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Presents

*EXPOSITORY & EXPLANATORY
LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF DANIEL*

with

Robert Duncan Culver



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Editor's Note

In order to make the notes more readable to the reader, we have taken the liberty in this edition of Dr. Culver's notes to revise the outline numbering scheme and relocated many of the references and comments that are in the text body to footnotes.

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I. Chapter 1 ~ The Historical Background

A. Introduction

The historical narrative of the book of Daniel relates mainly to events which transpired in or near the city of Babylon, located on the banks of the Euphrates about 400 miles due east of northern Palestine. The earliest events recorded took place in about the year 606 B.C. and the latest in about 534 B.C. All is reported by a man introduced at the beginning as a youth named Daniel and described the close as a very aged man.

Though there is much history in the twelve chapters of Daniel, it is clear that the material is not intended primarily as a history of the era. The events are not related in consecutive order. For example, the date of the seventh chapter is previous to that of chapters five and six. It has been incautiously affirmed that the prophecies of Daniel are "history prewritten," but this is not strictly true. Certain events of history, and even some sequences of history, are predicted, but the essential elements of strict relative chronological arrangement and relationship, necessary to history are not always present even in the so-called historical sections of Daniel, much less in the predictive sections considered as a whole.

One who strains to find obscure predictions in the historical sections is missing the point. This book is written with a moral purpose. Even the predictive portions are primarily moral in purpose. The best expositors have seen this. For example, Calvin, the greatest expositor of the reformation, properly saw the divine purpose of this book as a guide for God's people in times of moral and religious persecution and therefore saw two great volumes of commentary on it, emphasizing these themes.

At the time Daniel wrote this book his people did not live in Palestine, but were in exile in Babylon and neighboring countries. Many cultural changes were thrust upon them by this unhappy situation. The common language of their masters in Babylon was Aramaic, a tongue similar to Hebrew, also called Chaldee or Syriac. A number of evidences lead to the conclusion that this had been originally the language of Abraham when he first entered Canaan.¹ Note that the language of Laban is still Aramaic, but Jacob's is now Hebrew, the language of the Canaanites. Aramaic was the language of the Jews' neighbors at Damascus. It gradually replaced Hebrew, becoming by our Lord's time the common speech of Palestine.

The book of Daniel was written during the very early period of transition. This circumstance evidently brought about the strange result that Daniel was composed in two languages. Chapter one and the first three and one-half verses of chapter two are in Hebrew. From thence to the end of chapter seven the language is Aramaic. Chapters eight through twelve return to Hebrew. Why this strange situation? Why did not the author put the entire book in one or the other language? Or, if he wanted to use two, why did he not have one portion for each instead of two for one and one for the other?

The best answer, in my opinion, was presented in England about a century ago by a devout scholar, S. P. Tregelles, and about the same time in Germany by another reverent teacher named C. A. Auberlen. According to this view, chapter one is an introduction to the whole book having meaning primarily for Hebrews, is about Hebrews, and is directed to them. Chapters two to seven form another division in subject matter. It is, of course, addressed to Hebrews, but relates primarily to the nations of the world, as such. Hebrew interests are introduced somewhat

¹ *vid.* Deut. 26:5, Gen. 26:5; 31:47

indirectly. Aramaic, the diplomatic and commercial language of the nations of that day is, therefore, appropriate. Chapters eight through twelve revert to the same subjects and view-point as chapter one, and are, therefore, appropriately reported in Hebrew.

All of Daniel is a book of prophecy. Biblical prophecy includes prediction but is more than prediction. It may be history, written from a divinely given moral and spiritual point of view. And inspired writing of a prophet in the best Biblical sense is prophecy, whether it relates to the past, the present, or the future. Jesus said that the author of this book was a prophet.² Using the three linguistic divisions as the key, the book may be outlined as follows:

Daniel's Prophecies of the Nations of the World and of Israel's Future in Relation to Them

- I. Historical Introduction to the book (chapter 1)
- II. The Nations of Earth, Their Character, Relations, Succession, and destiny (chapters 2-7)
- III. The Hebrew Nation, Its Relation to Gentile Dominion and Future in the Plan of God (chapters 8-12)

The portion now **under** consideration, chapter one, has a designed relation to the whole book. In it the historical setting is laid. We learn when and where these things happened. We learn who the chief actors are to be. And, we learn how it was that these particular people happened to be at the focus, in time and space, and at which such significant things took place.

There is, however, a singularly valuable series of lessons in the moral heroism of the four Hebrew boys whose story is introduced here. This makes the chapter of great worth quite apart from the rest of the book.

During the presidency of Dwight David Eisenhower several stories of his boyhood with his brothers appeared in American newspapers and magazines. A very interesting one is about the time with great personal fortitude he bound his brother to prevent any doctor from removing his infected leg. The story, and the others, would be significant in any history giving the backgrounds of the Eisenhower administration of the presidency. For the usual reader, however, the story is of greater worth as an inspiration to personal fortitude. So it is with the first chapter of Daniel—the greatest personal profit will be derived from the inspiration to personal moral heroism.

In a day when the sports and entertainment world is furnishing our people, especially youth, with many very unworthy objects of emulation this story about four of God's own truly human heroes is sorely needed.

B. Circumstances Providing the Setting of the Story and of the Book (1-5)

1. The Time

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it (Daniel 1:1).

Until very recently this verse was the only knowledge available concerning this capture of Jerusalem except for a very interesting report of Josephus, a first century Jewish historian. II Kings 24:1 may refer to it, as may also II Chron. 36:6, 7. But this is not certain. In the absence of proof from archaeology or from other ancient historians it has been common for irreverent modern critics to deny that such a capture ever took place. In writing so-called

² Mt. 24:15

histories of Israel it has become customary even to ignore this verse and to regard the capture of the city after the end of Jehoiakim's reign in 597 B.C. as the beginning of the Babylonian servitude. A recent work by a thoroughly orthodox and generally competent New Testament scholar makes this blunder. As recently as December 1956 were first published the archaeological findings which provide full support for Nebuchadnezzar's presence in Palestine and which make this capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 605 credible even to skeptical historians.³

Actually there were at least three occasions when Nebuchadnezzar's armies besieged Jerusalem. The present passage of Scripture relates the first. A second was in the year 597 in the first year of Jehoiachin when Nebuchadnezzar carried away King Jehoiachin. This was the occasion of the transportation of Ezekiel.⁴ The final siege took place in 587-86 B.C. and lasted a year and a half.⁵

About seventy years after this capture of Jerusalem in 605 Cyrus the Persian allowed the first contingent of Jews, led by Zerubbabel and Jeshua, to return to Palestine.⁶ It must be, then, that this is the beginning of the "seventy years" during which the Jews would "serve the king of Babylon".⁷ No other period quite fits the historical situation and Jeremiah's actual words.

2. The Providence of God

And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God (Daniel 1:2a).

This gives a true interpretation of history. Just as there is "no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few",⁸ so there is no restraint to destroy by many or by few. Later in the book,⁹ the rule of God in history is made even plainer. Jeremiah had referred to Nebuchadnezzar as "my servant".¹⁰ Hitler was another of God's servants. After seventy years God would judge the king of Babylon just as finally God judged Hitler. Their self-praising exploits, as someone has quaintly said, were hardly more than "exercise to keep them healthy for execution".

3. The Transportation of Temple Vessels

Which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god (Daniel 1:2b).

This was to show the Jews that he would not protect even the holy vessels of his holy house from desecration by heathen hands if they, his people, would use them for unholy purposes. We learn from the seventh chapter of Jeremiah that the people of this time were trusting in the temple and its ritual rather than in the God of the temple. They were to learn, as American Christians need to know, that God is not a synonym for good fortune or prosperity, and that his places and emblems of worship are not mere good luck pieces. The rest of the vessels were carried away twenty years later.¹¹

³ *vid.* Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. LXXV, Part IV, p. 277

⁴ *vid.* II Kings 24:8-16; cf. Ezek. 1:1 ff

⁵ *vid.* Jer. 52; II Kings 25

⁶ *vid.* Ezra 1

⁷ Jer. 25:11, 12

⁸ I Sam. 14:6

⁹ 4:17

¹⁰ Jer. 25:9

¹¹ Jer. 52:16-23

4. The Transportation of Daniel and His Friends

And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the kings palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans (Daniel 1:3, 4).

The office of Ashpenaz, "master of eunuchs" is prophetically significant. Long before; in the days of Hezekiah, when he had inadvisedly admitted Babylonian diplomatic representatives to the temple, Isaiah had prophesied the loss of the temple vessels to Babylon¹² and had ominously added: "And of thy sons that shall issue from thee ... shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."¹³ Eunuch (*saris*) in the Hebrew language designates a castrated, or emasculated, male. For obvious reasons eunuchs were frequently the officials in charge of royal harems. By a kind of metaphorical use of the word other officials were sometimes called eunuchs. There seems to be no reason in this case, aside from our natural revulsion at the idea, to suppose that Daniel and his friends did not submit to this mutilation. The sins of fathers are sometimes visited upon the children in divine providence.

Josephus quotes from Berosus, an ancient Greek historian, the following very interesting account of the circumstances and manner of Daniel's trip to Babylon.

When Nabolassor, father of Nabochodnosor, heard that the governor whom he had set over Egypt ... had revolted from him, ... committing certain parts of his army to his son Nabochodnosor, who was then but young, he sent him against the rebel, Nabochodnosor joined battle with him, and conquered him, and reduced the country under his dominion again. Now it so fell out that his father Nabolassor fell into a distemper at this time, and died in the city of Babylon, after he had reigned 29 years. But as he understood, in a little time, that his father was dead, he set the affairs of Egypt and the other countries in order, and committed the captives he had taken from the Jews, and Phoenicians, and Syrians... to some of his friends, that they might conduct that part of the forces that had on heavy armor, with the rest of his baggage, to Babylonia; while he went in haste, having but a few with him, over the desert to Babylon; whither, when he was come, he found the public affairs had been managed ...Accordingly, he now entirely obtained all his father's dominions."

Daniel must have been in the group that took the long way home, northward to Euphrates, and thence southeastward along its banks to Babylon. These weeks of travel were likely a time of great physical distress for the four Jewish boys. Perhaps they also improved the opportunity for reflection and prayer regarding the spiritual struggles.

5. The Training of Daniel and His Friends for Court Service at Babylon

And the king appointed for them a daily portion of the king's dainties, and of the wine which he drank, and that they should be nourished three years; that at the end thereof they should stand before the king (Daniel 1:5).

These boys were taken from the "seed royal" and nobility in order to break the spirit of

¹² II Ki. 20:12-17

¹³ II Ki. 20:18

rebellion at Jerusalem. The particular ones chosen for the training were selected for their suitability to be trained for court service. The term "youths" is indefinite as to age. Rehoboam at about 40 is called by the same Hebrew word, as is Joseph at about 17, and Benjamin at about 30. In view, however, of the training and growth designed for them as well as the fact that Daniel lived on for some 70 years, we may suppose that they were in the "teens." "No blemish...well favored" indicates that they were to be good physical specimens and handsome. The wisdom in which they were to be trained was the technical and proverbial lore of the day—the cultural equivalent of science and philosophy today. "Knowledge" means "intelligence" here, and "Science," "education." "Ability...to stand in the king's palace" designates the poise necessary for the public eye. They were the physical, intellectual, and moral cream of the crop, and being "seed royal," i.e., of the king's kinsfolk, of the best families, socially speaking. These were true advantages, not fully appreciated in our present democratic epoch.

These facts strongly suggest that Christian mothers ought to consider meanings when they name their babies. Are we so fearful of being considered quaint or old-fashioned that we prefer the flimsy flippant names of currently popular entertainers to those of Biblical origin or of Christian significance? Our second most honored president was named Abraham. The entire roster of the presidents does not furnish an unsubstantial name. Dwight David was the name of a late honored president, conferred upon him by a pious Pennsylvania Dutch mother. John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson and Richard Millhouse Nixon are the names of the honored men who have since held the nation's highest office. One wonders how the owners of some of the current crop of abbreviated and manufactured names, contracted on no principles except whimsy and fancy, will feel about their names if they ever reach the presidency!

