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DANIEL 12:7 ... A 'SCATTERING' OR A 'SHATTERING'?

Some people have presented arguments which claim that Daniel 12:7 does NOT refer to the "scattering" of God's people which is currently taking place, but that it supposedly refers to the "SHATTERING" of the power of God's people during the three and a half years that precede the return of Jesus Christ, and which "shattering" is still future.

Let's examine this question more closely.

The general description we find in Daniel chapter 11 deals with the end time, and Daniel 12:5 then starts another vision. The previous vision has taken the story right through to its conclusion. Daniel 12:1 then focuses on the great tribulation, and Daniel 12:2-3 then focuses on the first resurrection. The story ENDS with the resurrection to immortal life.

THEREFORE, at the end of the story, Daniel is then told to "seal the book" (Daniel 12:4) until the time of the end, when God would open it up to His servants.

So the new vision, which starts in Daniel 12:5, does not continue the story regarding what will happen after the time of the first resurrection. No, instead this new vision now BACKTRACKS and fills in some details that pertain to the previous vision.

Exactly HOW FAR it backtracks is something we will have to determine.

Daniel 12:6 reads:

And [one] said to the man clothed in linen, which [was] upon the waters of the river, HOW LONG [SHALL IT BE TO] THE END OF THESE WONDERS? (Daniel 12:6)

Which "wonders" is this referring to? Why, all the things that were revealed to Daniel in the previous vision. The question is: "how long until these events come to pass?"

There are two parts to the answer to this question.

THE FIRST PART refers to a period of three and one half years. Now exactly what is meant by the expression: "IT SHALL BE FOR 3 1/2 YEARS"?

What does "IT" here refer to? It seems to me that the "it" refers to "the great tribulation", or "the time of trouble" mentioned in verse one. This statement must have some focus. There must be something specific which lasts for this 3 1/2 years. It is "the time of trouble" which was of concern to Daniel, and concerning which God was here giving him more information.

Now let's carefully notice THE SECOND PART of this verse. It reads:

... AND WHEN HE SHALL HAVE ACCOMPLISHED to scatter the power of the holy people, ALL THESE [THINGS] SHALL BE FINISHED. (Daniel 12:7)

In our English text there are THREE different verbs used in succession in this verse, which we should take notice of. They are: accomplished, to scatter, finished.

The first verb used, "he shall have accomplished", is the Hebrew verb "kalah".

The second verb used, "to scatter", is the Hebrew verb "naphats".

The third verb used, "shall be finished", is again the Hebrew verb "kalah".

So notice that the verb "kalah" is used TWICE in this verse. We will come back to this point later.

THE WAY TO ESTABLISH THE MEANING OF BIBLICAL WORDS:

The first thing we can do, when we want to know the exact meaning of a word, is to look it up in a dictionary. This may provide us with a range of meanings in English. The temptation at that point in time is to then immediately accept the meaning that fits in with our ideas. However, there is still a better way to verify the meaning of such a biblical word. And that way is as follows: IF this word is used in many other passages, THEN we should look at those as well. In many cases other passages will reveal meanings that are perfectly clear and unambiguous. This tells us how GOD inspired this word to be used. And whenever a biblical word has a clear and distinct meaning, one that cannot be debated, in other passages, THEN that particular meaning must always be a distinct POSSIBILITY for the questionable passage we may be examining.

In simple terms: look to CLEAR uses of any biblical word to help establish possible meanings in passages that are less clear.

With this in mind, let's now look at the two Hebrew verbs we noted above.

THE VERB "KALAH"

This verb, which is here once translated as "accomplished" and once as "shall be finished", is used 206 times in the Old Testament. In the KJV it is translated, among others, as follows: consume (57 times), end (44 times), finish (20 times), fail (18 times), accomplish (12 times).

Here are some clear passages where this verb is used. I have rendered its translation into CAPITAL LETTERS for easier recognition.

