

Daniel 12 and the Mount Olivet Prophecy

Michael Hughes

IN THE [MARCH 2007 Testimony](#) (p. 95), Brother Stephen Camplin makes an interesting contribution to our understanding of the relationship between the Olivet Prophecy and the time period prophecies in Daniel. The issue he raises is based on the words of Christ himself in the Olivet Prophecy: “When you see the abomination of desolation, the *one* spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place—the *one* reading let him understand—then let those in Judea flee upon the mountains” (Mt. 24:15,16 in the literal Greek). In these words, Christ appears to be telling us that the Olivet Prophecy and Daniel’s prophecies of “the abomination of desolation” are talking about the same thing.¹ Brother Camplin notes that none of the suggested historical fulfilments appears to reflect this. There is a similar issue from within the prophecy of Daniel itself that I would like to add to the discussion.

Four passages in Daniel

There are four passages in the book of Daniel that have “the abomination of desolation” or similar wording, as follows:

Daniel 8 contains the prophecy of the ram and the goat, which mentions “the transgression of desolation” (v. 13);

Daniel 9 finishes with the Seventy Weeks Prophecy, which includes the words, “on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate” (v. 27, NKJV);

Daniel 11 prophesies about the king of the north and the king of the south, and mentions “the abomination of desolation” (v. 31, NKJV);

Daniel 12 explains that “from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days” (v. 11, NKJV).

In the Hebrew and English it is Daniel 11 and 12 (and Daniel 9 in the Septuagint Greek translation but not the Hebrew original) that specifically mention “the abomination of desolation” or the equivalent.

Daniel 11 and 12

A closer examination of Daniel 11 and 12 reveals that Daniel 12:5-13 provides an explanation and time periods relating to the prophecy recorded in Daniel 11:31-12:4. In this regard, the prophecy of Daniel 11 and 12 follows the pattern of most of Daniel’s other prophecies (chs. 2, 4, 7 and 8), in which vision is followed by interpretation.

For example, the questions in Daniel 12:6,8 clearly relate to the events Daniel has just recorded in the preceding passage. Also, events mentioned in Daniel 12:5-13 in connection with time periods—such as the defeat of Israel (v. 7), the refining of the Jews (v. 10), the taking away of the daily sacrifice (v. 11), and the resurrection (v. 13), etc.—are all events mentioned in Daniel 11:31-12:4. The [table](#) overleaf lays out the supporting evidence for this connection in more detail.

If it is true that the time periods of Daniel 12 relate to the events in Daniel 11, then it follows that “the abomination of desolation” which begins the period of 1,290 days in Daniel 12:11 is “the abomination of desolation” mentioned in Daniel 11:31. They are the same event. This means that any suggested fulfilment of the time periods in Daniel 12 needs not only to fit the details of that chapter but also to harmonise with the details of Daniel 11, and vice versa. I am not aware of a historical fulfilment that does this, and would appreciate hearing of it if there is one.

A.D. 70 and prior?

“The abomination of desolation” in Daniel 11:31 is often related to Antiochus Epiphanes in the

1. It may be possible that Christ is prophesying of an event like the one spoken of by Daniel but happening at a different time. A number of New Testament passages quoting from the Old Testament use a phrase such as “that which was spoken by the prophet”, as Christ does in Matthew 24:15. Many of these New Testament passages appear to apply the Old Testament prophecy to events of a similar kind but at a different time. See Matthew 1:22; 2:15,17; 3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9; Acts 2:16.