It is this group of four God-fearing youths who become the main actors in the crisis of right behavior immediately to follow and in the entire book of Daniel.

C. Events Placing the Author in the Position He Holds Throughout the Book (5-20)

In addition to an explanation for the high position of Daniel and his three friends in the later history, this portion furnishes an outstanding example of spiritual and moral heroism.

Our own period, aptly dubbed "the ease era," does not have the climate which produces many heroes. The average American, including many who are already parents and a few grandparents, has yet to be involved in an unavoidable choice involving the necessary risk of his physical safety or public reputation. We prefer to *watch* synthetic heroes on television rather than even to read about authentic ones—much less to be real heroes!

Our era needs some heroes, too. We need them in public civic office no less than in pulpit and mission station; in newspaper office as well as on judge's bench, and in professor's chair. We might well pray as does Josiah Gilbert Rolland in his moving lyric—

GOD, GIVE US MEN

God, give us men. A time like this
demands Strong minds, great hearts,
true faith and ready hands;
Men whom the lust of *office* does not
kill; Men whom the spoils of

office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will;
Men who have honor; men who
will not lie;
Men who can stand before a demagogue
And damn his treacherous
flatteries without winking;
Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above
the fog in public duty,
and in private thinking;
For while the rabble with their thumb-worn
creeds, their large professions
and their little deeds,
Mingle in selfish strife, lo, Freedom
weeps, Wrong rules the land,
and waiting justice sleeps.

1. The Crisis of Right Living (5)

And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king (Daniel 1:5).

Something about the wine and meat (food) was defiling for these youths to partake. It is a naïve supposition that some alcoholic content of the wine was the cause of defilement. There is no reason to believe that this wine was more alcoholic than the common wine the boys had drunk every day from infancy. The defilement was evidently connected with the fact that it was "the king's" food and drink. The word for defilement¹⁴ sometimes means physical defilement, as at Isaiah 63:31 where it is translated "stain" (as of garments). It sometimes means moral defilement, as at Zephaniah where it is translated "polluted." It is most frequently to be understood as ceremonial (or religious) defilement. Certain priests, for example, who could not establish their relationship to the Aaronic family by written records, were therefore "as polluted, put from the priesthood."¹⁵ In view of our Lord's familiar dictum that "not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man"¹⁶ the possibility of moral defilement hardly seems possible. It must also be remembered that although the Old Testament furnishes many warnings by precept and example against the danger of drunkenness, complete abstinence is not commanded. Furthermore, since the food and drink was "the king's" it would not have been physically contaminated. The only likely possibility is therefore ceremonial defilement.

Among the ancients, religion, as among primitive people today, was not a department of life to be cared for once a week, it was rather something that conditioned all of life, including eating and drinking. The preparation of food involved religious ritual and had mystic significance. Portions were offered to household deities. Slaughtering of animals among pagans, as well as among Jews, was a religious act to be carried out with proper *solemnities*. The flesh of animals from the king's table would first have been offered to the god of the king. To eat flesh sacrificed to a pagan god was forbidden¹⁷ for it involved "serving other

¹⁴ Dan. 1:8

¹⁵ Ezra 2:62, cf. Neh. 7:64

¹⁶ Mt. 15:11

¹⁷ *vid.* Exodus 34:15

gods" in the public mind. Hosea 9:3, 4 predicted that the citizens of the northern kingdom would be thus polluted, and from Ezekiel 4:13, 14 we learn that Ezekiel faced the same problem. What was true of the flesh would also have been true of wines from the king's table.

A further problem was involved in the fact that Nebuchadnezzar's food would not have been prepared according to Levitical procedures, that is, it was not "kosher".¹⁸

It is an indication of what God counts important that so many verses of a truly great book are devoted to discussing what four men did about a small religious scruple which had no evident practical importance. Sacred scripture frequently devotes more space to religious minutiae than to the rise and fall of empires. It may seem to be a matter of slight importance whether one confesses Jesus to be *like* God or the *same as* God—yet the very integrity of our faith hangs on that distinction. It may seem like an unimportant hair-splitting distinction to insist that an objective propitiation of God's wrath¹⁹ was accomplished at Calvary rather than a *mere* demonstration of love, but again the very integrity of our salvation is at stake in the distinction. Furthermore, moral scruples may be quite as important as these theological ones. The fixing of a definite "back home" hour for one's adolescent son or daughter can be a distinctly necessary moral scruple which must be kept. Standards of "dating," counting money, places of entertainment—and a host of other things may take on high moral and spiritual importance. Especially where promises to parents, school rules, etc. are involved, these things become matters for resolute spiritual decision. It may come as a shock to learn that God once destroyed two other young priests "on the spot" at the scene of their carelessness in observance of a seemingly unimportant matter of religious ceremonial.²⁰

2. The Decision for Right Living (8)

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself (Daniel 1:8).

In spite of all that has been said above about the ceremonial defilement involved in eating Nebuchadnezzar's food, the fact remains that in extreme cases, when necessary to sustain life, the Jews were conscience-free to violate these things. There are quite a number of such examples, most notably that of David's eating the shew bread.²¹ It was because Daniel saw the intent of the king through these things to wean him from his faith that he refused. Calvin well says, Daniel "simply determined in his heart not to taste the diet of the court, desiring by his very food perpetually to recall the remembrance of his country. He wished so to live in Chaldea, as to consider himself an exile and a captive, sprung from the sacred family of Abraham."

Had Daniel been one of the easy-going Christians of our day who are prepared to let any worldly pleasure or entertainment, earthly gain or excitement, be an excuse for setting aside the claims of the Lord upon them, we would never have heard of this firm choice of his. But then, we would never have heard of Daniel either! He certainly would never have adopted "safety first" as his slogan! What worldly people call squeamishness may be truly a matter of principle. "Principle is never small. It is even greater when exhibited in little things than in matters so imposing that there is scarcely room for trial. And he that is faithful in little is thereby also faithful in much. The man who has no regard for pence is not to be trusted for

¹⁸ *vid.* Lev. 3:17, 6:26; 17:10-14; 19:26

¹⁹ Romans 3:25, 5:9

²⁰ Lev. 10:1 ff

²¹ Mt. 12:3-5 cf. I Sam. 21:6, Num. 28:8, 9

pounds. Our own history has shown us how a mighty revolution and the creation of a great and glorious nationality may be wrapped up in a box of tea. Daniel took his stand for God, conscience, and righteousness even in the little matter of his meat and drink, and thus laid the groundwork of a character which passed untarnished and unscathed through seventy years of political life, which outlived envy, jealousy, and dynasties, and which stands out to this day the brightest on all the records of humanity. We wonder and gaze with awe upon him as we contemplate his sublime career".²²

3. Procedures for Right Living—The Elements of Moral Heroism (8b-14)

It is in these seven verses that the heart of the story of Daniel's moral heroism lies. In order the better to understand the fine points of the narrative, and as a step preliminary to pointing out, in order, the precise elements of this heroism, we will examine closely some of the language.

Therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself (Daniel 2:8b).

The Hebrew language is replete with words which might be translated "requested." This one is usually translated "seek." It never appears except in what is called an intensive stem. The word cannot be used to describe any mild or indifferent entreaty. An idea of the nature of the entreaty here is indicated by the fact that the word is used of Saul's three days of *seeking* for his father's asses²³ and of David's importunate prayer to God for the life of his first child by Bathsheba.²⁴

Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? Then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king (Daniel 1:9, 10).

Literally rendered: "And the [One true] God [emphasizing that God rules even in the hearts of pagans who do not acknowledge Him] brought Daniel for kindness and tender affection before the prince of the eunuchs," this shows how ultimately the lives of these boys were spared. God provides defenders for His own in strange places and from unexpected sources.

This also shows that admirable motives and sentiments are not absent from heathen hearts. They not infrequently put some Christians to shame by their genuine concern for the needs of other people. It was, for example, a harlot of Jericho who sheltered the spies sent to that city by Joshua: the reason was that God had touched her heart. Wherever it appears, love is a "fruit of the Spirit." The rule is that "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel".²⁵

Though the text does not specifically say so, it is certain that Daniel's request of the prince of the eunuchs did not quite gain approval. What Daniel specifically asked is not stated either. At this stage, whatever the specific request may have been it evidently was neither granted nor denied. The prince of the eunuch's answer simply made it discourteous for Daniel to pursue it further.

²² J. A. Seiss

²³ II Sam. 2:17

²⁴ II Sam. 12:16

²⁵ Prov. 12:10

Then said Daniel to Melzar whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants (Daniel 1:11-13).

Observe that the author, guided by the Holy Spirit's own point of view, does not deign to recognize the new names honoring the pagan gods of Babylon. He uses their proper Hebrew names.

"Melzar," it is now generally agreed by scholars, means "steward," a name for the man's office, not for the man. The Hebrew prefixes the definite article to the word—and proper names seldom bear the article in Hebrew. He was simply "the steward."

"Pulse" probably should read "vegetables." This is not a text in proof of vegetarianism. The objections to the king's food were based on the ground that, containing slain flesh improperly prepared, it was ceremonially unclean. This was not the case with vegetables.

"As thou seest, deal..." probably means no more than that Daniel was prepared to accept it as the will of God for them to ignore the ceremonial impurity of the king's food if He did not miraculously (or providentially) intervene. As stated above, if necessary to sustain life, or if God specially commanded, "unclean" food could be eaten.²⁶ There is no support for the idea that God had given Daniela special revelation to the effect that the experiment would be successful.

So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days (Daniel 1:14).

Daniel's proposition appealed to the steward as sensible and feasible. What the results would have been if they had not fared well on the diet is not stated. Likely neither the steward nor Daniel and his three friends knew exactly. He as well as they wanted the plan to succeed—they were crossing their bridges as they came to them and making up the rules as they went along. It was a tense situation. Both the boys and the steward were in some danger to their lives, as the prince of the eunuchs had already indicated. Uncertainty only added to the tension. The situation called for no ordinary amount of diplomatic dexterity on the part of all concerned.

For the instruction and enlightenment of a hundred generations this story presents the elements present in true Christian heroism.

If we want heroes to emulate, here are some of them. We shall see herein good reasons why twice later in the book Daniel's called a man "greatly beloved"²⁷ and why Ezekiel's prophecy links him in character with Noah and Job.²⁸

a. Discernment

Daniel and his friends saw what was evil in the diet prescribed by the king's officials. The specific items of diet were likely the same as he had been eating all his life, and hence, the defilement involved was not obvious. He did recognize the risk of defilement,

²⁶ *vid.* above on v. 8 and also Ezek. 4

²⁷ Dan. 9:23; 10:19

²⁸ Ezek. 14:14, 20

however.

Where did he learn such discernment? We do not know just how much schooling Jewish boys of those days had but we do know the Mosaic commands about parental training of children.²⁹ The credit, then, must go to Daniel's parents. Surrounded from infancy by good example and instructed daily in divine things he could not fail to have a sense of the spiritually appropriate. The application to present day situations is obvious: the best place to receive spiritual nurture is the home.

One wonders what happened to the multitudes of other Jewish boys transplanted into a pagan culture. Evidently most of them went the way of Babylon.