And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine SHALL CONSUME the land; (Genesis 41:30)

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I MAY CONSUME THEM: and I will make of thee a great nation. (Exodus 32:10)

Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou [art] a stiffnecked people: LEST I CONSUME THEE in the way. (Exodus 33:3)

And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had MADE AN END of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. (Genesis 27:30)

And when Jacob HAD MADE AN END of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the

bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people. (Genesis 49:33)

Thus the heavens and the earth WERE FINISHED, and all the host of them. (Genesis 2:1)

And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses FINISHED the work. (Exodus 40:33)

And the taskmasters hastened [them], saying, FULFIL your works, [your] daily tasks, as when there was straw. (Exodus 5:13)

The above verses are a very small selection, which makes quite clear that this verb has the meaning of "finishing, ending, fulfilling", as well as the meaning of "consuming". This we will look at more closely later.

Now let's look at the verb "naphats".

THE VERB "NAPHATS"

As pointed out, this verb is used 22 times in the Old Testament. These 22 occurrences make very clear that it has TWO main meanings:

1) It means: to shatter, break, dash, beat in pieces.

THIS is the meaning the argument about "shattering" is based on.

2) It also means: to scatter, disperse, overspread, be scattered.

THIS meaning is overlooked by those who expound the "shattering" idea.

Now there is no question that this verb quite often means "to shatter". However, this does not in any way detract from the other equally clear meaning!

Now the meaning which God intended this Hebrew verb to have in Daniel 12:7 does not at all depend on how often it is used with the meaning of "to shatter", as opposed to how often it is used with the meaning of "to scatter". Arguments about ratios of how often it has the one meaning are meaningless. It can be very clearly established that "naphats" does indeed also have the meaning of "to scatter".

Here are the facts. In the following verses I have rendered the translation of "naphats" in capital letters for easy recognition. Notice how this verb is used:

These [are] the three sons of Noah: and of them WAS the whole earth OVERSPREAD. (Genesis 9:19)

What does this verb mean HERE (translated as "was overspread") ... does "SHATTER" make sense here? No, it does not! The descendants of Noah's three sons were SCATTERED all over the earth.

And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people WERE SCATTERED from me, and [that] thou camest not within the days appointed, and [that] the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; (1 Samuel 13:11)

How about this usage of "naphats"? Does the word HERE refer to "SHATTER"? Once again, no, it certainly does NOT!

My servants shall bring [them] down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them TO BE DISCHARGED THERE, and thou shalt receive [them]: and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household. (1 Kings 5:9)

How about this usage ... does the word HERE refer to "SHATTER"? Once again, no, it certainly does NOT!

And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together THE DISPERSED OF JUDAH from the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:12)

How about this passage? Will God gather "the shattered people of Judah", or will God gather "the SCATTERED people of Judah"? Once again, the word "naphats" must here clearly mean "scattered".

At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations WERE SCATTERED. (Isaiah 33:3)

How about this place where "naphats" is used ... at Christ's second coming will the nations be "SHATTERED" or will they be "SCATTERED"? Again, here it clearly does not mean "shattered".

I have now shown you five different places where the word "naphats" most emphatically CANNOT mean "shatter"; in all of these five places it OBVIOUSLY means some form of "scattering".

THEREFORE any argument about "how often" the word "naphats" has the one meaning as opposed to the other meaning is meaningless. For example, how would you apply that argument, that "naphats" means "to shatter" MORE OFTEN than it means "to scatter", to 1 Samuel 13:11 in order to prove that Saul said to Samuel that the people "WERE SHATTERED" from him? It doesn't make sense, does it?

I have seen one presentation in which 13 different translations are cited to support the point that in Daniel 12:7 the word "naphats" should read "shatter". That actually doesn't prove anything at all.

DIFFERENT TRANSLATIONS ARE NEVER REAL "PROOF"!

There is a flaw in logic when people turn to various different translations of the Bible as their first line of proof for an argument, which is intended to negate one particular clearly established meaning of a Hebrew (or in the New Testament Greek) word. And that flaw is this:

WHO CARES HOW DIFFERENT TRANSLATIONS TRANSLATE THE WORD "NAPHATS" IN THIS PASSAGE?

