

The Return of Elam

By Les Dennis

Elam, a name that means "height," is declared to be a son of Shem in Genesis 10:22. Being a son of Shem identifies Elam as an ancient Mid-eastern, Semitic tribe. In Genesis 14, Kedorlaomer, the king of Elam, fought against Sodom and Gomorrah along with several allied nations. Lot who was living in Sodom was taken prisoner, but Abraham and his servants freed Lot as well as citizens of other cities who were taken prisoner.

Babylon and Elam fought many battles against each other in ancient history with the victory changing back and forth many times. Isaiah 21:2 foretold one of the attacks of Elam and Media on Persia, and Isaiah 21:11-12 records a prophecy against Elam, which is referred to as "Dumah," a play on words in Hebrew.

The most important prophecy against Elam is Jeremiah 49:34-39 that records the following prophetic statements about Elam:

1. Elam's military power will be broken. (35) [fulfilled]
2. The people of Elam will be scattered. (36) [fulfilled]
3. The enemies of Elam will bring disaster on Elam. (37) [fulfilled]
4. Elam will cease to exist as a nation. (37) [fulfilled]
5. God's throne will be established in Elam, which suggest that God will show His power over them. (38) [fulfilled]
6. The king and officials of Elam will be destroyed. (38) [fulfilled]
7. The fortunes of Elam will be restored. (39) [not yet fulfilled]

According to Jeremiah 25:25, Elam along with the other nations of the world will drink God's wrath. This is probably a reference to Armageddon.

Some scholars identify Elam with present-day Iran, because they believe that Iran absorbed the people of Elam. Even Josephus in "Antiquities of the Jews" identifies Elam as becoming a part of Persia. Those who make the switch to Persia believe that the prophecy of Jeremiah 49:34-39 is fulfilled by Iran's fortunes being returned, although Persia has never ceased to exist as a nation.

The proper interpretation would seem to be that the people of Elam still exist as a "divinely Identifiable" people distinct from other peoples. We should expect that the descendents of Elam will be established as a nation again, and the nation of Elam by whatever name it takes in the end times will become rich. Elam's final judgment will come along with all the other nations at the battle of Armageddon.

The land of ancient Elam bears watching for developments. Ancient Elam was northeast of the Persian Gulf with Media to the north, Persia to the south, and Babylon to the west. Today, Iran controls the land of, ancient Elam, which was located in a plain within a low area in the mountains of Iran.