We live in a time when most boys are being taken away from their home and church surroundings into the worldly and frequently defiling atmosphere of military training or of university education. Our girls likewise go out pretty much unguarded to the temptations of study on the impersonal university campus or work and play in the pagan city. If our youth are to retain their purity, then they will have to have a basis for spiritual discernment brought from home.

b. Resistance to Evil

There was steel in this young man's character. Separation from home, distance from family observation, and relative immunity from criticism did not make him a push-over for the tempter. Fearing only God³⁰ he exemplifies the truth of James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Again, where did he get this fiber...this inner strength of soul? The answer is the same as before—from parental training. Children are by nature undisciplined. There is nothing, in fact, quite so against the nature of the young as to resist temptation where food and drink are concerned. The numerous "cookie jar" jokes are a bit of evidence of this. Yet children must be taught to resist the desire to eat all the time and to eat anything that appeals to the natural appetite. For the sake of health, as well as for the sake of spiritual welfare, they must learn to resist temptation. For a very few children precept and example may be enough—perhaps Samuel was this kind of child—but nearly all of them need to experience some kind of pain, inflicted by the hand of the parent, when the rules are broken. Parents who wish to rear sons and daughters who will resist evil when away from home will so manage their homes that they must, on pain of punishment, resist temptation at home. Let all Christian parents ponder and obey such passages as Hebrews 12:9-13 and Proverbs 3:11, 12; 13:24. Further, let them remember the lesson of Eli and his sons.³¹

c. Power to say No!

He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself—and he said so! He declared himself. By doing so he not only put himself on record but the force of his example carried others with him and won the respect of unbelievers. This force of character does not ordinarily develop in youth. Youth is a season of conformity. At the height of the Second World War a few college girls (in the absence of men from the war-time campuses) started wearing men's wool shirts, tails dragging at their calves, across the

²⁹ Deut. 6:4-9

³⁰ cf. M't. 10:26-28

³¹ I Sam. 2:12-30, esp. v.29

campus walks. In a few weeks thousands of men's shirts had been sold to college girls. Some of the young ladies looked liked nothing quite so much as bags stuffed with watermelons—but they wore the shirts just the same. Why? No power to say 'No' to a ridiculous fad. Then came the custom of painting red spots high on the cheeks, then on the mouth. These things are quite harmless. There are other areas, the wearing of immodest apparel, for example,³² where the possibility of harm in conformity is great. We need no non-conformity for the difference' sake; what we need in non-conformity for Jesus' sake.³³

d. Physical Courage

If the prince of the eunuchs felt that he would endanger his head if he should grant Daniel's request then Daniel likewise would endanger his head to persist in his request as he did. The man who threatened his own college of wise men with slaughter and the reduction of their houses to dunghills³⁴ for failure to do the manifestly impossible was not one to be trifled with. The same courage that later sent the three friends to a fiery furnace³⁵ and Daniel to a den of hungry lions³⁶ is first manifested here.

It is sad that the customary picture of the Christian missionary, and even of our Lord Himself, in the popular mind, is that of a bloodless weakling. Quite to the contrary, the roster of the spiritual giants is a list of courageous men. Luther risked his life at Worms, Calvin at Geneva, Savonarola at Florence, Huss at Constance, Paul at Jerusalem. Within recent decades in New Guinea and in Ecuador stalwart young men have lost their lives for Jesus' sake—and there have been many others. No one will ever know the number of Christian martyrs to Communism in China and Southeast Asia. They number at least thousands.

All men admire courage and every nation has its hall of fame. If Christians are to win the respect of men they must be brave men. Daniel had no way of knowing that his brave action would lead to political power. He sided with truth and right when they were unpopular.

Then to side with Truth is noble when we share
here wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis
prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward
stands aside
Doubting in his abject spirit till his Lord
is crucified
And the multitude make virtue of the faith
they had denied.³⁷

³² I Peter 3:1-5; I Tim. 2:9

³³ *vid.* Acts 4:19, 20

³⁴ Daniel 2:5

³⁵ Daniel Chapter 3

³⁶ Daniel Chapter 6

³⁷ (James Russell Lowell: The Present Crisis)

e. Perseverance

Daniel did not accomplish his purpose to change the food order "in one jump" so he took another jump. The story relates that after he failed with the prince of the eunuchs he tried with the steward. The bare request had failed, so next time he joined a workable and sensible proposition with the request. A man whose sympathy did not lie in the direction of God's law would have been satisfied with a token effort to avoid defilement. A man truly sympathetic with the law of God but lacking in perseverance would have capitulated likewise. The same ingenuity at finding loop-holes in the law, for which youth is famous, was here directed toward plugging all the holes! No wonder it is that when seventy years later Gabriel came to this man with a divine revelation he addressed him as "O man greatly beloved".³⁸

f. Determination

"Daniel purposed in his heart." He knew what his goals were and he determined to attain them. A professor in a Christian college spoke recently of a conference of college youth wherein the young men and young women were each questioned in writing, separately in groups, as to what their goals in life were. Economic security (in the form of income) was first while social security in the form of husband (or wife) and children was second. All agreed that they were dissatisfied with themselves because their reasons for these goals were simply that they really had no goals. Daniel got his goals from Holy Scripture and from pious training in godliness. We will gain good goals and determination to follow them from the same sources. Christ himself is the Christian's goal for living. In the words of Paul: "To live is Christ, and to die is gain".³⁹

g. Meekness

There is not the slightest evidence of mock heroics, bravado, or of disrespect for authority in Daniel's behavior. Daniel did not loudly stand on any alleged "constitutional rights." Rather he "requested" or "besought" the prince of the eunuchs and to the steward humbly said, "I beseech thee." Such meekness is always a sign of greatness. There is none greater in the Old Testament story than Moses. Yet of him it is written; "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth".⁴⁰ This has no similarity to contemporary youthful blockading of the dean's office or the Student Union!

h. Wisdom, or Good Sense

Not only his discreet manner of approach to his masters but in the sensible proposal—a ten-day trial—is this demonstrated. Already in his own life-time his wisdom was proverbial as the expression, "wiser than Daniel"⁴¹ shows. There is a kind of factual Bible knowledge which contains no wisdom, no discernment; no good sense. Of the "son" who gets wisdom and heeds its teachings, it is written, "so shall they be life unto thy soul and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble".⁴² The passage goes on to say that wisdom brings freedom from fear and sweet sleep.

³⁸ Dan. 10:19

³⁹ Phil. 1:21

⁴⁰ Num. 12:3

⁴¹ Ezek. 28:3

⁴² Prov. 2:23

4. The Rewards of Right Living (15-21)

In the first place, the four boys fared better physically (v. 15). Certain commentators are probably correct in attributing the cause of this not directly to the superiority of their diet, but to the overruling providence of God. It was at this point in the story that God is first seen to assert his power over the Babylonians.

In the second place, their right living, or perhaps it might better be said, their right choosing, was rewarded by deliverance from any necessity for ceremonial defilement. They had honored God, so God honored them. They had trusted in the Lord with all their heart; they had not leaned on human understanding. They had acknowledged Him in all their ways. As a result God had directed their paths.⁴³

In the third place all four of the "children" gained increased knowledge and skill, especially Daniel who gained understanding of visions and dreams—used with good effect later. Verily, "to him that hath shall be given." The "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

In the fourth place, they gained pre-eminence among all their associates. Again, it is written, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men".⁴⁴

Finally, Daniel was granted a continuing influence in high places for a period of about seventy years, even on into the period of the Medes and Persians who replaced the Babylonians in rulership of the Near East. "And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus" (v. 21). This was at least till 539 B.C., and perhaps even as much as 15 years longer, i.e., at least for a period of 66 years after Daniel's transportation from Jerusalem. It does not have reference to his lifetime, for chapter 10 represents him as living in the third year of Cyrus. It likely has reference to his continuing, as indicated by the preceding verse, in official capacity. No Hebrew mentioned in the Old Testament, outside of Joseph in Egypt, ever had influence in the affairs of nations like that of this man Daniel.

The strength with advanced age to which Daniel came teaches a lesson of which Shakespeare reminds us through the old man of his drama *As You Like It*.

"When I was young I never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood
Nor did not with unblushed forehead woo
the means of weakness and debility;
Therefore mine age is as a lusty winter,
Frosty, yet kindly."

D. Conclusion

This chapter has set the stage for understanding the rest of the book of Daniel. In doing so it has imparted a lesson in moral heroism. A couple of additional final observations should be added. This chapter demonstrates how that God's Word, the Bible, gives emphasis to the truly important things. One verse only is devoted to the fall of Jerusalem and another to the professional education of the four boys, but almost half a chapter is devoted to detailed recital of the story of what might appear to be a trifling religious scruple. What takes place in a young child's heart or in

⁴³ Prov. 3:5, 6

⁴⁴ Prov. 22:29, cf. Dan. 8:27

a Wednesday evening prayer meeting in a small church may be more important to God than what happens in the capitals of the world. Further, observe how that God, as usual, operated through a minority—a remnant if you will. Thank God for his faithful minority!

II. Chapter 2: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

A. Introduction

For all who take the Bible seriously as past and present as well as a dependable guide for the future, this is one of its most important chapters. In addition to chapters in Scripture, it is unique in giving the first schematic presentation of how God is ordering the course of the ages toward their final consummation in Christ. He Who is working "all things after the counsel of his own will"⁴⁵ has not let history slip out of His all-embracing grasp. Rather Scripture refers to God's providential control of His "dispensation [management] of the fullness of times",⁴⁶ that "he might gather together in one all things in Christ".⁴⁷

Many twentieth century thinkers have come to have a new appreciation of the Bible as being the true original source of the idea that history does have a goal, that it is "going somewhere." The pagan notion of antiquity reflected in the "under-the-sun" philosophy of Ecclesiastes,⁴⁸ was that all events of history run in cycles of repetition. Like the seasons, which repeat themselves, reasoned the philosophers of classical antiquity, what is happening now has happened repeatedly in the past, and will continue indefinitely to repeat itself in the future.

Current writers are apt to assign this "insight" of the "linear" and "teleological" character of the succession of human events to the genius of the Hebrew people. The Bible, however, does not present that people as possessing any unusual gifts of insight.⁴⁹ They were rather, in spite of stiff-necked resistance to divine truth, the chosen recipients of special revelations imparted through prophets like Daniel. The entire Old Testament is witness to God's patient grace with their obdurate rebellion against Him.

While the chapter before us gives no specific information concerning particular nations now in existence, it does supply information concerning specific tendencies now in evidence and operation. For this reason no one is really equipped to give a biblically informed Christian interpretation of current history apart from this chapter, for some of it appears nowhere else in Scripture.

At first glance it may seem a bit strange that the prophetic dream herein should first have been granted to a heathen monarch, for ordinarily God reveals his secrets to prophets.⁵⁰ A bit of reflection will recall at least three previous Scriptural instances wherein heathen potentates received prophetic revelations. There is the case of Pharaoh and his chief courtiers,⁵¹ also the case of the Philistine king, Abimelech.⁵² Another is the less well-known case of Pharaoh Necho who received from God regarding King Josiah.⁵³

Joseph's experience in interpreting Pharaoh's dreams is quite parallel to that of Daniel in interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's. Both interpreted royal dreams where the official "prognosticators" had failed and both were promoted to positions of civil prominence as a direct result of their success in interpreting the dreams.

⁴⁵ Eph. 1:11

⁴⁶ i.e., the full course of all history

⁴⁷ Eph. 1:10

⁴⁸ *vid.* Ec. 1:1-11

⁴⁹ *contra* Deut. 7:6-8

⁵⁰ Num. 12:6

⁵¹ Gen. 41

⁵² Gen. 20:5-7

⁵³ II Chron. 35:20-22 cf. II Ki. 23:29, 30

Our procedure for study of this long, somewhat obscure chapter will be, first, to give careful attention to understanding the narrative and its divine interpretation; after that to seek to apply it to personal life and the current world scene.