Are those 13 translations supposed to imply that therefore the word "naphats" does NOT mean "to scatter"? No, they can't really imply that, because in the five passages I quoted above they also translate this word "naphats" as "scatter" or as some synonym for "scatter".

The bottom line is this:

When a given word has CLEARLY PROVEN different meanings, then in any passage that could be ambiguous the translators themselves use their own bias and their own opinions as to which meaning to attach in that passage. This choice of meanings on the part of the translators only reflects their personal preference, nothing more. THIS IS PRECISELY ONE OF THE REASONS WHY THERE ARE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DIFFERENT TRANSLATIONS.

Once you know beyond any doubt that "naphats" does indeed also mean "to scatter" in other biblical passages, then even FIFTY different English translations of Daniel 12:7 don't change this fact!

STRIVING ABOUT WORDS

The Apostle Paul urged us not to "strive about words to no profit" (see 2 Timothy 2:14). As the word "naphats" is used in Daniel 12:7 ... is there REALLY a difference between "scattering" and "shattering"?

NO, THERE IS NOT!

This verse tells us that THE POWER is going to be "scattered" or, if you prefer, it is going to be "shattered". "Shatter" is a very graphic word which brings to mind a piece of pottery that is broken.

Question: When a piece of pottery is "SHATTERED" into many different little pieces, exactly what has happened to the whole piece?

Answer: Why, it has been "SCATTERED" ... the pieces are lying all over the place. Similarly, what happens to the pieces of the windscreen of a car which is "shattered" in an accident? The individual small pieces of that "shattered" windscreen are "scattered" all over the road!

And this is PRECISELY WHY this one Hebrew word has both these meanings, because in many circumstances "shattering" involves "scattering", though the reverse may not always apply (i.e. some forms of "scattering" do not involve any "shattering"). Basically the "shattering" takes place first, and the "scattering" is then a consequence of that "shattering".

Anyway, I FIRST wanted to make clear that "scatter" is very much a biblically correct translation of the word "naphats". However, once we are prepared to admit that in Daniel 12:7 it could very well be translated as "scatter", THEN I am quite content to also consider the meaning of "shatter" in this verse.

Frankly, whether this word is in Daniel 12:7 translated as "scatter" or as "shatter", it does not change ANYTHING in the meaning of this verse!

A COMMON FLAW IN EXPLAINING THE SCRIPTURES

There is something that is done quite frequently, and therefore it is something we should be aware of it. And that is this:

People start out ASSUMING that they correctly understand a Scripture before they have even examined it very carefully. Their assumption is based on how they understand the rest of the Bible. Therefore the verse they are examining simply MUST fit into that understanding which they already have.

Now IF "the rest of the understanding they already have" is indeed correct, THEN this approach is usually fine! But IF there is a flaw in "the rest of the understanding they already have", THEN the verse they are examining is going to be FORCED into conformity with that flawed understanding. And THEN they will never come to the true and correct answer!

This is the problem religious people in this world have. As long as they view the Scriptures based on the flawed understanding they have, they will never understand the truth.

THERE IS A DEAD GIVE-AWAY OF THIS APPROACH!

Do you know what that give-away is? Are we ourselves perhaps guilty of sometimes employing this approach? Here is how to identify this approach.

When people explain a difficult Scripture, they might use one of these two approaches:

APPROACH #1:

They FIRST explain the entire difficult verse and every word and every phrase in it IN GREAT DETAIL. Possibly they might refer to what the original Hebrew or Greek actually means. ONLY ONCE THEY HAVE DONE THIS do they then appeal to other supporting Scriptures, which make the same point as the "difficult" Scripture. And even if they bring some "supporting Scriptures" into the discussion earlier, this does not prevent them from carefully explaining every single word in the verse in question.

