

# Beauties of the Truth

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## Rod of An Almond Tree

*"Jeremiah, what seest thou? . . . I see a rod of an almond tree. . . . Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it."* JEREMIAH 1: 11, 12

What does an almond rod have to do with the Lord "hastening" to fulfill his word? It is evidently a play on words in the Hebrew. In Nelson edition of the American Standard Version the footnote gives *shaked* for "almond tree," and *shoked* for "hasten" (rather, "watch" in ASV).

(Footnote - How is it that the two words are so similar? Rotherham's footnote: "'The watcher' - 'so called from its early blossom, as being the first of the trees to wake from the sleep of winter.' - Davis' H.L." His translation is "a twig of an almond tree . . . Thou hast rightly seen, for keeping *watch* am I, over my word to perform it.")

The use of sound-alike words to emphasize a point appears also in Isaiah 5: 7. In Rotherham's translation, "And he waited for *equity* but lo! *murderous iniquity*. For the *rule of right*, but lo! *The cry of the wronged*." His footnote: "N.B.: the striking assonance-'And he waited for *mishpat*, but lo *mispah*; for *zedhakah*, but lo *zeakah*.'"

But there is a notable difference between the word play of Jeremiah and that of Isaiah. In Isaiah the meaning of the words convey a direct thought, in addition to the "assonance," In Jeremiah, there appears to be little direct relation between an almond tree and the accomplishment of God's word.

Symbolically, however, there is a connection. The rod of an almond tree represents the manifestation of God's election of the Church class. This comes from its use in the Tabernacle to show that Aaron and his tribe were to serve the priestly and ceremonial duties. (Numbers 17) A representative of each tribe provided a rod; these were collectively laid up in the tabernacle by Moses. "And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord *unto all*

*the children of Israel:* and they looked, and took every man his rod. And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels . . . "

But what *particular manifestation* of God's election of the church is represented in Jeremiah 1: 11? We think it is the resurrection of the sleeping saints, (Footnote - The other possibility which comes to mind is the completion of the church in glory. But against this is that Jeremiah represents the harvest saints in the flesh.) investing them with judicial authority and power (Rev. 11: 15) to actually *accomplish* the words of Jeremiah 1: 10 -

" . . . over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to, destroy and to throw down, [and, concerning Christ's kingdom] to build, and to plant."

Jeremiah, who spoke these words, pictures the saints in the flesh. They are God's spokesmen declaring the necessary replacement of present institutions with the incoming Kingdom of Christ.

Our mouths have been "touched" and the Lord says to us "I have put my words in thy mouth." (vs. 9) (Notice a similar mention respecting Isaiah who had his mouth purged to cleanse him for service-another picture of the saints in the flesh.-Isa. 6: 5-7)

Among other scriptures which show a close relationship between the raising of the saints and the judgments of Christendom, note Obadiah 21, and Ezek. 43: 2, 4, 5 *cf.* Rev. 18: 1, 2.

## **The Dragon of Revelation 20**

As there appears to be some question regarding the identity of the dragon of Revelation 20, the following is offered as a summary of the position that it represents *primarily* the civil power as a tool of the adversary.

Dragon appears in the New Testament only in the book of Revelation. There it appears only in chapters 12, 13, 16 and 20. The 12th chapter is explained in detail by Bro. Russell in which he clearly shows the dragon as pagan Rome as the enemy of both the true and the apostate churches. It is not an unsafe generalization to say that in this chapter Bro. Russell equates the dragon with civil power. In the 13th chapter he does likewise, and in the 16th chapter likewise. It should not, therefore, be inconsistent or surprising to claim that the final mention of the dragon in Rev. 20 is also representative of civil power. Some, however, seriously questions this position.

On R4609 Bro. Russell stresses that while the devil of Rev. 20 includes the actual being (the personal devil), the term is much broader than that and represents a system. Care must be taken with this quote. Note that Bro. Russell says "religious system." Note also that he specifies verses 7-9 dealing with war in *heaven*. Because the dragon was pagan it was religious in a pagan sense only. But as such it did control the heaven of its day. The result of the battle, however, is that the dragon is cast out of heaven to which it never returns. After this point it is an exclusively civil entity-a thought which we believe is consistent with all of Bro. Russell's writings on the matter and which accounts for his interpretation of dragon in chapters 13 and 16.