B. The Reception of the Dream (2:1)

And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams; and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep went from him. (Daniel 2:1)

The point in time of the events of this chapter, including those on the night the king had his dream, is somewhat of a problem, for it is said to have been in Nebuchadnezzar's second year. Yet it was apparently after three years of Daniel's education for his work of serving the king.⁵⁴ Since Nebuchadnezzar is called "king" from the beginning of the book it would appear that this would be after the king's third year at least. How in the king's second year could Daniel have finished his three years?⁵⁵ Several suggestions have been made: that the text should read "twelfth";⁵⁶ that the author simply made a mistake;⁵⁷ that the first year of Daniel's education was numbered in the reign of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, since he died during the calendar year of the beginning of Daniel's course of training, and that these events were near the end of the second of the Nebuchadnezzar.⁵⁸ Perhaps we are to understand merely that Daniel as a "wise man in preparation" was counted in the group who were to be slain (vv. 13, 14), and that the three years had not yet expired. This simplest solution will commend itself to many as most satisfactory.

Dreams, as noted earlier, were a method God had used before in speaking to kings as well as to prophets. The ancients were accustomed to regarding dreams as divine omens and in several cases God deigned to make them truly such. There is no support here for the supposition that all dreams are to be so regarded. Modern psychology proposes its own explanations for dreams and has every right to propose them and to seek to verify its theories.

The terrifying effect of the dream upon the king is hard to explain if, as is suggested by first impressions from the Authorized Version, the king had forgotten what was in his dream. He might have had a kind of emotional "hangover" from a forgotten nightmare but nothing, it seems, as terrifying as this to a hard-bitten character like the mighty Nebuchadnezzar, general of armies and master of men. As will be seen shortly, perhaps the king was frightened precisely because he had *not* forgotten his dream.

C. The Test by Use of the Dream (2-6)

Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriac, O king, live forever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and

⁵⁴ cf. Dan. 1:5

⁵⁵ cf. Dan. 1:5

⁵⁶ Ewald, Herzfeld, Lenormant, Farrar

⁵⁷ several critical writers

⁵⁸ Hengstenberg

*rewards and great honor: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.
(Daniel 2:2-6)*

⁵⁹ As just observed, the Authorized Version gives the reader the impression that the king could not recall the dream and that he asked the wise men to recall the dream because he had forgotten it. The portion in question is the expression in verse 5: "The thing has gone from me" repeated in verse 8. The margin of the ASV gives the reading which I prefer as follows: "The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The word is gone from me: that if ye make not known the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces" etc. This sense is employed in the RSV also. The essential change is that "thing" is rendered "word" in the sense of decree or commandment. The king, if this be correct, had not forgotten the dream at all, but rather, since he did remember the dream, was using it as a test of the reliability of the wise men's alleged occult powers. They who could produce supernatural interpretations, unknown except to themselves and the gods, ought to be able to produce the dream, known to the king. The dream, common to mortal man, ought to be more easily produced; the king seems to have reasoned, than the interpretation, available only to the gods. The king, on this view of the matter, was simply reasoning from the greater to the less.

I am convinced that this offers the correct sense, and for the following reasons.

- i. The word *millah* (Aramaic) employed here is commonly given either translation—word or thing. The corresponding words in Hebrew and Greek, the other two Biblical languages, manifest this same feature. Thus there is a wide-open possibility that the translation should be "word." It is, indeed, the more common translation. This very term, *millah*, which appears also in modern Israeli Hebrew where it is used in the name for a dictionary, i.e., a book of words.
- ii. Right in the immediate context (v.9b) the word *millah* is translated "word", viz., "Ye have prepared lying and corrupt words." It is clear, on this account, that Nebuchadnezzar was familiar with this use of the word and was thinking of it in that sense at the time.
- iii. If the king had not forgotten his dream we have a plausible explanation as to why the wise men did not at least try to invent a dream and interpretation by giving the king a whole-cloth fabrication of some comfort. Any kind of story would have been worth a try since their lives were at stake, for if the dream were really forgotten, the king would not have been able to tell the difference. In such circumstances these wily and resourceful men would surely have attempted a farcical solution for they had no reason to hope for mercy.
- iv. It likewise gives a fuller meaning to verse 9. Nebuchadnezzar felt that the wise men were withholding information that they might give if they wanted to do it—or at least might be withholding information. To him it appeared that they might only be waiting "till the time be changed," i.e., till the position of the stars in the zodiac would change so it would be impossible to secure the astrological data necessary. He further intended to test their ability to predict the future (the interpretation) by their ability to reconstruct the past (the

⁵⁹ A minor problem of interpretation, unrelated to the message of Daniel occurs in this position in connection with the sentence: "Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriac" (v. 4). This does not mean that the language in which the Chaldeans spoke was Syriac. Rather, as is now generally recognized by scholars, "In Syriac" (Heb. *In Aramaic*) should be regarded as an ancient editorial rubric indicating that all that follows in Daniel, down to the end of chapter seven is in that language. This was the language of Palestine in later Jewish times.

dream).

The classes of "wise men" composing the king's college of occult advisors are of interest as showing upon whom the ancient world of men, without knowledge of the God of truth, relied for guidance into the unknown future. Verse four mentions four of them. *Magicians*. The Aramaic *châr-tûm-mîm* means scribes, or those learned in books, perhaps incantors. Religious formulas likely were in the Sumerian language of the predecessors of the Babylonians, unknown to ordinary citizens. Incantations were in this long-dead foreign tongue. So these men were they who spoke charms, pronounced curses, etc.—the "hocus-pocus" of the day. *Astrologers* (*ashapîm*). A better translation is practitioners of hidden arts—like the present day "spiritualists." They were not star-gazers as "astrologers" suggests. *Sorcerers* (*mekash-shepîm*). Derived from a word meaning to cut, the name refers to their work of cutting into small pieces the ingredients of various magical drugs and potions as in Chinese pharmacy. The Greek translation, *pharikoî* (pharmacist) indicates a very ancient interpretation which may indeed be correct. *Chaldeans* (*kasdîm*). In this case the name refers to a class of wise men, though Chaldeans may be a comprehensive name for all the wise men (vid. vv. 4 and 10). The name also has an ethnic sense, i.e., a name for Nebuchadnezzar's nation, though that is not the sense here.⁶⁰

These men were the savants of the ancient world. They were for that age what the scientists of our great research laboratories and the university professors of the great centers of learning are to our age. The perspective of history labels them fools. Will the perspective of the future say the same of our modern wise men? Without indicting research or education as such of any inherent error it can safely be said that in the present era our "post-Christian" savants quite commonly share four essential defects with those of pagan antiquity.

- i. There is *first* a common essentially pantheistic view of nature. Such deity as is held to exist is locked up in the system of nature. He is not nature's creator not its Lord; rather only some vital principle within nature.
- ii. In the *second* place there is common to both an essentially optimistic view of man. Man, himself, is not the root of human disorder but the problem is his environment or his "fate."
- iii. *Thirdly* both operate in essentially ignorance of God's ordering of history by a wise and all-powerful providence. Neither knows of history's goal wherein God will sum up all in a consummation.
- iv. *Fourth*, both operate in the absence of any permanent system of values. Sometimes hedonistic, sometimes idealistic, always humanistic ("man the measure of all value") the glory of the God and Father of our Savior Jesus Christ, the only true measure of ultimate worth, is wholly unknown and unconsidered. It makes no difference whether God exists or not. *He is* irrelevant. Such are some of the common and essentially corrupting errors of research and education in this world, ancient and modern. Such are the reasons why, if men ever are to know truth or fact in right relation to the wholeness of reality, God must make the truth known by revelation.

⁶⁰ See E.J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, pp. 271-273 for full discussion.

D. The Revelation of the Dream (2:7-23)

1. The Failure of the Wise Men (2:7-12)

They answered again and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. (Daniel 2:7)

No doubt the wise men were sincere enough that the king's refusal to comply with their request was unfair. They had their professional procedures. Their formulae were standardized and evidently all their formulae applied to the interpretation of dreams rather than to the recovering or discovering of them.

There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, Lord, nor ruler, that asketh such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldaean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. (Daniel 2:10-11)

Observe that the wise men at least believed in the possibility of divine revelation of the future as well as divine revelations of the unknown past. The Bible claims, in the Genesis account of creation, to contain an account of things God revealed to Moses concerning the manner in which the universe originated. No man was there to observe it. It was to be forever unknown to man unless God chose to reveal it. The Bible likewise claims to have predicted details of the coming of the Savior long before his birth—as well as the seventy years of servitude of the Jews to Babylon and many other things. It claims also to give us important details concerning our own personal future in a heaven or hell, concerning future resurrections, judgments, and final rewards. The Holy Scriptures purport to outline certain future events in the course of the world's future history. So these ancient "quacks" were nearer to Biblical truth than are some preachers and theology professors of our own day. To reject predictive prophecy out of hand is to reject the authority of the Bible.

The wise men also appear to make a distinction between two classes of gods. The removal of the comma before "whose" (v. 11) changes that last clause to a restrictive clause, *viz.*, in addition to the gods with whom the wise men professed to be in contact with there were supposed to be other gods "whose dwelling is not with flesh"—that is not in contact with Nebuchadnezzar's counselors or any other human beings. These higher gods were thought to know secrets unknown even to the patron god of Babylon, Marduk, the great revelator. This distinction proposed by the king's wise men paved the way for Daniel to demonstrate his connection with a "high God" who could reveal either the past or the future to his chosen servants, and for demonstration that He is indeed "God Most High", one whom Nebuchadnezzar was soon to acknowledge as "God of gods, and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets".⁶¹

That Nebuchadnezzar's rage was excessive and that his pronouncement was harsh is readily granted. But that his anger was unjustified and some pronouncement of punishment wholly unjust may not be granted. His excesses need not be defended, but that the king's judgment was essentially in error cannot be granted. These men professed to know the divine *mind*. They claimed their positions and support from this alleged knowledge. The king's test was valid. If they were failures they were also frauds. Sincere as some of them may have been, their profession was a deception and an imposture. They deserved to be dismissed, and

⁶¹ Dan. 2:47

according to the standards of the time, to be destroyed. Yet, as is so well stated by Joseph Seiss,

"The thing has much deeper and farther-reaching implications. It furnishes demonstration of the incompetence of all mere human resources, learning, and power to ascertain the mind and will of God apart from His own revelations. Here was a full-grown heathenism of more than a thousand years. Here were the combined strength and wisdom of the most noted schools in the highest acme of their glory. Whatever ability existed in priest or savant, astrologer or necromancer, wise man or magician, apart from the anointed servants of the God of Israel, were here concentrated and embodied. If these men failed, it was the laying prostrate of all the wisdom, power, and art of man. The case was legitimate. It was propounded by proper authority. It presented a fair test.... I look upon these venerable colleges of sages...I trace how Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans copied their systems...I see in them the full-orbed sun, around which all the mythologies and theologies and philosophies...of the whole pagan world revolved and derived their light. And when I read these words, formally given out by their very chiefs in the name of them all, and sorrowfully pronounced in the audience of the imperial majesty of the earth as the utmost they could do to save themselves from summary destruction, I see a veil of darkness drawn over all the wisdom, strength, and science of man which makes me shudder as I gaze...it proves to me, in one brief utterance, that all the religions, arts, sciences, philosophies, attainments, and powers of man, apart from God's inspired prophets and all-glorious Christ, are but emptiness and vanity as regards any true and adequate knowledge of the purposes and will of Jehovah or of the destinies of man. It demonstrates...that all the learned theorizing of the world's would-be wise, from Babylon's magicians down to the Hobbes', Herbert's, and Voltaire's of the last centuries and the materialistic skeptics and pantheists of our own day are but rottenness, rubbish, and damning falsehood, insofar as they conflict with the revelations which the Almighty has given by his own anointed prophets. It is to the modest Daniels and to the humble Nazarenes, after all, that the proud world must come to learn the true God and to find out His mind and purposes."⁶²

2. The Success of Daniel (2:13-23)

The same discretion that had won the master of the eunuchs and the steward, as reported in 1:2-16, now prevailed with the captain of the king's guard.⁶³ Just how Daniel conveyed to the king his request for time is not stated. Probably some messenger carried the message.