APPROACH #2:

People have HARDLY gotten into an examination of the difficult Scripture in question before they ALREADY introduce numerous "supporting Scriptures", which are claimed to say the same thing as the difficult Scripture. These "supporting Scriptures" are OBVIOUSLY "very convincing" in what they say. In fact, there may be so many "supporting Scriptures" that the rest of the "difficult Scripture" is actually never focused on, and thus NEVER EXPLAINED. It is simply ASSUMED to have been adequately covered by THE NUMEROUS CROSS-REFERENCES THAT WERE INTRODUCED.

Now I myself very deliberately and very consciously use Approach #1 to understand the Scriptures. But many of you who will read this will frequently use Approach #2 to understand the Scriptures, because THAT is what you were taught in the Church of God in many cases. I say this in order to help you understand the Bible more clearly; I do not say this to somehow imply that I am better. Approach #2 commonly leads to major misunderstandings of the Scriptures.

The problem with Approach #2 should be readily apparent. The problem is that EVERY "supporting Scripture", which is introduced BEFORE the difficult Scripture itself is correctly explained, is OBVIOUSLY based on the preconceived ideas of the person presenting the explanation.

Can you understand that it is very unsound reasoning to present "supporting Scriptures" BEFORE one has correctly explained the Scripture in question?

When someone introduces a "supporting Scripture" BEFORE the meaning of the difficult Scripture is clearly established, then the "supporting Scripture" is intended to slant the meaning of the difficult Scripture in favour of the "supporting Scripture". In MANY areas our preconceived ideas (i.e. the ideas we have before we even approach a difficult Scripture) are probably correct. This would apply especially to areas of Christian living. We already KNOW that God's laws are binding on us and that God REQUIRES us to obey His laws. So we can correctly approach difficult Scriptures with this premise firmly fixed in mind.

BUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT PROPHECY, then we really don't have the same surety that our preconceived ideas are correct, though we may think so. It is especially important that we employ Approach #1 in our efforts to understand the prophecies of the Bible; but in practice we very easily employ Approach #2 in this area. Employing Approach #2 is much easier, and we tend to feel more

comfortable with it. In many cases it enables us to avoid focusing on what the Scriptures are actually SAYING! Our "supporting Scriptures" have supposedly already done that for us.

SOME EXAMPLES OF APPROACH #2

Let me give you just a few examples of where people use Approach #2. These examples have nothing to do with Daniel 12:7, but they are helpful for you to understand.

EXAMPLE 1:

People who try to use the words of the Apostle Paul to do away with CLEAR statements by Jesus Christ in the gospels. The Worldwide Church of God has done this a great deal in recent years.

EXAMPLE 2:

Looking at OTHER Scriptures to "explain away" the statement in Revelation 14:4 that the 144,000 are "THE FIRSTFRUITS unto God and to the Lamb". And there really are no other "firstfruits".

EXAMPLE 3:

Using ONE SINGLE STATEMENT out of the whole context of Revelation 7:9-17 in an attempt to identify this "great multitude". The ONE statement that is latched onto is "these ... came out of the great tribulation" (Revelation 7:14), and in the process ABOUT 20 OTHER IDENTIFYING STATEMENTS ARE TOTALLY IGNORED, because they simply don't fit into the preconceived ideas.

EXAMPLE 4:

Clinging to preconceived ideas about the LATIN name "Lucifer". This is a Latin word (which we have accepted into the English language), and in the LATIN version of the Bible (known as the Latin Vulgate) the word "Lucifer" is very clearly used three times, including ONCE FOR JESUS CHRIST in 2 Peter 1:19 and ONCE FOR SATAN in Isaiah 14:12. Are you really sure that in Isaiah 14:12 the word "lucifer" is an accurate translation for the Hebrew word "heylel", when "Lucifer" is ABSOLUTELY AND WITHOUT ANY QUESTION A 100% CORRECT TRANSLATION IN 2 PETER 1:19, which refers to Jesus Christ?

EXAMPLE 5:

Many people ASSUME that Matthew 24:14 is a commission to the Church. They feel no need to present any PROOF for this assertion. They also don't read the verse for what it actually says.