The internal evidence from the book of Revelation seems to support the conclusion that the dragon of chapter 20 is the civil power heretofore discussed. We believe this evidence is strongest in the following three references:

1. In Revelation 12: 9 this dragon is named with its *multiple names*: dragon, serpent, devil and Satan. *Only* in one other place does this occur: Rev. 20: 2. It is not unreasonable to think that this is so because the Lord wished to stress to the careful observer that the identity of the entity in Rev. 20: 2 is the same as that which was cast out of heaven in Rev. 12: 9 - *i.e.*, the civil power.

2. In Rev. 16: 13 is introduced a trinity of enemies: beast, dragon, and false prophet. The Revelator follows these enemies until their destruction. Two of them, the beast and false prophet, are destroyed in the lake of fire in 19: 20. But the dragon is not. Thus the 20th chapter is set aside as a detailed description of the destruction of the same dragon introduced in 16: 13 - the civil power.

Some have suggested that the dragon is represented in chapter 19:19 under the words "kings of the earth." We do not believe this to be true because "kings of the earth" are *also* listed in 16:14 as the ones *affected* by the pronouncements issuing from beast, dragon, and false prophet. Therefore, a distinction must be made between dragon and kings of the earth. They are not the same. Additionally, note that the kings of the earth are not destroyed in the lake of fire in 19:20 with the beast and false prophet so that if the kings of the earth were synonymous with the dragon, their destruction would even so of necessity be reserved for a later text than chapter 19.

3. Rev. 20:10 shows us that finally, at the end of the little season, the dragon has joined the beast and false prophet in the lake of fire. There would be no need to mention the beast and false prophet in this verse except to draw our attention to the fact that all three enemies of 16:13 are finally accounted for-the third having its demise 1000 years later than the first two-and its identity yet the same: civil power.

In summary it would be wise to stress again that the personal devil must not be excluded from Rev. 20. His personal binding as shown by Jesus in the Gospels is to be an accomplished fact. However, chapter 20 is not *primarily* dealing with the personal devil, but rather with the binding and ultimate destruction of his long-cherished tool: civil government. It seems to have been our Pastor's expectation that the deception of the little season would be in the form of a civil government- a coup to displace or challenge the ancient worthies. This concept is in harmony with the loosing of civil government and its master, Satan. Perhaps the terms Gog and Magog also give us the same clue. These names in the gospel harvest we do not connect with a religious power nor with the personal devil solely, but rather with some civil invading force. A similar interpretation at the little season is consistent.

In short, there seems to be no particular argument against the dragon of Rev. 20 being representative of civil power, and there seems to be strong, consistent, contextual argument for it. Let the Lord enlighten us further as need be.

-- *Contributed*

## ***"7 Times" - 4 Times***

***"Hew down the tree. . . leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass . . . let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him"*** - Daniel 4:14-16

This text comes from a dream of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Many things occur in dreams which are impossible in reality. That was true in this dream. Nebuchadnezzar saw a great tree which sheltered and nourished all the beasts of earth and fowl of heaven. "The height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth." Suddenly this majestic tree was ordered of the angels to be hewn down, but to leave the "stump of his roots in the earth, . . . with a band of iron and brass." (Dan. 4:10-15) The scene changed, and the tree became a man given over to the life of a beast. "Wet with the dew of heaven . . . let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: let his heart be changed from man's and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him." (Vs. 15, 16)

### **FIRST INTERPRETATION**

The prophet Daniel gives us dream's immediate interpretation. The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar as king of the empire. His authority was cut down and he wandered insane as an animal for "7 times."

But his reason and kingdom were subsequently restored. That his dominion was to return had been shown by the stump of the tree remaining in the earth. It was circled with iron and brass bands, suggesting that at some time the hands might be loosed, and the stump sprout again. "For these is the hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease." (Job 14:7)

### **DEEPER MEANING**

But the dream was recorded to inform us of affairs more important than Nebuchadnezzar's period of insanity. We have long seen it to foretell 7 prophet times of 360 years each, when the beastly governments (lion, bear, leopard and "dreadful" beast of Daniel 7) would subordinate God's typical kingdom, Israel. These "7 times" of gentile rule parallel the "7 times" of Israel's national punishment spoken of in Leviticus 26: "I will punish you seven times more for your sins." (Vs. 18) This was from 607 BC to 1914 AD, when the incoming actual kingdom of Christ began the disruption of the gentiles and the restoring of Israel's nationhood. A comparison of Lev. 26:31-34 with 2 Chron. 36:17-21 shows that Israel's 7 times of punishment began with their subjection to Babylon.

