



PROPHECY EXPO

The Mysterious Little Book that
Mesmerized the World

- I. The Backbone of the study of the book of Revelation is the study of the book of Daniel
As we will see tomorrow evening and Friday evening and a couple of other evenings, readers of the book of Revelation are dependent on first understanding the book of Daniel

- II. In this presentation we want to focus on two time periods in which the book of Daniel has excited Bible students. The topic for this evening is important information for tomorrow evening's and Friday evening's presentations
 - A. In the period around the time of Jesus there was great expectation that the Messiah would come. One reason was that, as we saw earlier, apocalyptic literature comes to life in days of distress and the Romans brought distress.
 1. Because of the presence of their overlords, the Romans, the Jews were fomenting in revolt. The idea that the unclean Romans were their overlords was enough to cause a riot in itself. A few years after Jesus' death the Jews would explode in revolt. From the point of view of the Romans, the problem was that the Jews had a taste of freedom between the time of the Greeks and the Romans.
 2. A young man named Simeon, who was one of several brothers known as Maccabeus overcame a terrible Seleucid king named Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes and achieved a period of freedom for the Jews

“And when he had been conqueror after so glorious a manner, he was made high priest, and also freed the Jews from the dominion of the Macedonians; after one hundred and seventy years of the empire [of Seleucus].”
(Josephus; Wars 1:53)

3. Eventually the Romans came; even going into the temple

“Pompey [a Roman Army general] went into it [the Temple], and not a few of those who were with him also, and saw all that which it was unlawful for any other men to see but only for the high priests. There were in that temple the golden table, the holy lampstand, and the pouring vessels, and a great quantity of spices; and besides these, there were among the treasures two thousand talents of sacred money; yet did Pompey touch nothing of all this, on account of his regard to religion; and in this point also he acted in a manner that was worthy of his virtue.”
(Josephus Ant.; 14:72)

“Moreover, the Romans exacted of us, in a little time, more than ten thousand talents; and the royal authority, which was a dignity formerly bestowed on those who were high priests, by the right of their family, became the property of private men; but of these matters we shall treat in their proper places.”
(Josephus Ant.; 14:78)

“Now the occasions of this misery which came upon Jerusalem were Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, by raising a sedition one against the other; for now we lost our liberty, and became subject to the Romans, and were deprived of that country which we had gained by our arms from the Syrians, and were compelled to restore it to the Syrians.” (Josephus, Ant.; 14:77)

4. Eventually, Herod became the puppet king of the Romans based on a bribe and the friendships he made with the Romans

“Because Herod offered him [Caesar] money to make him king, as he had formerly given to him to make him tetrarch, and chiefly, because of his hatred to Antigonus, for he took him to be a seditious person, and an enemy to the Romans. Caesar was also the facilitator to raise Herod's dignity, and to give him his assistance in what he desired.”
(Josephus, Ant.; 14:382)

5. The Jews hated Herod because

- a. His parentage was not pure Jewish (because he came from Edom)
- b. The Romans deposed a more popular King to elevate Herod
- c. He appointed and dismissed high priests at will
- d. To the Jews, Herod was a traitor

- B. These events of intrigue and of an unsettling nature caused students of the Hebrew Scriptures to search the Scriptures for the coming of the Messiah

1. That is why, when Jesus spoke to His disciples about Elijah they understood that Jesus meant John the Baptist. Not that John the Baptist was Elijah, but that John the Baptist had the message of Elijah

”As they were coming down from the mountain (of Transfiguration), Jesus commanded them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.’ And His disciples asked Him, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ And He answered and said, ‘Elijah is coming and will restore all things; ¹² but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.”
(Mathew 17:9-13; NASB14; SP951)

2. God had promised that Elijah would return before the Messiah would come

”Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.
⁶ ”He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”
(Malachi 4:5-6; NASB 678; SP 927)

- a. Elijah would come before the great and terrible day of the LORD
- b. His message would be a message to restore all things
- c. His message would, to those who accepted it, join the hearts of children to hearts of the parents

III. The reason that the people believed Elijah/John the Baptist, would appear soon before the Messiah, was that many religious people had been searching for answers among the Jewish Scriptures. Because of their searching, we have quite a bit of evidence about the book of Daniel from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Among the copies of Daniel

“One copy of Daniel is inscribed in the script of the late second century B.C.; in some ways its antiquity is more striking than that of the oldest manuscripts from Qumran, since it is no more than about a half century younger than the autograph of Daniel.”
(Frank Moore Cross, Jr. *The Ancient Library of Quran & Modern Biblical Studies*, p. 43)

