

one occasion, and no specific application to powers then existing is given. However, an application on continuous-historic lines beginning soon after the time the prophecy was given is indicated by the opening verse: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants *things which must shortly come to pass*". This could only be so if the fulfilment took place through history down to the return of Christ. There are in fact two continuous-historic sections:

Revelation 6–11. Begins with the fulfilment of the seals in events to do with the pagan Roman Empire, ends with the kingdoms of the world becoming the Kingdom of God, and with the judgement of the saints.

Revelation 12–22. Begins with a power which is described in terms of Daniel's fourth beast (Rome) persecuting the woman (the church), ends with the return of Christ and detailed descriptions of the establishment of the Kingdom and beyond.

I cannot see how such prophecies can have more than one fulfilment. What further fulfilment can there be of prophecies of the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God?

T.B.

The importance of Aramaic

Brother MacLeod's claim in his letter "[Hebrew and Greek important, not Aramaic](#)" (Feb. 2003, p. 53) that Aramaic was not in widespread use in Palestine during the time of Jesus and his disciples is a surprisingly dismissive view and unfortunately does not do justice to the subject raised in my original article ([Dec. 2002, p. 459](#)). Authorities on the matter take a very different view, as indicated by the following:

"The Aramaic texts of the Qumran and Murabbaat caves fill a great gap in our sources for the knowledge of that language as used in Palestine in the Greek and Roman periods. With the exception of relatively brief inscriptions, especially those of the Palmyrenes and Nabataeans, we had previously almost no Aramaic texts from that period. The literary Aramaic of the Persian and Greek periods was known from the Aramaic portions of the books of Ezra and Daniel and from papyrus documents found in Egypt, but the common spoken Aramaic of the Roman period in Palestine had no direct attestation.

"This was the language spoken by Jesus and his first disciples, though in a Galilean dialect which doubtless differed somewhat from the dialect of Judea . . . The new increment of Aramaic texts is therefore of great importance for serious study of the New Testament and Christian origins". Professor Millar Burrows, former Chairman of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literature at Yale University, and Dead Sea Scrolls scholar, in *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (pp. 184-5);

"Aramaic is known to have been the common language of Palestine, and especially of Galilee, in the time of Christ, and was in all probability the language which He and His apostles habitually spoke". F. F. Bruce, former Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the University of Manchester in *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (p. 39);

"Altered circumstances had brought many changes to the new Jewish State. Even the language, spoken and written, was other than formerly. Instead of the characters formerly employed, the exiles brought with them, on their return, those now common, the so-called square Hebrew letters, which gradually came into general use. The language spoken by the Jews was no longer Hebrew, but Aramaean, both in Palestine and in Babylonia; in the former the Western, in the latter the Eastern dialect. In fact the common people were ignorant of pure Hebrew, which henceforth became the language of students and of the Synagogue. Even there a *Methurgeman*, or interpreter, had to be employed to translate into the vernacular the portions of Scripture read in the public services, and the addresses delivered by the Rabbis. This was the origin of the so-called *Targumim*, or paraphrases of Scripture". Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* (Book 1, Chapter 1, pp. 7-8).

So, when Jesus spoke in the temple and synagogue he would have used Hebrew, as he also would have done in conversing with Nicodemus and the Pharisees and Sadducees, and no doubt others as well. However, Jesus, when reminding John the Baptist of his unique mission as Messiah and Saviour, said, "the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Mt. 11:5), and the language of the common people was Aramaic.

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