The Lord alone could save these Hebrews and Daniel new it. But just like the rest of us, even a Daniel could exercise a stronger brand of faith in the company of others likeminded, so he laid the matter before his three companions.⁶⁴ Faith usually prays best "in concert."

It is significant that their prayer was frankly (even frantically) selfish—"that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon".⁶⁵ Even the Son of God prayed for himself.⁶⁶ We are encouraged to pray for ourselves—our needs, our ailments, even our desires, if they are not wrong desires.⁶⁷ Later in the book Daniel is presented as a great

⁶² *Voices from Babylon*, pp. 47-49

⁶³ Dan. 2:14, 15

⁶⁴ Dan. 2:17

⁶⁵ Dan. 2:18

⁶⁶ Mt. 26:39, 42, 44; John 17:5

⁶⁷ Ps. 21:2; 38:9

intercessor,⁶⁸ but this experience of petition for himself and its answer had to come first in his case not ours.

God's answer came in a night vision.⁶⁹ Nebuchadnezzar had first received the matter in a dream. The vision, an experience of seeing things brought before the mind's eye, might be a part of a dream but it was not invariably so.⁷⁰ The visions of the later parts of the book seem to have no connection with sleep or dreams.

Daniel's prayer of thanksgiving⁷¹ is a truly beautiful poem or psalm in the spirit and fashion of the Biblical Psalter. His prayer recognizes God's control over the history of nations, which is significant in connection with the interpretation of the vision. It praises God for his wisdom and thanks him for granting the same wisdom to Daniel.

E. The Telling of the Dream (2:24-35)

The first report of success was to Arioch.⁷² Though introduced simply as captain of the king's guard⁷³ the sinister nature of his work is emphasized in some of the translations—"captain of the cutthroats" Spanish; "chief butcher" Greek of the Septuagint and of Theodotion. Even so he was not untouched by Daniel's appeal. It is not difficult to understand why Daniel let no grass grow under his feet in reporting his success at discovery of the king's dream.

This Arioch is of some interest as likely a typical "bureaucrat" of the day. It had been at his recommendation that delay had been granted in the first place, and since he had thereby risked the king's disfavor, he too reported to the king "in haste".⁷⁴ Up to this point Arioch evidently had not identified the "wise man" whom he had allowed extra time. Now, as the time-serving opportunist that he was, he claims credit for search and discovery of the new master of dreams, viz., "I have found a man...that will make known unto the king the interpretation".⁷⁵

Against this background of the perversity of the "natural man"⁷⁶ the moral glory of Christ in the heart and action of Daniel the "spiritual" and "wise" man,⁷⁷ is in stark contrast. Daniel now gives God all the glory⁷⁸—as indeed he should, for if there is any realm wherein God alone can enter without help it is knowledge of the future.

The most important part of this section is the statement in verses 28 and 29 of the scope of the prediction in the interpretation to follow. These two verses provide the key to chapter two, which, in turn, furnishes the framework of the rest of the book of Daniel. Daniel, in turn, is the key to the chronological framework of the predictions of the rest of biblical prophecy. Hence it is hard to exaggerate the importance of these two verses.

But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed,

⁶⁸ as also by his great contemporary, the prophet Ezekiel, *vid.* Ez. 14:14, 20

⁶⁹ Dan. 2:19

⁷⁰ cf. Dan. 7:1

⁷¹ Dan. 2:20-23

⁷² Dan. 2:24

⁷³ cf. Dan. 2:14

⁷⁴ Dan. 2:25

⁷⁵ Dan. 2:25

⁷⁶ I Cor. 2:14

⁷⁷ Mal. 3:16-18; I Cor. 2:15

⁷⁸ Dan. 2:27, 28

are these; what should come to pass hereafter: and he that reveal secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. (Daniel 2:28, 29)

The scope of the predictions of "what shall come to pass" is indicated by two expressions: "in the latter days"⁷⁹ and "hereafter"⁸⁰. Concerning the former, "the latter days," we must strongly emphasize that we must not focus the reference to events at Christ's second Advent. It is a phrase out the general prophetic literature of the Old Testament wherein it refers to the general future,⁸¹ but especially to the future as it develops and is concluded in the Messianic period of the world's duration.⁸² All the church age is a part of these "last days."⁸³ Thus while the prophecy does relate to times of consummation at the end of this age it also covers the interval intervening.

"Hereafter" has no direct reference to human existence after death as in popular parlance, but in context refers simply to the succession of kingdoms to follow Nebuchadnezzar's, reaching down, as the context likewise shows, to the coming of Christ. The two advents of Messiah are not clearly distinguished in this or in any other Old Testament prophecy, both being blended in one great complex of events. The progress of history and of revelation since Old Testament times distinguishes the two advents.

The great metallic image needs no elaboration. One's own body will furnish a sketch on small scale of what the king saw on a grand gigantic scale and in such magnificent splendor that even to a king like Nebuchadnezzar, accustomed to glitter and show, it appeared bright and excellent, for "the form thereof was terrible"⁸⁴. Neither is there anything essentially obscure about the stone and the action of it. These all call for special attention in connection with the interpretation now to follow.

F. The Interpretation of the Dream (2:36b-45)

1. The head of gold (2:37, 38)

Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over all. Thou art this head of gold. (Daniel 2:37, 38)

It represents Nebuchadnezzar himself, and as seen later, also his kingdom and dynasty. Other Old Testament prophets had used gold as a symbol of Babylon.⁸⁵ It is to be noted that this grant from God included the whole earth. Though Nebuchadnezzar never got around to possessing all of it his empire did probably reach much further than the area of the Fertile Crescent to which it is customarily assigned. Our information is not complete by any means, but it is now known that he defeated the Pharaoh of Egypt and conquered Syria, Palestine, and Phoenicia. Phoenician colonies ringed the Mediterranean. He may therefore have received revenues from the entire world.

2. The belly and thighs of brass (2:39a)

And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee. (Daniel 2:39a)

⁷⁹ Dan. 2:28

⁸⁰ Dan. 2:29

⁸¹ in contrast to "the former days"

⁸² See Isaiah 2:2, Micah 4:1, and Genesis 49:1 especially as the period between them in which we now live.

⁸³ An examination, in context, of the following passages will satisfy the inquiring student on this point—Acts 2:17 cf. Joel 2:28; I John 2:18; Hebrews 1:1, 2.

⁸⁴ Dan. 2:31

⁸⁵ *vid.* Isa. 14:4

This must be compared with the corresponding description of the image.⁸⁶ History and the Bible both agree that the kingdom which succeeded Babylon was that of Medo-Persia. The last chapter of II Chronicles is very clear on the point. Furthermore, Daniel himself, a bit later says: "Darius the Median took the kingdom."⁸⁷ Yet when the law of that kingdom was promulgated it was "the law of the Medes and Persians".⁸⁸ The duality is suggested by the two arms and two breasts.⁸⁹

3. The Belly and Thighs (Aramaic, buttocks) of Brass (2:39b)

And another third kingdom of brass which shall bear rule over all the earth. (Daniel 2:39b)

Again historians and the Bible are in agreement. This is the Grecian nation led by the Macedonian kingdom of Philip and his son, Alexander the Great. Old Testament story ends before the coming of the Greeks as conquerors into the Near East. That it was the Greeks who were to succeed the Medes and Persians is made crystal clear by Daniel in his eighth chapter.⁹⁰ Joel 3:6 also mentions the Greeks. Alexander led his armies into Asia Minor from Macedonia in 334 B.C. Then in a series of engagements over the following three years he became master of the Medo-Persian Empire. Eight years afterward, at the time of his death, he could claim the largest realm the world had ever seen up to that time.

4. The Legs of Iron and Feet of Iron and Clay (2:40-43)

And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all [things]: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And [as] the toes of the feet [were] part of iron, and part of clay, [so] the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, [but] it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. (Daniel 2:40-43)

Rome and the great civil, legal, and religious system which accompanied Rome are represented by this part of the image. This cannot be proved by citing references in the Bible which say that Rome succeeded to the empire of the Greeks, for there are no such texts. Rome probably did not yet exist in the sixth century B.C.⁹¹ There is, however, sufficient evidence that the Rome which history knows as following the last stage of the Grecian period

⁸⁶ Dan. 2:32

⁸⁷ Dan. 5:31 c.f. 5:8

⁸⁸ *vid.* 6:8

⁸⁹ Anti-supernatural Biblical criticism for nearly two centuries now has made interpretation of the four successive kingdoms a point of special attack. If, as the book of Daniel clearly indicates, and as history shows, believers have always interpreted, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, then Daniel contains true predictive prophecy. But these critics place the date of authorship in the period just before 160 B.C. So they twist this book to teach mistakenly, of course, that there were Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. In this way genuine prediction of the future is eliminated from the prophecy, making out the author to be a blunderer in matters of history. The reverent reader of Daniel and of the Old Testament as a whole will not be led into any of these wild conclusions.

⁹⁰ Dan. 2:20, 21

⁹¹ No extensive kingdom, at least of that name, existed.

is at least included in the fourth empire seen in this prophecy. This evidence is due to the fact that the fourth empire, which had no existence yet in Daniel's time, is given detailed treatment in the prophecy. This is a divine providence.

This is, we repeat, a prophecy of Rome, its empire, and the world system it introduced and which, it seems, at least, is to prevail until Jesus comes again. The details fit. Rome was "strong as iron" —of all common metals the strongest. "It breaketh in pieces" aptly describes the effect of Roman policy on all other nations and their institutions. It "subdueth all things" also fits Rome. Gibbon wrote: "The empire of the Romans filled the world, and when the empire fell into the hands of a single person the world became a dreary prison for his enemies. To resist was fatal, and it was impossible to fly." ⁹² The two legs may symbolize the two-fold division which came between the eastern and western portions in the imperial period, with capitals at Constantinople and Rome.

There is a real and important sense in which all the "West" or European civilization, is a continuation of the old roman world. It is likewise true that thus applied it continues to "subdue" and "break in pieces" all (i.e. all other nations, cf. v.40). Constantinople, the eastern capital of the Empire, held out against all attackers until it fell to the Turks in 1453. The "Holy Roman Empire" continued in name in the western part of the Empire until abolished in 1806 by Napoleon. The "West," however, continues to be Roman. Our literature (including grammar itself) as well as much of our law, and even our popular religion are borrowed from Rome. Christendom itself became Romanized whether Eastern (Greek-speaking) or Western (Latin-speaking). The Pope's title, for example, "Pontifex Maximus" was inherited from the emperors as head of the state religion. This Western form continues to subdue the world, to break apart social customs and institutions and then reform them according to Western patterns. Even the Chinese and Japanese are becoming Westernized. It is a Western form (whether we like it or not) of Christianity that has planted our faith around the world in the last two centuries, the greatest missionary era. The very language of the New Testament was the language of the Empire—not Latin as might be supposed, but Greek. Not only was Greek used in commerce everywhere but it prevailed even in the streets and homes of Rome in Paul's day, rather than Latin. *Ekklesia* (the Greek word for "church" in the New Testament) was the name for the assembly of citizens of a Greek or Roman city before it was transferred to the local body of Christian believers assembled for worship — to cite one important example.

In verses 42-44 the "toes of the feet" are picked out for special interpretation. In the opinion of many interpreters they represent a final form of Gentile dominion under ten allied kings in the times of the Antichrist. This ten-fold shape of final gentile dominion is to be elaborated later in connection with the "ten horns" of Daniel 7:7. They are probably the same as the final Gentile kings of earth as seen in Daniel 7:24 and Revelation 17:12.

A question frequently asked is: Does this mean that there will be a revival of the Roman Empire? In my opinion the answer depends somewhat on whether "revival" be understood as resurrection of a dead thing or not. If it does, then the answer is in the negative. The fourth kingdom of the prophecy endures until the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on earth (as symbolized by the stone). That the headquarters of the Empire shall be re-established at Rome is certainly possible.

