In response, Jesus performed miracles before John’s messengers, then sent them to tell John what they had witnessed. The miracles were to assure John that Jesus was, indeed, the Messiah (Lk. 7:19-23).

The Apostle Peter’s Testimony. Peter declared Jesus to be the Messiah (Acts 2:36) and indicated that God certified Him to be the Messiah “by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him” in Israel (v. 22).

Conclusion

By restoring nature to its original pre-fall condition when He restores God’s theocratic kingdom-rule to this present earth, Christ will accomplish the third future thing that God must do to fulfill His purpose for history.
Israel Awaits OK To Join UN Group

(Taken from The Jerusalem Report)

Israel’s request to join the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) in the United Nations is now being considered by the 15 European Union member states, and Israeli officials are hoping for a positive response soon.

Israel is the only UN member country excluded from membership in any of the five regional groupings. Iran is leading opposition to Israel’s taking up its natural regional affiliation in Asia; hence the bid to join WEOG. Membership would open the way for Israel to get seats on prestigious UN bodies, including the Security Council.

Statisticians Say Israel May Have 9 Million People By the Year 2020

(Taken from The Jerusalem Post)

JERUSALEM—The population in Israel has reached 6.2 million, and the Jewish population is approaching 5 million, according to recent figures published by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).

A CBS spokesman said he expects rapid population growth to continue into the new millennium, reaching the 7 million mark by 2006 or 2007 and 8 million between 2013 and 2018. By 2020 the CBS predicts the population may reach 9 million.

There has been a sharp rise in the number of stonethrowing and firebombing incidents in Judea and Samaria, a senior military official said recently. The reason, the official said, is mainly the Palestinians’ concern that they are being pushed to the background.

Traffic Deaths Down

(Taken from The Jerusalem Post)

There has been a 14 percent drop in the number of road deaths over the first 11 months of the year, compared with the same period last year, the Transport Ministry has announced. However, the trend reversed itself in the latter part of the year.

Sri Lanka To Forge Bonds With Israel; Air Flights To Begin

(Taken from The Jerusalem Post)

Sri Lanka is to open diplomatic relations with Israel in the near future, according to Gemini Wathasinghe, chairman of the board of Peace Air, the Sri Lankan airline. Wathasinghe was in Israel to sign an agreement for regular, twice-a-week flights from his country. Flight time, on a route circumnavigating the Arab states, is to be seven hours and forty minutes.

Weather Experts: Drought Continues

(Taken from The Jerusalem Post)

Last winter’s drought, which has caused Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) and Israel’s main underground reservoirs to drop below their respective red lines, appears to be continuing. According to the Meteorological Service, rainfall so far this season has not been much better than over the same period last year. Several places, including parts of the north, have received less rain than last year, and in all areas the precipitation is below average.

Talks With Syria Lead to Increased West Bank Violence

(Taken from The Jerusalem Post)

Since Israel announced the renewal of talks with Syria, there has been a sharp rise in the number of stonethrowing and firebombing incidents in Judea and Samaria, a senior military official said recently. The reason, the official said, is mainly the Palestinians’ concern that they are being pushed to the background.

Clinton Delays Moving Embassy From Tel Aviv

(Taken from The Jerusalem Post)

U.S. President Bill Clinton has again ordered a six-month delay in moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Embassy Act, passed by Congress in 1995, obligated the U.S. to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by May 31, 1999. A clause allows the president to invoke a security waiver to delay the move. Clinton said the delay was necessary “to protect the national interests of the United States.”
did you know it’s possible to give a one-time gift to The Friends of Israel—a gift annuity—that will reap spiritual fruit among God’s Chosen People?

In addition, that same gift can increase your personal income and reduce your future tax payments.

If your heart’s desire is to invest in the Lord’s work, yet at the same time, you need to make the most of your current financial resources, then you may want to consider purchasing a gift annuity from The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.

If you decide to give appreciated property, such as stock or real estate, rather than sending a check, you will pay capital gains tax on only part of the appreciation. In addition, the capital gains tax will be spread over many years rather than all be due in the year of your gift.

Indeed, a gift annuity is a gift with benefits both lifelong and eternal, allowing you to maximize the impact of your financial stewardship. For specific details about how a gift annuity can work for you, complete the form and mail it in the return envelope in this magazine. There is absolutely no obligation on your part.

Name ___________________________________________
Address ___________________________________________
City/State/Zip _______________________________________
Date of Birth (month/day/year) __________________________
(Suggested minimum age of 60)
Name of Joint Annuitant _____________________________
Date of Birth (month/day/year) __________________________
(Suggested minimum age of 60)
Relationship to First Annuitant _______________________
Phone ( ) ______________________________________
Possible Amount of Annuity $ _______________________
(Minimum annuity amount is $5,000)

Income to be paid: 
○ Quarterly   ○ Semiannually
○ Annually
○ I would like a Friends of Israel representative to contact me.