Daniel Chapters 11 and 12

Quotations from the NKJV unless stated otherwise

A: Prophecy (11:2–12:4)	B: Explanation and time periods (12:5-13)	Connection between A and B
	v. 6. Until when is the end of the wonders? (literal Hebrew).	Having experienced “the wonders” described in Daniel 11, the questioner in 12:6 asks the time period involved.
11:40,41. At the time of the end . . . he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown.	v. 7. It shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.	12:7 is an answer to the question asked in v. 6 about “the end”. In 11:40-45 Israel is defeated at “the time of the end”, and 12:7 provides the time period at the end of which their defeat is complete.
“The end” is mentioned in 11:27,45, and “the time of the end” in 11:35,40 and 12:4.	v. 8. Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, “My lord, what shall be the end of these things?”	In 12:8 Daniel himself asks what happens at “the end” of the events described in Daniel 11. The rest of Daniel 12 is the answer given.
12:4. But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end.	v. 9. And he said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end”.	12:9 reinforces the message given at the conclusion of the prophecy in 12:4.
11:35. And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.	v. 10. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.	12:10 mentions the process of purifying the Jews, which 11:35 says will continue up to “the time of the end”. The time period mentioned in the next verse (v. 11) may relate to this refining process.
11:31. And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.	v. 11. And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.	12:11 explains that the taking away of the daily sacrifice and setting up of the abomination of desolation described in 11:31 begins a time period of 1,290 days. This may refer to the period of Jewish refinement mentioned in the previous verse (12:10).
12:2. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. v. 3. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.	v. 12. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. v. 13. But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.	The strong similarities between 12:13 and 12:2 indicate that Daniel himself will participate in the resurrection and reward described in 12:2,3. The fact that 12:12 contains a blessing for those who come to the 1,335 days (the longest of the three time periods in the chapter) ties in with Daniel arising to his inheritance “at the end of the days” and the wise shining for ever and ever. This suggests that the process of raising, judging and rewarding described in 12:2,3 will be completed by the end of the period of 1,335 days. Presumably this period starts from the same point as the time period in 12:11.

The prophecy in Daniel 11:2–12:4 describes the events, and 12:5-13 explains the time periods that relate to them.

second century B.C. and to the Romans in A.D. 70. Unfortunately there is difficulty using these dates as the starting point for the Daniel 12 time periods.

For example, it seems that Daniel was told in 12:11-13 that he will have arisen to his inheritance 1,335 days after "the abomination of desolation". If the starting point is A.D. 70, and even if days are interpreted as years, according to this view Daniel would have been raised from the dead by A.D. 1405, which is over 600 years ago. Since Daniel has not yet been raised, I see little option but to conclude that the primary fulfilment of "the abomination of desolation" mentioned in Daniel 11 and 12 takes place no earlier than the seventh century A.D., which brings us to the next possibility.

The Muslims and the Dome of the Rock?

"The abomination of desolation" time periods in Daniel 12 are often related to the Muslims, and to the Dome of the Rock being erected on the Temple Mount in the year A.D. 688. This interpretation has the end of one of Daniel's time periods in 1948 (the establishment of the State of Israel) and the resurrection still future. This looks promising. Unfortunately, as far as I am aware, this potential starting point does not harmonise well with the details of Daniel 11:31 and following. I am happy to be corrected on this if necessary.

Conclusion

So, whilst the second century B.C., A.D. 70, and the seventh century A.D. may contain shadow fulfilments of Daniel 11–12, I am not aware of any historical events that satisfy all of the details relating to "the abomination of desolation" prophesied in both chapters. This potentially leaves the main fulfilment of "the abomination of desolation" of Daniel 11–12, the one "spoken of by Daniel the prophet" referred to by Jesus, in the future.

Comments

Brother Hughes has drawn up some interesting comparisons in his [table](#), and led me to some interesting conclusions. The table refers to the whole prophecy in the heading, but the table itself only relates to 11:31 onwards. The implication is that the time periods of chapter 12 refer to literal periods at the time of the end, involving trouble for the Jewish nation. However, there is no clear

break at verse 30 that would enable us to say that verse 31 onwards is "the time of the end", and the first reference to "the time of the end" having arrived is verse 40. I cannot therefore see how the time periods of Daniel 12 could be literal days covering the time of the end.

Let us suppose that the time periods of chapter 12 refer to the whole span of the prophecy. The prophecy begins in the time of Daniel and goes on to forecast in great detail the wars of the Seleucids and Ptolemies, particularly as they affected the Land of Israel, in the years following the death of Alexander the Great. The correspondence is so clear that commentators who do not accept the inspiration of the Bible are forced to take the view that the prophecy dates to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, who enters the scene in verse 21. The conclusion of the prophecy is the resurrection and judgement. If we take the start of the prophecy as being the third year of Cyrus, when it was given (10:1), this was 536 B.C., a period of 2,542 years to the present day.