“The text type of Daniel reflected in the MT is well documented from the early period of its textual transmission. Qumran provides eight exemplars of the book (as compared with only six of Jeremiah), one of which dates from the end of the second century B.C.E., only about a half century after the book’s composition. And all eight, insofar as the fragmentary evidence allows one to judge, are generally in the same textual tradition in which the MT stands.”
(Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*, pp. 69-70)

IV. A similar happening occurred around the beginning of the 19th Century, when political and natural events caused people once again to begin to search the book of Daniel

A. In the time of Daniel his prophecies were a sealed book and they were opened just a little in the time of Jesus, so people could be ready for the coming Messiah

"But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."
(Daniel 12:4; NASB640; SP681)

B. A specific time period was given until the prophecies of Daniel would be opened

"How long *will it be* until the end of *these* wonders?"
⁷ I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a **time, times, and half a time**; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these *events* will be completed."
(Daniel 12:6-7; emphasis supplied; NASB640; SP681)

C. We read of this same time period on Saturday night from Daniel 7:25, when we read that the “Little Horn” power would persecute the “saints” and blaspheme God for the same length of time

'He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a **time, times, and half a time.**'
(Daniel 7:25; emphasis supplied; NASB635; SP875)

Bible students from around the world believed that this prophecy would come to pass near the beginning to middle of the 19th Century

D. One of the two important keys in coming to an understand of this long time prophecy was realizing that a regular phenomenon of the Hebrew language was the use of the Hebrew word “days” to mean “years,” so it makes sense in apocalyptic prophecies, which are filled with much symbolism, that in apocalyptic prophecies a “day” would symbolize a “year” in time. Elsewhere in the book of Revelation this same period of time, “time, times, and half a time,” is mentioned and interpreted to mean 1260 days/years. (A supplement called, “A Day for a Year Principle in Apocalyptic Prophecy” is available, along with your outline this evening)

“But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a **time and times and half a time**, from the presence of the serpent.”
(Revelation 12:14; emphasis supplied; NASB195; SP1218)

“Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished **for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.**”
(Revelation 12:6; emphasis supplied; NASB195; SP1218)

E. A similar events occurred about the beginning of the 18th century as had occurred around the time that Jesus was born, which made Bible student begin to focus on the books of Daniel and in Revelation we read that an angel came out of heaven with an open book in his hand. This book can be no other than the book of Daniel

“(The Angel). . .had in his hand a little book which was open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land.”

(Revelation 10:2; NASB194; SP1217)

“So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, “Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.”

(Revelation 10:9; NASB194; SP1217)

V. Besides the known 62, 19th century American authors, who wrote about the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. More than 100 Europeans authors wrote books and tracts supporting the soon coming of Jesus, all of them deriving their belief from the book of Daniel

“Many Christians believe that the Messiah will shortly establish a kingdom on the earth, and reign visibly over all its inhabitants. Whether this doctrine be orthodox or not we shall not here inquire. The number of people who hold it is very much greater than the number of Jews residing in England. Many of those who hold it are distinguished by rank, wealth, and ability. It is preached from pulpits, both of the Scottish and of the English church. Noblemen and members of parliament have written in defence [sic] of it.”

(Thomas B. Macaulay, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (1844) vol. 5, p. 324)

A. What caused this great, world-wide revival was primarily the reading of the book of Daniel

B. Current events also played into interpretations of Daniel and Revelation as well

1. The disintegration of France, due to the French Revolution

“The dramatic impact of the French Revolution upon the American colonies was profound, giving birth to extraordinary hopes and fears. It gave impetus to the movement to democratize American life and institutions. The English declaration of war of France produced a crisis in America. At the beginning of the struggle the sympathy of America as a whole went to France.”

(L.E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, Vol. pp. 235-6)

2. The collapse of the papacy was seen almost universally, by these many writers, as a sign of God’s judgment on the mother Christian church, which had, through the centuries, lost her way

C. What happened to the joyous revival celebrating the coming of Jesus, was that He failed to come. Writes the Baptist preacher William Miller, when the day He expected Jesus to come passed uneventfully

“It passed. And the next day it seemed as though all the demons from the bottomless pit were let loose upon us. The same ones. . .who were crying for mercy. . .before were now. . .mocking, scoffing, and threatening in a most blasphemous manner.”

(William Miller, “Letter to J.O, Orr, M.D., December 14, 1844”)

- D. As the prophecy had said, it tasted sweet in the mouth but gave those who believed Jesus was coming again, an upset stomach. That is why so few churches proclaim the literal, visible, second coming of Jesus

“I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.”
(Revelation 10:10; NASB194; SP1217)

- E. Yet, the prophecy doesn't end on a sour note, because those who believe in Jesus must continue to proclaim His soon coming

“And they said to me, ‘You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.’
(Revelation 10:11; NASB194; SP1217)