

The Gospel, 1844, and Judgment Rome and Antiochus

Lesson #10 for September 2, 2006

Scriptures: Isaiah 55:11; Matthew 13:10-13; Luke 2:1; Luke 21:20, 21; John 11:48; John 16:12; 2 Peter 1:19.

1. Whether we like it or not, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been almost defined by its interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel. Our evangelists have so often used Daniel 2,7,8 and sometimes 9, that we may have come to regard these prophecies as almost our personal property. It may seem strange that a church was born out of a great disappointment over the second coming of Jesus Christ, but in the environment in which William Miller began his preaching it took something of that magnitude to really grab people's attention. In any case we should be ready to recognize that these are our historical roots.
2. While no other Christian denominations have accepted our full explanation of Daniel 8:14 it is important for us because:
 - a. It helps to explain the disappointment of 1844
 - b. It helps us to understand our historical roots
 - c. It helps us to define ourselves as a movement.

If these are key issues in understanding Scripture and God's plan for the end of time, is it any wonder that the Devil has done his best to discredit, misinterpret, and confuse as many people as possible about these matters?

3. By showing the parallels between the prophecies of Daniel 2,7, and 8 we have been able to clearly name four of the five world empires that are mentioned. As we view history is there any question about which world empire is not named? Certainly Rome fills the bill! It dominated world events in New Testament times. (Matthew 22:17; Luke 2:1; Luke 3:1; John 11:48; Acts 25:21).
4. Read Matthew 24:15 and Luke 21:20,21. Clearly the prophecy of Daniel 8 is linked by Jesus to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman power in A.D. 70. (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). If Jesus linked the prophecies of Daniel to the Roman power in New Testament times that should be a fairly safe guide for us! Compare Daniel 7:23 and Luke 2:1. Is it clear in your mind that these passages are speaking about the same power?
5. **The big question then comes: why wasn't the world power of Rome identified by name?** Certainly if we believe that God has prophetic power, he could have done so. He could have specifically told us about not only pagan Rome but papal Rome if he had decided to do so. Rome dominated a larger portion of the civilized world and for a longer period of time—both as a pagan power and later for much longer as a religious power—than any of the preceding world powers. Many scholars from ancient times until relatively recently have felt that Rome was the identified power to be associated with the little horns of Daniel 7 and Daniel 8. Why then is it so widely disbelieved and discredited today? Many commentaries today and Christian scholars assert that these little horns refer to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Assyrian king who ruled from 175 to 164 B.C. So why do we as Adventists reject this interpretation? Can we be sure that the little horns of Daniel 7 and 8 apply to the same religious-political power?
6. If we are willing to read it carefully, a lot of information is given in the book of Daniel about the identification of these two little horns. Note particularly these points of

similarity:

- a. Both are depicted by the same symbol - a little horn. (Daniel 7:8,20; 8:9).
 - b. Both are persecuting powers. (Daniel 7:21,25; 8:10,24)
 - c. Both are religious, self-exalting, and blasphemous powers. (Daniel 7:8, 20,25; 8:10,11,25).
 - d. Both powers clearly attack God's true people. (Daniel 7:25; 8:24).
 - e. Both have aspects of their activity delineated by prophetic time. (Daniel 7:25; 8:13,14).
 - f. Both extend until the time of the end. (Daniel 7:25,26; 8:17,19).
 - g. Both will be supernaturally destroyed. (Daniel 7:11,26; 8:25).
7. As we have noted previously **Daniel 7 deals primarily with papal Rome, while Daniel 8 discusses both pagan and papal Rome.** Could you have two different world powers with these many similarities and occurring in the same era which are not the same power? It seems extremely unlikely.
 8. With all of this evidence clearly in the book of Daniel itself, why did God hesitate to name Rome? Distracters, who do not want to accept the interpretation that we are discussing, will try to explain away all of this by saying that Daniel was not written by Daniel but was written in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes. They will claim that it is not prophetic at all but simply a recounting of history that had occurred already up to that time. We have already noted in previous lessons that this interpretation is clearly contradicted by Jesus's own words. (Remember our discussion from Isaiah 40-55 that the ability to predict the future is one of the proofs of divinity!)
 9. So what other explanation can we give? Does God ever choose to reveal himself a little bit at a time? Why would he choose to do such a thing? Read Daniel 12:4,9; Matthew 13:10-13; Luke 10:24; John 16:12; 2 Peter 1:19. We have noted in the past that God apparently did not reveal to the people in Old Testament times that the Messiah would come more than one time. It is not until New Testament times that a second coming is mentioned. And, furthermore, it is not until the final three chapters of Revelation that a third coming after the millennium is mentioned. This should be clear evidence that, at times, God does not choose to reveal all the truth at any one time. **Is it possible then that God chose not to reveal the name of Rome, and in fact, to leave these prophecies somewhat obscure, so that for the centuries in which the Scriptures were controlled by Rome the book of Daniel, at least, and perhaps much of Scripture were not destroyed by that religious political power? If Rome had understood clearly that they were being pictured in a bad light would they have hesitated to tear the book of Daniel out of their Bibles and thus out of ours?** Is this why Daniel was told to "close up and seal the book until the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). Many of the reformers clearly saw Rome identified in these passages. Adventists were certainly not the first to come up with such an interpretation.
 10. Interestingly enough, in biblical times Jewish interpreters often named these kingdoms as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Edom! Why would they mention Edom, a kingdom which was basically gone by that time? Was it because Herod the great was half Edomite and worked in close corporation with Rome, growing up there himself? Are there times when it is prudent and wise not to tell everything we know?
 11. Let us now take a few moments to look at the popular interpretation of these passages. What does the book of Daniel say about when it was written? (Daniel 1:1, 2:1, 7:1, 8:1, 9:1). If we say then that Daniel was not written by Daniel or in his day but was written hundreds of years later in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes do we then concluded that

the book of Daniel is not inspired? Certainly it would qualify as a “pseudepigraphical book”. (It would be written by someone other than who it claimed to be written by.)