Given the span of the prophecy, the only way in which Daniel 12:5-13 could be giving the time period of the whole prophecy is if we add the time periods together and interpret them on a day-for-a-year basis. If we add together the 1,260 and 1,290 periods of verses 7 and 11 we get 2,550. On this basis the 1,290 period will expire in 2015, having begun in 715, about 100 years after the Muslim period began. 715 happens to be the year that the Al Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount was completed (the Dome of the Rock was completed about twenty-five years earlier). We might consider 2015, eight years ahead, a reasonable date when the Temple Mount will be cleared of Muslim abominations, and by which time the saints will have been raised and judged. The 1,335 period of verse 12 would then expire in 2060, at which time Daniel would be able to "stand in [his] lot", that is, his inheritance in the Land, when the whole earth has been subdued by Christ and the saints.

But what of the words in verse 7: "when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished (RV)"? A possible answer is that the time of the setting up of the Al Aqsa Mosque marked the completion of the process of the Jews being scattered from the Land, remembering that many Jews remained in Galilee after the Romans had killed or taken captive the Jews of Judea in A.D. 70 and A.D. 135. The words "all these things shall be finished" would then mean that the Muslim phase

of the desolation of the Jews would be the final phase of their desolation, to run on till 2015.

Regarding Christ's words in Matthew 24:15, in commenting on Brother Camplin's March letter I pointed out that Daniel 9:27 refers to "the

overspreading of abominations", leaving room for there to be more than one, and proposed that the "abomination of desolation" referred to by Christ was the one in Daniel 11:31.

Tony Benson

Your Letters

The census of Luke 2

A reader has written to ask Brother Peter Osborne, author of the series "Rome versus Jerusalem" (Dec. 2004 to May 2005), to comment on a suggestion regarding the census of Luke 2. The following is the request, followed by Brother Osborne's response.

Thank you for your articles in the *Testimony*. I am writing to ask if you would consider doing an article investigating the subject of Luke's census and the nativity, specifically on what was the involvement of Herod in the census. There may be other approaches, but I was particularly intrigued by a few comments by the late Brother Harry Whittaker in *Studies in the Gospels*. He writes:

"Herod the Great was wily enough to dress up this political event in a Jewish guise, by holding it at the time of a Jewish feast and by insisting on all registering as members of their own particular tribe of Israel. Almost certainly, according to Exodus 30:11-16, the payment was made of the half-shekel of 'atonement money . . . for the service of the tabernacle'. So the priests in Jerusalem would co-operate with enthusiasm" (p. 27).

Brother Whittaker makes realistic the synthesising of Luke and Matthew on the census, a subject in which the critics have had a field day. Yes, Cyrenius (Quirinius) was on the scene, was in effect ruling, but was not the major figure in enforcing the census. In 4 B.C. he had just finished a successful military campaign in Pamphylia-Galatia, for which he received honours and may have been on the scene in the territories involved. His involvement with the Roman Legion could well endow him with Luke's description as ruling

in Syria. He may have had the full power of Rome at his disposal, but did he use it?

A fully-fledged Roman census is hard to envision, on the basis of motivation, ability and opportunity.

Rome would be unlikely to diverge from established procedures. A priority in their strategies for empire was the support of puppet rulers like Herod. Herod had always glorified Rome, and they would think carefully before unsettling his reign. A Roman census would be a major step towards ending Herod's rule and moving to full absorption to empire, and, as we know, they were still willing after Herod's death to countenance tetrarchys and even succession to such as Archelaus. They thus were still, even a decade later, supportive of the protectorate system.

Furthermore, such a full-fledged Roman census would have been opposed by Herod, as he would have seen it as heralding the end of his rule. On the other hand, Herod had been voted by the Roman Senate as deserving the title, 'King of the Jews'. Would the Roman administrators have been willing to oppose Senate authority by carrying out such an erratic act? The Jewish people would not have cooperated either. So motivation on the part of all involved can be questioned.

What about the ability of the Roman authority to carry out a census? Rome's procedure was to get agreement from the Senate and appoint a censor or legate. They had to go through all of the steps prescribed by the Roman Senate, the same senate that had supported Herod. However, as far as we know, there were few, if any, Roman officials on site to set up and carry out such a census. There was certainly no Roman legion in