Before presenting the final elements of the prophecy some general principles about the

⁹² Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

course of world dominion through the centuries as seen herein must be observed. Four principles are seen to prevail.

- i. *A continuous succession* of world dominions down to the coming of Messiah's kingdom. As observed earlier, the prophecy covers the "latter days", inclusive of all time from Daniel's own down to the consummation. There is not the slightest hint of a "gap" or "hiatus" somewhere. Jesus refers to this sweep of Gentile rule when Jewish political power is gone as "the times of the Gentiles".⁹³ At the end of it Jerusalem will cease to be "trodden down" by Gentiles and will again be the seat of national sovereign government. We should not, therefore, expect some other shape of Gentile sovereignty before Jesus comes.
- ii. *A progressive division* of sovereignty, reaching a climax in the ten-toed stage of the image prophecy. An illustration will help. Monarchy is rule by one; oligarchy, rule by a few; democracy, rule by all citizens. Sovereignty, i.e., right of rule, is progressively divided in the illustration. So in the image that right of the absolute monarchy of Nebuchadnezzar is progressively divided till at the end it is divided between ten (toes) representing ten kings of Daniel 7:7.⁹⁴ This may refer to the present divided state of the Roman dominion, but it seems more likely to refer to some situation at the end.⁹⁵
- iii. A progressive deterioration in the character of the authority of rulers. This decline is indicated by four elements in the dream. There is, first, a deterioration in the *worth* of the metals: gold, silver, copper, iron (and clay). The second is in *position* in the image from gold on top through silver and brass to iron at the bottom. The third is the prophetic interpretation of v. 39: "after thee shall arise another kingdom *inferior* to thee." Finally, observe that the metals grow *lighter* in weight (i.e., in specific gravity, mass per unit of volume), from the heaviest in gold to the lightest in iron and clay.

Granting that some of these details may be incidental, the emphasis indicates clearly something very important. Several considerations lead to the conclusion that it is the character of the authority of the rulers. Just as the value of the metals declines in the image so the authority of rulers declines in history.⁹⁶

See how this has worked out in history. Nebuchadnezzar (gold) had what James the Second of England only thought he had—divine right monarchical power. Jeremiah 27:5-8 and Daniel 5:18, 19 ASV make this plain. "Whom he would he slew and whom he would he kept alive." The Medo-Persian kings who followed Babylon were not above the law as Nebuchadnezzar was, but were subject to the laws of the realm—bound by the legal entanglements of their own decrees.⁹⁷ The Greek kings had no dynastic claims in the East at all, but ruled solely by virtue of great personal gifts. The Roman emperors and even the early kings of the dynastic period, before republic and empire, ruled largely by popular choice. Republicanism, which followed the monarchical period, soon degenerated into mob rule especially after it merged with the Imperial period. Some of the greatest emperors were affected by the will of mobs in the capital city. Since those days, with a chequered history of changes and variety

⁹³ Lu. 21:24

⁹⁴ *vid.* "the days of these kings" of v.44

⁹⁵ cf. Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12 ff

⁹⁶ See the author's book, *Daniel and the Latter Days*, Part II, Chapter 2, Chicago: Moody Press, 1964 for fuller discussion and proof.

⁹⁷ Dan. 6:14, 15

during the Middle Ages, democracy has emerged—i.e., sovereignty has been shared with everyone. To use Lincoln's famous words, it is "government of the people, for the people, and by the people." In the sweep of socialistic theory and soviet government this becomes a fierce and perverted form of rule by the masses.

- iv. *A progressive improvement* in hardness and strength. An exception is the clay, which, though hard enough in a vitrified form to cut iron, is very brittle. This indicates, perhaps that the kingdoms will grow stronger. At the end the brittleness of mass sovereignty is indicated by the clay. That the people in general are signified in a quite natural interpretation supported by general usage even today in aphoristic speech. The races were created of "the dust of the ground";⁹⁸ the Hebrew word for mankind, *adhamah*, means ground; more than once in Scripture the "people" are spoken of metaphorically as "the clay".⁹⁹

5. The Stone Which Smites the Image and Becomes a Great Mountain (2:44, 45 cf. 34, 35)

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to another people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. (Daniel 2:44, 45)

Here is unquestionably represented the coming of Messiah and his kingdom, just as the head of the image stood for Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom.

If the hungry heart has felt unfed with spiritual "bread for today" among the ponderous verses of this long chapter let him linger here and eat before pressing on to the close of the chapter. No symbol of Scripture speaks more uniformly and pointedly of the Savior than does the stone. Genesis 49:24 is the first appearance of the thought: "From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel"—combining the stone symbol with the figure of the shepherd.¹⁰⁰ At Psalm 118:22 the Savior as the rejected stone later to be exalted to chief corner stone is first introduced. This is followed by another form of the figure, oft cited by New Testament writers, at Isaiah 28:16 where our Lord is said to be Zion's foundation stone, tried and true, one on whom the believing soul may find a sure foundation.

To the nation of Israel Christ was and remains "the stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" so that many of them should "stumble, and fall and be broken, and snared, and taken".¹⁰¹ It is known from the New Testament, as indeed, the centuries since likewise show, that this has been fulfilled. As Paul says, He was "to the Jews a stumbling-block".¹⁰² Peter declares that he is to the Jews "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient".¹⁰³ The tragic results were prophesied by Jesus.¹⁰⁴ Paul discerned the

⁹⁸ Gen. 2:7

⁹⁹ Isa. 45:9, 64:8 cf. Rom. 9:21

¹⁰⁰ Ps. 23, John 10, I Peter 5:1ff

¹⁰¹ Isa. 8:14, 15

¹⁰² I Cor. 1:23

¹⁰³ I Pe. 2:8

dispensational and providential effects for redemption ¹⁰⁵ as well as the future repentance of Israel.¹⁰⁶ Paul states the tragic present result of Israel's national rejection of Jesus at I Thess. 2:14-16.

To Christian believers Christ, quite to the contrary, has always been a sure foundation stone, "to whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious...a chief corner stone".¹⁰⁷ Indeed he has been such a stone to believers of all ages, for, as Paul says of the children of Israel on their wilderness journey, they "did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ".¹⁰⁸ The great Christian hymn beginning, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in thee," appears to be derived from this figure.

Unhappily, but necessarily, Christ the Rock has another relationship—to the unsaved nations of the world—that of a smiting, smashing, grinding stone. As Jesus once said,¹⁰⁹ the Kingdom of God was taken from the Jews and given to Gentile believers. Because of their unbelief the Jews were judged and of that judgment Jesus said, "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder".¹¹⁰ This is precisely what is going to happen one of these days when Jesus comes again—no more as suffering servant and tender shepherd but as judge.¹¹¹ It is precisely in this capacity and relationship that the coming of Christ "in his kingdom" is prophesied here.

But, someone wants to know, is it not the first coming of Christ which is predicted here? Those who expect a peaceful epoch on earth to be followed by the second coming of Christ (Postmillennialism) feel that the "smiting stone" predicts the first coming of Jesus and that the kingdom of the stone is the Church. Those who expect neither a future visible reign of Christ on earth, not a millennium of peace before Jesus' second coming (Amillennialism) agree. Those who interpret the twentieth chapter of Revelation mainly literally and expect the coming of the Lord to be followed by a millennium of peace during which Christ will reign on earth with his saints gloriously, as many passages of Scripture seem to declare, believe that whatever fulfillment the symbolism of the stone may have in the first advent, the main reference is to the Second advent. Some arguments in favor of this view, known as Premillennialism, are as follows:

- i. By other views the church, which has no civil prerogatives at all (unless the traditional Roman Catholic theory is right), appears to be made into a political entity like Babylon, Medo-Persia, etc. On the contrary the church, both as a body and individually, is to be "subject to the powers that be" ¹¹² and is to "render" obedience dutifully "unto Caesar".¹¹³
- ii. Contrary views substitute a quiet imperceptible growth of a church in a gradual conquest for what the passage represents as a violent, catastrophic, sudden blow upon the consummate form of Gentile dominion.

¹⁰⁴ Luke 19:41-44

¹⁰⁵ Rom. 11:11 ff

¹⁰⁶ Rom. 11:25-32

¹⁰⁷ I Pe. 2:4-7

¹⁰⁸ cf. also Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31, 37

¹⁰⁹ Matt. 21:43

¹¹⁰ Matt. 21:44

¹¹¹ Matt. 25, Rev. 19:11 ff

¹¹² Rom. 13:1 ff

¹¹³ Matt. 22:21

- iii. The violence with which Christ's kingdom is presented as replacing the kingdoms of this world fits expectation of a day when "he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked".¹¹⁴ In this connection it is written of God's Son: "thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel"¹¹⁵ and "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron."¹¹⁶ Another text states: "for the nations and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish: yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted".¹¹⁷
- iv. The church has not overcome the kingdoms of the world, and if we interpret the Scriptures correctly, it never will. It seems that those who, like Amillenarians, expect no future reign of Christ on earth, and who expect good and evil to grow together till the harvest at the end of this age¹¹⁸ are inconsistent in identifying this victorious "stone" kingdom with the church. The Postmillenarians appear to be unbiblical in the expectations of a victory of the church over the world.¹¹⁹

Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream [is] certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. (Daniel 2:45)

The kingdom of Christ, symbolized by the stone that becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth, is of great importance for Christians. Perhaps we can explain it somewhat like this: Our Lord did establish a kingdom when he first came—a realm in which he now rules in believing Christian hearts. It is a kingdom of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"¹²⁰—a present kingdom of God's "dear Son" into which believers have already been translated,¹²¹ and where we are now reigning with Him. But there is another aspect of this kingdom still wholly future, when the "kingdoms of this world...become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever".¹²² For this kingdom we can only pray, as taught, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" for as the prophecy of Isaiah says so eloquently of it: "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

G. The Rewards for Interpretation of the Dream (2:46-49)

Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth [it is], that your God [is] a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret. Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise [men] of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of

¹¹⁴ Isa. 11:4; Compare also Zech. 14:16-19

¹¹⁵ Ps. 2:9

¹¹⁶ Rev. 19:15

¹¹⁷ Isa. 60:12

¹¹⁸ Matt. 13:30, 39, 40

¹¹⁹ See also II Tim. 3:1-5 and I Tim. 4:1-2

¹²⁰ Rom. 14:17

¹²¹ Col. 1:13

¹²² Rev. 11:15

Babylon: but Daniel [sat] in the gate of the king.¹²³

"Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him".¹²⁴ Nothing is said to the effect that Daniel accepted these honors proper only to God Himself. Daniel had been ridiculed for making such a fuss over improper food (chapter one) while thinking nothing of accepting worship due only to God. But this is to ignore what Daniel had already said to the effect that his success was not due to any personal qualities,¹²⁵ but rather that a gracious God wanted the king to know and to spare the lives of him and his innocent friends. When pagan people would have given divine honor at Lystra those two missionaries frantically disclaimed such honors.¹²⁶ We may be certain that a man of Daniels's piety and wisdom would have been scarcely less scrupulous.

It is a matter of encouragement to all sorely tried believers to note that the faithful prayers and testimony of Daniel brought about a change in the heart of the proud and arrogant king. It wasn't conversion, and he had many lessons yet to learn.¹²⁷ But he did come to see that Daniel was indeed a true servant of God and that his God was "God of gods, and Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets".¹²⁸ This was at least progress.

Another happy result was that honor was brought to God through this victory of obedient faith.¹²⁹ It all was "to praise of the glory of his grace."