### **"7 TIMES" - 4 TIMES**

An intriguing feature of both Daniel 4 and Leviticus 26 is that the warning of "7 times" appears exactly 4 times. (Daniel 4:16,23,25,32, Leviticus 26:18,21,24,28) This in itself forms another link between the two passages supporting the conclusion that they do refer to the same period. It is valuable at least for that.

But is there any special reason why it appears *four* times? This is the kind of question that we often cannot answer. But in this case we have a suggestion. We think it infers there are four intended applications of the 7 times. These are upon:

- 1) *Nebuchadnezzar* personally (7 X 1 year?)
- 2) *Israel* during 70 of bondage to Babylon (7 X 10 years)
- 3) *Israel* in bondage to Gentile power for 2520 years, 607 BC-1914 AD (7 X 360 years)
- 4) *Mankind*, who forfeited their dominion for 7000 years (7 X 1000 years)

(1) is evident. Daniel gave us that interpretation. (3) and (4) are discussed in Volume 2, chapter IV. (Footnote - That chapter does suggest a correlation between Adam and Nebuchadnezzar (pg. 96). It does not suggest the 7000 year period as a fulfillment of the 7 times, nor equate the tree with Israel's sovereignty.) We add (2), and suggest the 70 years of servitude to Babylon (the "head," representative of the entire image) was itself a small picture of the entire 7 x 360 years of the gentiles.

The dream showed a tree being cut down - a dominion lost. Each of these interpretations includes a lost dominion, and the hope of its restoration after the 7 times. The dominions lost in each case:

- 1) Nebuchadnezzar's
- 2) Israel's independent statehood lost to Babylon.
- 3) Israel's national independence lost to 4 world empires.
- 4) The dominion of earth possessed by mankind in Adam.

### **A CLOSER LOOK AT (2) & (3)**

These 2 views are intimately related because they both refer to Israel. In fact, as before stated, (2) is a small model of (3). The subjection of Israel to the head of gold (Babylon) was the representative of the longer subjection to the entire gentile image.

In support of this note part of the prophecy against Israel in Leviticus. ". . . seven times . . . and I will break the pride of your power, (Footnote - *Cf.* Lam. 2:3,17. Power is symbolized by a horn. Lam. 2:3,17 seems to record the fulfillment of this Leviticus expression.) And I will make your *heaven as iron*, and your *earth as brass*." (Lev. 26:18,19) (Deut. 28:23 reverses this: "thy heaven . . . shall be brass, and the earth shall be iron.")

This refers to the governmental forces which would subordinate Israel. They appear as the iron and brass bands around the tree stump (Dan. 4:15) to restrain growth. The breaking of these bands means the end of the 7 times, and Isaiah 45:1,2 prophesies of that breaking. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him; . . . I will go before thee, . . . I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron."

This speaks of the overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus. The cutting asunder of the restraining iron and brass led directly to the return of Israel to their land. But in the fuller and larger application

Cyrus is a type of Christ, God's true "anointed." He subdues the gentile image, freeing Israel in a greater sense from the restraints of "iron and brass" that they might sprout as an independent nation again. Those bands began to be broken in World War 1.

Psalms 107:11,16 refers to this. For Israel who had "rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the most High," the Lord breaks "the gates of brass, and cut[s] the bars of iron in sunder." The brass and iron remind us of the metallic image.

### **WHAT IS A "TIME"?**

We are using a "time" variously in the 4 applications of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. We think this is justifiable. Prophetic teachings often encompass different but not contradictory applications. E.g., notice how differently the famous prophecy of Isa. 7:14 was fulfilled in the case of Isaiah's son and Jesus. (Isa. 8:3, Matt. 1:23) In this way God teaches several things with a few prophecies. Often this permits a lesser fulfillment to further illustrate a fuller and grander one. This is so in Malachi's prophecy of Elijah. John the Baptist was a fulfillment, and in turn was himself typical of the greater fulfillment, the Church. Psalms 2:1-5 is another prophecy which clearly has two fulfillments.