12. So could Antiochus IV Epiphanes be the little horn? Review Daniel 8:5-8,21,22. What is our understanding of what happened to the he-goat power, Greece? One of the four kingdoms into which it was divided came to be known as the Seleucid kingdom, ruling from the area of the Syrian nation today, and lasted from about 301 B.C. until about 146 B.C.. During this time period there were many Seleucid kings most of whom ruled for only a short period of time. Antiochus IV Epiphanes was the eighth Seleucid king. He reigned from 175 to 164 B.C. Twenty other Seleucid kings followed him before their kingdom was swallowed up by the Roman power.
13. It is true that his predecessors controlled the land of Judah and he temporarily invaded Jerusalem, defiled the Temple and tried to force the Jewish people to become Greeks in a process known as Hellenization. About three years later the Maccabees arose and drove his forces out of Jerusalem after many battles and he lost control of the kingdom of Judah and apparently died of natural causes a short time thereafter.
14. Look now at several reasons why Antiochus IV Epiphanes cannot be the “little horn”.
 - a. In the progression of the prophecy of Daniel 8, Medo-Persia is described as great (Daniel 8:4); the Grecian “goat” is described as “very great” (Daniel 8:8); but the little horn became “exceeding great” (Daniel 8:9). Unless we are going to say Daniel was a false prophet or perhaps misled by God, we must ask ourselves whether Antiochus IV Epiphanes exceeded in power and greatness the kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Greece? Clearly he does not qualify.
 - b. Read Daniel 8:17,19,26. We have noted several times already that the little horns in both Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 deal with events up until “the time of the end”. Could a minor king ruling from 175 to 164 B.C. qualify as such a power? Obviously not! Or was the inspired writer confused about the end of time?
 - c. Read Daniel 8:25. The little horn in Daniel 8 is described finally is being “broken without hand” which seems to suggest a supernatural end. Paralleling the passage with Daniel 2:34,45 we see that it parallels the destruction of the earth and the setting up of God’s eternal kingdom. Does Antiochus’s natural death qualify him to fit this prophecy? Never! Why then do you think that Adventists are almost alone in this interpretation of these key passages? Notice carefully that Antiochus never did destroy the kingdom or the temple in Jerusalem. And he certainly did not destroy the sanctuary system of the Jews for a period of 2300 years!
 - d. Would it be accurate to describe Antiochus IV Epiphanes as standing up against a prince of princes? (Daniel 8:25) Was he able to cut off the anointed one, the Messiah? (9:26) We know historically that Antiochus never became a great power and was not even around when the Messiah showed up.
 - e. In 167 B.C. Antiochus invaded Egypt, but when he reached Alexandria, the Roman Legate ordered him out. Such a humiliated king cannot represent the mighty, growing, religious-political power of the little horn!
15. While Antiochus Epiphanes did desecrate the temple, sacrifice unclean meat on the altar and try to establish the worship of Greek “gods” in Jerusalem, did he seek to

change “times and laws”? (Daniel 7:25) Did he do so successfully? What about Rome? Were they successful in their attempts? Many kings, presidents, and emperors in times past and up to our day have developed a “god” complex! This does not automatically qualify each one of them as the fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel!

16. One final point: Read Daniel 8:8,9. ⁸“And the young he-goat hath exerted itself very much, and when it is strong, broken hath been the great horn; and come up doth a vision (prominence) of four in its place, at the four winds of the heavens. ⁹And from the one of them come forth hath a little horn, and it exerteth itself greatly toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the beauteous *land*.” (*Young’s Literal Translation*) Those who want to argue that Antiochus is the fulfillment of this little horn prophecy point out that he arose from one of the four horns. However, a careful look at the Hebrew shows that “from the one of them” refers not to the “vision of four” but “the four winds of the heavens”! Some try to discredit this interpretation by saying that horns grow out of horns and not out of winds. But how often have you seen a horn growing out of a horn?

Because Hebrew grammar uses feminine and masculine nouns to link adjectives the “one of them” matches “the four winds of the heaven” and doesn’t work with “vision (prominence) of four in its place”.

Even if this argument had some validity, Antiochus IV Epiphanes clearly does not qualify because of the previous arguments that we have noted.

17. So why is all of this important to us as Seventh-day Adventists? Does it really make a difference to your faith? While the Seventh-day Adventist Church has staked its reputation on this interpretation, do you have questions about it? Do you have doubts about whether the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God’s remnant? What other groups claim to be God’s true church? What are their arguments?

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