Further, this act of Daniel brought him into a position of favor among unbelievers, a circumstance which made it possible for him to serve God better, and to help men more. As the man who "sat in the gate of the king" he had great influence over the affairs of the kingdom. He was thus in a position to assist his poorer Jewish brethren. That his Jewish brethren in exile knew about him and regarded him well is evidenced by the high praise given by his contemporary and companion in exile, Ezekiel.¹³⁰

Some of the greatest of comforting truths in all the Bible are found in the chapter we have now surveyed. Foremost of these is the fact of divine providence—the overruling control which He has over all that is. He works everything after the counsel of his will.¹³¹ This being true, we know that this world is not ultimately going to go to smash. Over all, from the fall of raindrops to the fall of empires, God rules and reigns. Because this true the saint of God can know that "all things work together for good to them that love God"¹³² —not because of fate or some impersonal optimistic destiny, but because the God who rules is the believer's Father.

A young Christian one cold December day walked across a Massachusetts field. As young men uncertain of their plans and futures often are, this young man was lonely, disconsolate, and sad. As he walked a wild duck flew whistling overhead heading, as the young poet knew, for his proper home, wherever that might be. God, he knew, was watching and in control. Ashamed of his needless fears William Cullen Bryant wrote "To a Waterfowl", a superb bit of poetry, enthusiastically praised by Matthew Arnold as "the most perfect brief poem in the language." The

¹²³ Dan. 2:46-49

¹²⁴ Dan. 2:46

¹²⁵ Dan. 2:30

¹²⁶ *vid.* Acts 14:8-18

¹²⁷ *vid.* Chapter 4

¹²⁸ Dan. 2:47

¹²⁹ Dan. 2:47

¹³⁰ See Ez. 14:14, 14:20, 28:3

¹³¹ Eph. 1:11

¹³² Rom. 8:28

last lines point out the meaning of it all.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply has sunk the lesson thou has given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

Another impression remains with the discerning and impressionable reader—that no matter how pretentious and impressive any government or capital may seem to be, it is not permanent and the judgment of God has been pronounced upon it. Our own nations of today, with whatever affection we hold them, are not exceptions. Hitler built his Reich to last, he thought, for a thousand years. It lasted less than ten. Every new alliance, each new precarious balance of power, is formed to ensure a "just and lasting peace." These efforts are praise-worthy. We should pray for the blessing of God on the worried men who try to work them out.¹³³ But we dare not trust them. Our ultimate hope is in the living God rather than in the men of this world, for the present age is destined for judgment. Isaiah, the great prophet of the glory of God proclaimed: "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing...all the nations are as nothing before him; they are accounted by him as less than nothing, and vanity".¹³⁴

Finally, we should be warned in our study not to rush off too quickly in search of "practical" lessons in preference to factual historical, doctrinal matters. Nothing is ultimately more practical than a correct understanding of the words of Jesus about His kingdom. The key, however, to those words lies right here in these chapters, for on them Jesus built his own teaching about the kingdom of God. The pearls of God's treasure will not be found by the callow, shallow, or slothful scholar. Nor will the impatient reader understand the "mysteries of the kingdom." They are reserved for the intellectually curious, the spiritually thirsty, and the man of prayerful industry.

¹³³ I Tim. 2:1-3

¹³⁴ Isa. 40:15, 17

III. CHAPTER 3: Three Heroes in a Fiery Furnace

A. Introduction

This chapter of the Bible contains one of the most famous stories in the world. Not only has it served as entertainment and lesson for the very young at the knee of countless mothers but likewise as illustration in a multitude of sermons. In other days and in other lands than ours, where physical peril from the wrath of wicked men has been far more real, it has assured many of God's oppressed people of the truth that "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe".¹³⁵ The story's fame extends even to the well-known recital of historical examples of faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, where after mention of those "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises" and "stopped the mouth of lions," mention is made of those who through faith "quenched the violence of fire".¹³⁶ The three young Jews of this chapter must surely be the heroes of faith referred to.

The contents very clearly indicate, as the abovementioned uses of it, that divine purpose for the chapter is mainly practical rather than doctrinal. There are no clear predictions in chapter three. It consists simply of a narrative of the trial of faith imposed upon three believing young men by their ungrateful professional associates, of how that trial brought them into peril of life on account of their steadfast refusal to disobey God, of how God miraculously saved them, and of how they were properly rewarded. The predictive and doctrinal sections of the Book of Daniel would be quite complete without this chapter. On the other hand the Book of Daniel—and the whole Bible for that matter—would be much poorer as "instruction in righteousness ... that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" without this chapter.

The "cast of characters" is already familiar. Nebuchadnezzar, the exasperated and angry king has already been introduced as the conqueror of the Jews and then as the exacting lord of his servants and convinced confessor of the greatness, even superiority, of the God of the Jews in the two previous chapters. The "Chaldeans",¹³⁷ who herein involve the three confessors in their difficulty by informing on them, are the same passel of quacks who failed their king as advisors and interpreters in the test connected with the king's dream and whose very survival they owed to the success and intercession of these same young Jews and their more famous friend Daniel. As for the three confessors, we should remember that though herein called by their new pagan names: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (all honoring the vile pagan deities of the Babylonian pantheon) they are none other than the pious Jewish boys Hananiah,¹³⁸ Mishael,¹³⁹ and Azariah¹⁴⁰ who honored their God by refusing to defile themselves with the king's food and drink with Daniel in the signal victory of prayer in connection with the king's dream. Furthermore, to the obvious chagrin and envy of the Chaldeans, they had just now been promoted to high administrative positions in government of the home province of Babylon.

But, one known character is missing—Daniel, whose name does not even appear in the chapter. Notice of the absence of this man has set off what is probably the oldest man-hunt in history—a quite tame one, of course, in the commentaries. Was he unable to be present on account of illness? In later life he was sometimes ill for days and absent from the places of the king's business.¹⁴¹ Did his high office as president of all the "learned societies"¹⁴² excuse him from the

¹³⁵ Prov. 29:25

¹³⁶ Heb. 11:34

¹³⁷ Dan. 3:8

¹³⁸ Heb. Grace of the Lord

¹³⁹ Heb. Who is like God?

¹⁴⁰ Heb. Help of the Lord

¹⁴¹ *vid.* 8:27

necessity of being present on the occasion of the dedication of the image? This is doubtful. Or, was he simply "out of town on business" for the king? This has a kind of ludicrous sound, but it may be nearest the truth. We may be sure that if he had been "in town" there would have been four confessors, not three only,

May we, therefore, hopefully approach our study, expecting to find ourselves involved in a most complete demonstration of how Christian faith is attacked and how, through that same faith, the victory is won.

B. The Opposition to Faith (3:1, 8)

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. (Daniel 3:1)

The image itself, its size, shape, composition, and significance draw first attention. The height of sixty cubits (about 90 feet) would have made it visible for a distance of twelve to fifteen miles in all directions on the broad lower Mesopotamian plain, and in a dry region where clouds seldom obscure the sun, would usually have been bathed at the top in the golden rays of the sun long before the light of sun struck the ground in the early morning as also after sunset. The height suggests, since it was only nine feet thick, that most of the monument was a pedestal. Proportions of 90:9 (10:1) would make a very thin man! The language, "an image of gold," requires only that it should have been covered with gold. In Old Testament times it was customary to overlay religious objects of non-precious material with a covering of gold.¹⁴³ The tabernacle, for example, among its furnishings contained an altar called a "golden altar",¹⁴⁴ yet it was only "overlaid with pure gold",¹⁴⁵ not solid gold. The word for image used here is *tselem* common to several Semitic languages, meaning primarily shadow or by extension, a material reproduction of the outline of some living thing. The ordinary meaning would be statue, but sometimes this word *tselem* can describe a pillar or obelisk or stele only partially sculptured with a relief. So this may have been a pillar with either a statue or relief at the top. The ancient world was fond of gigantic statuary. Citizens of all older nations are much more familiar with this type of public monument than are we Americans whose country has as yet produced only a small amount of it. The tendency of gigantic statuary to produce a feeling of awe and of reverence—an accompaniment of worship—be acutely noticeable to all those who visit our nation's capital and enter either the Jefferson or Lincoln memorials.

Though there are reported to have been three places in Mesopotamia called "Dura" in ancient times, only one is near the city of Babylon. At this site (Tells of Dura) there are reported to be ruins which may even be related to this image and its platform.

The question of to whom or to what the image was dedicated is of greater importance for interpretation of the passage, but impossible to decide with complete certainty. The fact that several times worship of the image is distinguished from worship of the gods of Babylon indicates that it was not dedicated to any particular Babylonian deity.¹⁴⁶ Several scholars (Montgomery and Keil) argue that it was a symbol of Nebuchadnezzar's empire. This is plausible, especially in connection with the dream of chapter two, and would account for the fact that representative

¹⁴² Dan. 2:48

¹⁴³ cf. Jer. 10:3ff

¹⁴⁴ Ex. 39:38

¹⁴⁵ Ex. 37:25, 26

¹⁴⁶ *vid. v.* 14 "do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up," also vv. 12, 18

officials from all sections of the empire were required to be present and why the Chaldeans when they refused to render the image the required worship could charge the three Jews with treason rather than sacrilege.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, just as the "head of gold" in the image stood for Nebuchadnezzar and his empire, so the statue may have been dedicated both to the empire and its king. Another most attractive suggestion is that Nebuchadnezzar had been so impressed by Daniel's revelations from Jehovah, the Jewish God, as reported to us in chapter two, that he had the image erected and dedicated in honor of the God of Israel. Farfetched as this may seem, it is by no means impossible. The image would thus take somewhat the same status as the altar "to the unknown god" of the Areopagus.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore it is not without precedents. Aaron's golden calf¹⁴⁹ and Rehoboam's two calves of gold,¹⁵⁰ both used for idolatrous worship, were likewise certainly dedicated to Jehovah. It is precisely this perverted kind of worship which was Israel's most acute temptation—worship of the true God in an utterly false manner. This continues today in different ways, to be a great temptation.

Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near and accused the Jews. (Daniel 3:8)

The significance of these words is chiefly that they show how the chief opposition to the obedient faith of God's people often comes from other people. The men, in this case, were the very professional class of wise men, advisors of the king, to which our three heroes belonged. They were professional associates, in a sense.

It will always be true that being "men of like passions," all of God's people are likely to receive their most difficult, persistent and persuasive temptation *via* men. Even our Lord was no exception, for it was Peter who suggested that he follow another course than the will of his Father.¹⁵¹ The tempter may be one's wife or husband, one's parents, fellow students, or fellow workmen, or professional colleagues. The younger one is, the more persuasive is social pressure. Social pressure—the dreadful insistence from without and within that one conform to the habits, pleasures, tastes, and desires of the group, particularly one's peers, is almost overwhelming in childhood and youth. A high school girl of finest tastes for example, may be pressed to wear the current outlandish costume or to exchange lucid diction for the latest "youth" jargon, just in order not to be a "square," or because "everybody" is doing it. Ten years later as an adult she might wish very much not to be seen on the street wearing style and pattern of dress as even one other woman, for people do become a bit less the conformists as they grow older.

Either good or evil men may oppose us, that is, tempt us to be less than God's will prescribes for our lives, but the temptation most frequently comes, as in this story, from those who do not love God. Our three heroes did not fear them. "The fear of man" only "bringeth a snare".¹⁵² Our Lord has told us how both to fear and not to fear men in an extensive section of Scripture.¹⁵³ The worst, Jesus has said, that evil men can do to us is to harm our bodies. Since God, however, can destroy both the soul and the body in hell we should "fear him." So, "beware of men", he says¹⁵⁴ not because they themselves can really harm you ultimately but because they can lead you to sin. Yet, further on, Jesus says, "fear them not",¹⁵⁵ inasmuch as their power to do harm extends only to our bodies.

