

Prophetic Delays

IN JEREMIAH 37 the Lord told Jeremiah that the Chaldeans were going to destroy Jerusalem:

Jeremiah 37:6: “Then came the word of the Lord unto the prophet Jeremiah saying,
7 Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that
sent you unto me to enquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh’s army, which is come forth to
help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land.

8 And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and
burn it with fire.

9 Thus saith the Lord; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely
depart from us: for they shall not depart.

10 For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against
you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up
every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.”

At that time the people were saying “Oh, we don’t need to worry about the Chaldeans. The Egyptians are coming to help us and they will make the Chaldeans leave. Everything is going to be fine.” God told Jeremiah to warn the people that they were wrong. Egypt was not going to be able to save them, and the Chaldeans were going to burn the city.

Immediately after Jeremiah relayed this message, the Chaldeans left the land because they were afraid of the Egyptians:

Jeremiah 37:11: “And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was
broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh’s army,”

Needless to say, this did not help Jeremiah’s credibility. He was promptly arrested and put in prison.

As it turned out, though, events *did* happen exactly as God said. The Chaldeans did come back, and when they returned Egypt was not able to save Israel. The Chaldeans did burn the city with fire and carry off its people. The prophecy came true – but it didn’t come true right away. Instead, in the short run, what happened was exactly the opposite of what God had said. Even though Jeremiah was proven right in the end, current events made it look like he was a false prophet.

There is something very similar to this going on today. In the past hundred years there have been several Bible prophecies fulfilled. Israel has become a nation again, and the Jews now possess Jerusalem. However, that’s been pretty much it. For years Bible teachers have been saying that one day Damascus will be utterly destroyed. They have been predicting a massive war between Israel and her neighbors – a war that Israel wins, that lulls Israel into a false sense of peace, and that leads to the Gog-Magog war. Yet despite all these predictions over all these years, *none of it has happened yet*. Israel has been involved in a number of wars, but none of them have been a fulfillment of prophecy. Each prediction has been proven false.

For the past few years there has been a lot of tension in the Middle East. Some people are claiming that this tension will lead to a war that will fulfill prophecy – but we have heard that before. The truth is that no one has any idea what is going to happen next. People keep saying “The end is near!”, but they have been saying that since before I was born.

We are in the same situation that Jeremiah was in. God told Jeremiah the truth: Egypt was not going to save Jerusalem, and the Chaldeans really were going to take the city. In the end that is exactly

what happened – but in the short term the Egyptians did scare the Chaldeans away.

Ultimately, Damascus really is going to be destroyed. Israel will defeat her neighbors. She will enter into a time of peace and become wealthy. The Gog-Magog war will happen. One day the Tribulation will begin. These things will happen – we just don't know when.

It may be that the current situation will lead to a fulfillment of prophecy. It is also quite possible that there will be no war – or that the war will have nothing to do with prophecy. The fulfillment of these various prophecies may still be decades away. It may happen in our lifetimes, or it may not.

The Rapture can happen at any time, but end-times prophecies are a different matter. Fulfillment may not be near, and the Tribulation may not be near either. That means that there is still time for us to work and preach the gospel. We have been given more time than many people expected, and we should use that time as wisely as possible. After all, the day will come when our time will run out – and when that happens our work will be over, whether we were finished or not.