In March of 2000 we are planning a very special event in Israel. We hope to plant 2000 trees in the Friends of Israel Forest in Jerusalem as a tribute to Israel and 2000 years of Christian history in that land. Won’t you join us by providing a tree as a living memorial to a family member, friend, or relative? Or you may wish to plant one or more trees in their honor or on your own behalf. The cost is only $10 per tree, and you will share in helping to make the desert blossom.

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A Tree for the Millennium

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Every day we see the Orthodox distributing leaflets on the street. They are free to do this, not like us. We must have eyes in the back of our heads to stay out of trouble. I recently received a leaflet that told of a big meeting in a synagogue in my neighborhood. I have been to that synagogue several times and have engaged the rabbis in long discussions. Often other rabbis visit, and they draw large crowds. This leaflet told of a guest rabbi who would talk about redemption and the Messiah. And who is this messiah of his? He is the late, ultra-Orthodox Lubovitch rabbi from Brooklyn, New York—Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

God chose us to be His Chosen People, to be a light to the Gentiles and to tell of His salvation to the ends of the earth. But what do these people do? They put big posters on the streets, with a big picture of Schneerson, and big letters that proclaim him to be the Messiah. So I wanted to go to this meeting. When I asked my wife to come with me, she answered as Ruth answered Naomi, “where thou goest, I will go” (Ruth 1:16). When we arrived, many people were there. Most of them looked at us as though we had fallen from another planet, because we do not dress or act like the Orthodox. I listened to the rabbi speak for a long time. As it is written in 2 Timothy 2:24, the servant of the Lord must be patient. I learned patience well in the Israeli army, where I worked in the minefields during all Israel’s wars. Without patience, where would I be today? So I let the rabbi finish speaking. By then everyone was almost asleep. Many people were giving thanks that he was through, and they immediately prepared to leave.

Then the rabbi asked if anyone had questions. I was waiting for this, and I stood up. “Please tell me, rabbi,” I said, “in which chapter of the Bible is it written that the Messiah will come from New York? And how did you conclude that Rabbi Schneerson is the Messiah?”

The people who had been so sleepy were suddenly awake and eager to listen. The rabbi was very sure that he would put me down in a minute. “Tell me,” he said, “do you come often to the synagogue? Do you often read the Bible?”

I said, “For me, the Bible is very interesting, and I believe what is written in it. I don’t run to commentaries but receive the Bible as it is written.” Then he asked me if I had read Deuteronomy 19:16-17 and 17:5-6, which talk about the need for witnesses in a dispute. I answered, “Yes.”

“So,” he said, “is it not enough for you?”

What do you mean?” I asked. “How can you ask me such a stupid question?” the rabbi replied. “It says that two witnesses are enough, and here fifty great rabbis have signed a paper saying that our Rabbi Schneerson is Messiah. So who are you to say this is not true!”

By now much tension filled the room. I told the rabbi that people might sign a petition to elect a political leader, but not the Messiah! “Who gave you the right to choose the Messiah?” I asked. “If signatures are all you need, you could come tomorrow and claim there is a new god, as the people did who came up from Egypt. They were in the Desert of Sinai, and what did they do? They made for themselves a new god, a golden calf. Their leaders accepted this so-called god. And there were more than two witnesses. But what
was their end? Please, rabbi, tell these people now!"

But he said nothing. So I continued. "Many died," I said, "because they were deaf to the truth of what is written in the Ten Commandments. In Deuteronomy 6, which you read several times every day, it is clearly written, ‘Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him . . . Ye shall not go after other gods . . . Ye shall not put the LORD your God to the test’” (v. 13-16).

I told him that he has done all these evil things, he and the rabbis who signed such a paper. Then he became angry and told me I did not have the right to come to the synagogue. So I asked him, “Rabbi, I will ask you, as you have asked me. Have you read Isaiah 56:7?” He stared at me but did not answer. So I read this passage because all the people wanted to know what was written.

Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all peoples.

I read this because he told me never to return to the synagogue. "So Rabbi," I said, “here in the Bible it is written that ‘mine house shall be called an house of prayer,’ and again you want to make a new law. Whom shall these people believe?” I then read Psalm 118:8-9, where it is written, “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.” I was happy to see that most of the people were not against me. This conversation took two hours, and they wanted me to continue. Of course, the rabbi did not. But I was happy, because I could see that now the people were thinking.