EXAMPLE 6:

Many people ASSUME that the Song of Solomon is supposed to be a discussion of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary. They totally ignore the fact that God is never mentioned in this book; God is not even hinted at in this song. This song deals exclusively with the subject of sex.

Now the way to avoid the error inherent in Approach #2 is to always look EXACTLY at what a verse actually says. And we need to look at EVERYTHING that the verse in question says.

So now let's get back to our subject of Daniel 12:7.

THE POWER OF THE HOLY PEOPLE IS SHATTERED AND SCATTERED

I mentioned earlier that it doesn't really matter whether we apply the meaning of "shattered" OR the meaning of "scattered" to Daniel 12:7; the result is still the same. I used the word "scattered" in my article because that is the word many people are familiar with from the KJV.

Now IF the meaning of "scattered" is indeed the correct one, THEN the explanation in my article has to be acknowledged as being correct! And many people have freely acknowledged that "a scattering of the Church is now indeed taking place". The scattering of the Church is in most cases not being denied, not even by those who advocate that Daniel 12:7 should say "shattered" rather than "scattered".

However, the point in my article about the power of the Church now being "scattered" does not really depend on how this word "naphats" is translated in Daniel 12:7. The facts are that at the time of Mr. Armstrong the Church of God DID have a certain amount of power! The Church WAS reaching the world in a powerful way with the truth of God. The truth was being preached by more means (radio, TV, booklets, magazines, articles, news-stands, advertisements, personal meetings, etc.) to more people than at any time during the past 2000 years! IF the "holy people" have ever had a power during the past two millennia, it SURELY was during Mr. Armstrong's time!

THAT POWER has now been SHATTERED! There is no power left, and WCG may very well be on the verge of bankruptcy! The current picture of the "power" of the Church of God is an anaemic and pathetic shadow of the former "glory"! Can anyone who saw that "former glory" of reaching the world in many different ways deny this loss of power?

The "power" of the Church has always resided in God, who has channelled it through the converted members that make up "the body". So things have happened in two steps.

Step one was that the power of the holy people was "shattered". Step two, as a result of that shattering, the individual members of the body have been "scattered" into different directions, like the fragments of a shattered windscreen of a car on a busy highway.

QUESTION: Does ANYONE deny that the Church of God had MORE power during the ministry of Mr. Armstrong, than it does now?

QUESTION: Does ANYONE deny that "a scattering of the Church is now taking place"?

THEREFORE the statement in Daniel 12:7 has been fulfilled, and still IS being fulfilled before our very eyes at this very time! Tell me on what grounds anyone can claim:

A) That THE POWER of the Church of God has not been "shattered" from the time of constant growth for 35 years under Mr. Armstrong's leadership, to the point where there NOW really is no power left?

B) That THE POWER of the Church has also not been "scattered" by the membership being scattered into so many different organizations?

Anyway, NOW we should be ready to examine Daniel 12:7 itself very carefully. Let's see everything this verse tells us. So let's use Approach #1 to see if we can understand Daniel 12:7.

DANIEL 12:7

Here is the section of the verse we have been examining:

... and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these [things]

shall be finished. (Daniel 12:7)

I don't think anyone has a difficulty with the first part of this verse. Earlier we examined that the 3 1/2 years is a reference to the "time of trouble" mentioned in Daniel 12:1 (i.e. the great tribulation). We also noted the two Hebrew verbs that are used here, "kalah" and "naphats".

Specifically, we saw that the verb "kalah" is used TWICE. We also saw that "kalah" has the two distinct meanings of "TO CONSUME" and also "TO FINISH, TO END, TO FULFILL"; and there are numerous clear examples available to illustrate both these meanings.

Now what is the context of this verse?

Daniel had just been given a terrifying vision; he had seen the worst time of trouble that humanity will ever experience, immediately before Christ's return. This knowledge, that humanity would go through such a terrifying time, obviously troubled Daniel's mind. It was worse than a terrifying nightmare. The great tribulation is the event that the attention was focused on. Daniel's mind had been forcefully jolted onto this subject.