Of course the primary meaning of a "time" is that carried most consistently in Scripture. It is a period of 360 years. This is gathered from Rev. 11:2-3, 12:6,14, 13:5 which refer to the same period as "[1] time [symbolic year] [2] times, and a half a time" (3 1/2), 42 months, and 1260 days. Using 30 days per month all are identical. Using the day-for-a-year reckoning of Ezek. 4:4,6 and Numbers 14:34, one "time" = 360 years.

### **ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL INFORMATION**

There are two manuscript words used for "time(s)" in Daniel. Strong's 5732, *iddan*, Dan. 2:21, 4:16,23,25,32, 7:25. Strong's 4150, *mowed*, Dan. 12:7. Since the last two scriptures refer to the same period (3 1/2 times) it seems either word can be used for the prophetic time of 360 years.

In Leviticus 26th chapter there is no direct Hebrew word for "times." It is supplied; or perhaps more correctly, inferred by the use of "seven." "I will chastise you seven [seven what?] for your sins." (Lev. 26:28) Various translations of this: "seven times" (AV, ASV, Lamsa, Smith, NASB, Rotherham), "seven (times)" (Green), "sevenfold" (Leeser).

The fact that in Daniel different words are used helps us see that a specific word is not required in Leviticus. The concept of a seven-segment, "sevenfold," or seven-staged punishment is sufficient to *suggest* a punishment of 7 prophetic times. Relating Moses' prophecy to the dream in Daniel 4 fortifies the conclusion.

## ***WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST!***

Monday, September 22, 1980 - Iraq declared war on Iran. How does this relate to the mustering of nations for the Armageddon conflict at Israel?

Ezekiel 38:5 mentions Persia (Iran) as an ally of Gog (Russia). In past decades, however, Iran has been aligned with the Western powers. This changed with the deposition of the Shah in 1979. Since then Iran has been bitterly anti-American, but also anti-Russian. Certainly Russia's atheism is contrary to the principles of Mr. Khomeini's Mohameddan revolution.

Iraq, on the other hand, is supplied with Russian arms and has close ties with the Soviets.

The effect of the present war cannot be otherwise than to weaken Iran. This enhances Russia's opportunity to exercise her influence and makes Iran more vulnerable to Soviet aggression. Will Iran be taken over by the Soviets, as in Afghanistan? Or will they remain independent, but through weakness lean more favorably to the Soviets than in the past, for appeasement sake? Any specific inference from the scriptures on this detail is not apparent to us. In any case Iran is irately anti-Israel. This in itself may be sufficient to align them with the attacking forces in the last battle.

The Strait of Hormuz is among the long disputed border territories which are the subject of the present struggle. As 40% of the free world's oil supplies usually flow through this narrow outlet from the Persian Gulf, the western governments are gravely concerned. The United States recently proposed a council with her allies to lay contingency plans for retaining access to that region-with military force if required. For while America reportedly has a 2-year reserve of petroleum at present, most of her allies are not so well stocked. And even a slight shortage of oil on the open market could cause prices to soar, as suppliers barter among demanders for the highest price. At the very least this incident points to the vital importance of the sustained flow of Middle East oil. It is not difficult to see that measurable Soviet aggression in the Middle East could spark military countermeasures by Western nations. This is what we ultimately expect to occur when god descends "like a cloud the cover the land." (Ezekiel 38:9)

## ***COUP IN TURKEY!***

A coup from the Turkish military occurred on Friday, September 12. Its purpose was to calm the rising strife fomenting among the leftist element. The coup accentuated the severity of the unrest which in past months had led to the ambushment of several American military personnel stationed in Turkey.

These developments are of particular interest to brethren who have understood Ezekiel's prophecy to show Turkey (Togarmah, perhaps also Gomer-Ezekiel 38:6) allied with Gog's forces from the north. If this is correct, it seems to require a shift of Turkey's political alignment from the West to the East. A leftist takeover would serve that purpose. Presently Turkey is allied with the Nato powers.

A fuller treatment of Ezekiel 38 is available in tract form by request. It interprets the prophecy largely from a geographical approach. It identifies the areas where the peoples Ezekiel spoke of lived, and correlates the nations which inhabit those lands today.

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