So in Daniel 12:6 one of the angels conveniently asks the right question, which is:

... How long [shall it be to] the end of these wonders? (Daniel 12:6)

How long till the end of the great tribulation? The answer in the first part of verse 7 is: it will be 3 1/2 years long. So we are told when it will end.

Now recall the clear meaning of "TO CONSUME", which the verb "kalah" also has. I mentioned that it is actually translated as "consume" 57 times, and the references I mentioned in this regard included Genesis 41:30, Exodus 32:10 and Exodus 33:3. I could also have listed the 54 other verses where this verb is so translated. Understand that "TO CONSUME" is a very common way this verb is translated.

So now let's look at what I feel this verse could mean. Here is the section in question:

"... and when he (Satan) shall have finished (ended, fulfilled) (KALAH) to shatter and scatter (NAPHATS) the power of the holy people (THEN) all these things shall be CONSUMED (KALAH)."

I realize that some people may not agree with this translation. BUT it is a fact that I have not twisted any of the verbs, and I have not read any personal views into any of these three occurrences of these two verbs. Every rendering I have given to these verbs here can be ABUNDANTLY illustrated by other occurrences in the Old Testament. I have, however, provided the word "then". That is something that is done very commonly. (The word "then" appears 2168 times in 2115 different verses in the KJV. In many of these places there is actually no Hebrew or Greek word. It is simply provided in the English text.)

But can you NOW see what this verse is telling us?

In plain language this is saying:

"when Satan has completely shattered and scattered the power of the Church of God, THEN the consuming of all things (i.e. the great tribulation and then leading on into the Day of the Lord) will

start."

Thus this answer here in Daniel 12:7 to the question that was asked in verse 6 gives us TWO things to understand. They are:

- 1) The tribulation will last for 3 1/2 years, after which Christ will return and the first resurrection will take place (Daniel 12:1-2). We know the tribulation will END at the time of the first resurrection.
- 2) The tribulation will START once Satan has completely shattered the power of the Church and completely scattered the members of the Church.

To read this verse this way is not only in agreement with the known meanings of these verbs; it also gives us some additional information.

Notice also how this ties in with the rest of chapter 12.

In Daniel 12:8 Daniel immediately admits that he himself did not understand this information. In Daniel 12:9 he is told that that's okay, because it wasn't really for his own time. In Daniel 12:10 he is told that, at the time of the end, only the wise would understand what this information means. AND THEN DANIEL 12:11-12 AGAIN starts BEFORE the time of the great tribulation.

I do NOT at this time have the foggiest notion how the 1290 days and the 1335 days will be fulfilled. I really don't even have a reasonable "guess" available. I simply don't know at this stage! So I guess that proves that at this stage I am not "one of the wise who will understand all these things" (Daniel 12:10 paraphrased).

But the point is this: these periods must start at some time BEFORE the tribulation starts, because they are longer than the tribulation. Now the question is in Daniel 12:6. The answer is in Daniel 12:7. Daniel 12:11-12 ADDS more details to the answer that was given in verse 7. It is really only one question that is being asked and answered in this final vision of the Book of Daniel. So the time periods mentioned in Daniel 12:11-12 must have SOME reference to the answer that was given in verse 7; there must be some link-up somewhere. Verses 11-12 are not some totally isolated statements, the way we ministers tend to use biblical statements in our sermons. Those verses must be a part of the whole context.

I agree that I cannot now conclusively PROVE that this is the totally correct explanation for this verse. Yes, there is still an element of guessing or speculating involved. BUT YOU CAN NOW JUDGE FOR YOURSELF WHAT THIS VERSE MEANS!

But whatever time may teach us that this verse really refers to, it is at this point in time a fact that the members of God's Church have been scattered, and also that the power which the Church had during Mr. Armstrong's time has been shattered.

Many Scriptures have more than one fulfillment. If there is still to be more "scattering" and "shattering" in the future, that does not negate the present shattering and scattering of the Church.

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