¹⁴⁷ Dan. 3:12

¹⁴⁸ Acts 17

¹⁴⁹ Ex. 32

¹⁵⁰ 1Ki. 12:25-33

¹⁵¹ Matt. 16:21-23

¹⁵² Prov. 29:25

¹⁵³ Matt. 10:16-39

¹⁵⁴ Matt. 10:17

¹⁵⁵ Matt. 10:28

C. The Temptation of Faith (3:2-15) ¹⁵⁶

Perhaps before proceeding it will be well to answer a question: What is temptation? In the Bible the word temptation is simply an alternate term for test or trial. In this broad sense, illness, poverty, etc. are temptations. In this sense of trial even God is tempted.¹⁵⁷ In the special sense in which we now usually think of it, however, temptation is a test in the moral or spiritual realm. It consists of enticement to sin. It may be external stimulation of improper desires, as in the case of the serpent's tempting Eve.¹⁵⁸ Or, it may be something that arises from within man's nature without the necessity of external stimulation, such as pride, gluttony, covetousness, etc.

There is a sense in which it is true that God never tempts any man. James says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed".¹⁵⁹ Yet in an indirect manner, called providence, God does try men. "The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins".¹⁶⁰ God allows Satan to be an instrument of trial. Thus, to cite a well-known example; in II Samuel 24:1 God is said to have "moved David" to perform the sinful act of numbering Israel. Yet in I Chronicles 21:1 we are caused to see that Satan was the real tempter. The explanation is simply that God's providence allowed it, in the same manner that he allowed wicked men wrongfully to sell Joseph into Egypt,¹⁶¹ or to crucify the Savior.¹⁶² Satan is the arch fiend behind all enticement to sin. This was clearly the case in the temptation of Jesus.¹⁶³

Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music,¹⁶⁴ ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. (Daniel 3:4-6)

It is by no means necessary to accept this as true. The fifth chapter, and several subsequent chapters, show that Daniel survived the conquest of the Babylonians by the Persians by several years, and had high office in the Persian administration. It would, then, have been most natural

¹⁵⁶ "The king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces" (3:2). The passing of time has lent confusion to the precise meaning of the words behind the translation of this list of officers. We do not know exactly how Nebuchadnezzar organized his empire for administration and we do not know the exact meaning of the words. They are, in fact, derived from three different known ancient languages: Aramaic, Persian, and Babylonian. There are two words in the list of unknown derivation. Words of Persian origin preponderate. Those who insist on a second century date for the writing of the book say this is evidence that the book was written in that century when the Persian Empire was still well remembered.

¹⁵⁷ *vid.* Ex. 17:2, 7; Deut. 6:16

¹⁵⁸ Gen. 3:1 ff., cf. I Tim. 2:14), or of David's temptation by sight of a particularly alluring woman (II Sam. 11:1-4)

¹⁵⁹ Jas. 1:13, 14

¹⁶⁰ Ps. 7:9, cf. Job 7:18; Ps. 11:4, 5; 139:23

¹⁶¹ Gen. 50:20

¹⁶² Acts 2:23

¹⁶³ Mt. 4:1-10; 16:14-23

¹⁶⁴ "The sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music" (3:5). The cornet and flute were wind instruments, but horn and pipe are better renderings. Horn in Aramaic and Hebrew, as in our language, is primarily either a cow-, sheep-, or goat-horn or an instrument made from one. Presumably, an instrument shaped like a animal's horn even though made of other material, then as now, might be called a horn. The pipe or flute is from a word meaning whistler or hisser. Harp should be lyre or zither. The sackbut (Aram. *sabkah*) was a triangular instrument of three or four strings. The psaltery (Aram. *pesanterin*) is another stringed instrument of some kind. Dulcimer is entirely misleading as a translation, for the Aramaic word *symphonyah* means tube, vein (artery) or pipe. This name in later Greek-Latin form, *symphonia*, came to designate a bagpipe. Highest authorities assert that though it is a Greek-sounding word, it is, nevertheless, indigenous Aramaic, adapted in sound later to a thoroughly Greek word *symphonē* (symphony), *syn* (with) plus *phonē* (sound, voice).

for him to have brought the nomenclature up to date. Actually nothing is more in accord with known history of the culture of the Near East than the preponderance of Persian words in this verse.

This proclamation presented a three-fold temptation to the three Jews—as well as to the many others of their nation who may have been present. It was first of all:

1. Temptation to Perversion of their Faith

Idolatry in Israel as noted above had been always mainly a perversion of the true worship of the one true God rather than a denial or abandonment of it. The gods of their neighbors were worshipped occasionally, to be sure. But the idolatry of Israel was usually an attempt to worship Jehovah-God through some "aid to worship" such as a graven or molten image. This was clearly true of the first case after the Exodus, the golden calf incident in the wilderness, for when Aaron announced: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,"¹⁶⁵ he used the plural name *Elohim*, the word usually translated simply, God. Perhaps it should be so translated here. In fact it is close to a certainty inasmuch as even though there was only one calf image Aaron used the plural name Elohim. So the plural Elohim should be understood in the sense of God instead of gods. Moreover, the whole affair was preparation for what Aaron further declared would be "a feast to the LORD" on the morrow.¹⁶⁶ The next day Moses came down from the mountain only to find the people engaged in drunken, licentious, pagan-style dancing around a golden image of a calf—all in the name of Jehovah. The same was true of Jeroboam's worship of the calves at Bethel and Dan.¹⁶⁷

We may rightly discern in the worship of idols a perversion of a normal and healthy desire in man for a visible manifestation of the Godhead. That is, it is now entirely wrong to prefer to walk "by sight." Philip quite guilelessly suggested: "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us".¹⁶⁸ As Jesus then pointed out to Philip, it is precisely to satisfy this longing of men that God, in part at least, sent his Son to be "God manifest in the flesh." "He became flesh" John says, "and dwelt among us".¹⁶⁹ The Christian may, then, find a fully sufficient answer to this longing to see the living God by reading the Scriptural account of the life of Jesus.

It would be remiss not to raise a strong warning for Christians today at this point. We are witnessing, in both Roman and Protestant groups, what has been called a "liturgical revival." It is not all bad, of course. Dignified forms of worship suited to the culture, education, and tastes of God's people, if kept within proper limits, is all for the good. But what are proper limits? The use of any visual representation of God whatsoever, or even of the Savior at the place where attention centers in a room where worship is conducted, certainly is wrong in educative effect. Roman Catholic worship with its use of images and intermediate objects of worship not only violates sound worship practices but at least one of the ten commandments. A discerning Christian knows that so innocent an object as a picture or other visible symbol, even if it be not a likeness, can be idolatrous or at least tend toward wrong emphasis unless extreme care is sustained. A stained glass window containing artistic portrayal of some scene from the Lord's earthly life may be justified as educational, decorative, and useful if it is at the side of the room or at the entrance of the place of worship. If set where it is the center of interest, however, rather than the invisible present Christ, revealed only through the Word,

¹⁶⁵ Ex. 32:4

¹⁶⁶ Ex. 32:5

¹⁶⁷ *vid.* I Ki. 12:25-33

¹⁶⁸ Jn. 14:8

¹⁶⁹ Jn. 1:14

such art may become a temptation to idolatry. Certainly recent converts from idolatrous worship will be offended. Publishers of illustrative aids for the instruction of children, and especially the teachers themselves, should be careful that pictures, flannel graph objects, etc. do not become substitutes for the true, present, invisible Christ, the one really seen fully best in the stories of the Gospels. These devices may be used to obscure the truth of the invisibility of the Divine Spirit rather than to illumine this truth about Him.

Beautiful music, stately architecture, and even oratory, may become other less-obvious channels tending toward idolatry. It should be clear, however, that they are not by any means *necessarily* idolatrous. Rather, wherever admiration of the creature, as such, rather than the Creator occurs there is idolatry.

Both Testaments warn frequently against this perversion of the true faith. We are familiar with the warnings in the Ten Commandments and in Jewish history. Paul likewise condemns the making of an "image made like to corruptible man" for purposes of worship, and in one place even calls covetousness a kind of idolatry.¹⁷⁰ Let all Christians remember and heed John's patient words, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols".¹⁷¹

2. To Compromise of their Faith¹⁷²

A second look at the three confessors is in order. They were three of the very finest physical and intellectual specimens their nation could boast. They had been chosen for training in the highest learning their age knew. They had achieved the very finest kind of success their profession offered. Moreover, they had been advanced to honors most unusual. These honors had all come to them as foreigners and—what is far more important—it had all happened to them while they were very young men. This kind of early success spoils many who achieve it. Furthermore, piety, like a good many fruits and vegetables, grows better in the shade! It was an act of God's

"mercy, therefore, to them, and for the good of the Jewish exiles, that there was still a terrible trial for them to undergo; and their faith again winning the victory, thereby became so strong and massive that henceforth no storm could overthrow them from their firm foundations. Furthermore, with them the whole nation grew strong and learned to trust in the Lord God of their fathers".¹⁷³

These three urbane and cultured, yet godly Jews quite naturally wanted the approval of their professional associates in Babylon. By joining in worship of the idol they might have had it. The history of the world shows that education and scientific advancement have not provided any real barriers to what is obviously foolish idolatry. Idol worship can be justified to the satisfaction of many carnal men on artistic or aesthetic grounds. The beauty of the representation of gods and goddesses (or of saints and martyrs) is held to be its own justification. In civilized countries at the present time it is sometimes justified on patriotic grounds, as in Japan or on cultural and philosophical grounds, as in India. The Bible furnishes one example of participation, by a believer in the one true God, in idolatrous practices on the grounds of custom and legal necessity. The case is that of Naaman the Syrian who, convinced of the supremacy (if not sole existence) of Jehovah, desired pardon for participation in his master's (Ben-Hadad king of Syria's) worship of the image of Rimmon, since his official duties

¹⁷⁰ Col. 3:4

¹⁷¹ I Jn. 5:21

¹⁷² i.e., to worship an idol and to justify it somehow as a means to some good end

¹⁷³ R. Payne Smith

required his presence in the idol's temple.¹⁷⁴ Like Naaman, these confessors might have agreed among themselves that the idol was nothing and that they should join in the external acts of obeisance to keep up appearances while inwardly reserving all worship for Jehovah. Or, they might have joined in the idolatry and have excused it to themselves as something they were compelled to do.

Yet, they steadfastly refused to worship the hateful idol, choosing what was, humanly speaking, certain death, rather than to pervert in any manner their pure faith in the invisible God who "dwelleth in light unapproachable" and who had commanded: "Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or likeness of any thing that is in heaven above ... thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God" (Deut. 5:8, 9) and who also had said, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me" (Deut. 5:7). One thinks also of James' words: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

3. To Concealment of Their Faith

Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do ye not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? (Daniel 3:14)

There are times when it is perfectly proper to believe all the truth there is and to remain discreetly silent about it. If there is no essential denial of one's God or failure in support of a beleaguered fellow-believer involved it may possibly be correct to remain silent. Yet no one especially admires Nicodemus for having come to Jesus "by night"¹⁷⁵ or Joseph of Arimathea for not having declared his faith openly.¹⁷⁶

The text above should be changed to read "Is it on purpose"? instead of "Is it true"? The situation seems to have been that the king was genuinely fond of the three young men who had previously served him very well. So, after having been informed that they had now joined in worship of the image, the king, though exasperated with a disobedience he could not understand, still wished to spare them if possible. So he suggested that perhaps the failure to join in the worship had not been "on purpose." If they would only say the failure was unintended, then they would live. A little white lie would have saved them.

The writer will not soon forget an academic quarter in a state college where all his teachers were, with one exception, anti-Christian. One aged teacher especially, kept up a kind of running program of disparagement of everything Christian after he discovered that I, one of the dozen or so students in his class, was a ministerial student. Ridicule was daily fare for any known Christian believer in that class. Imagine my surprise, then, some weeks later, while attending a Christian Endeavor rally in the same town, to see a young man who had been a regular member of that class singing lustily in the choirs. How he could have silently concealed his faith for weeks while another suffered alone is hard to understand, and under the circumstances impossible to excuse.

The cause of Christ suffers daily from the failures of true Christians who deny their Lord by failing to show their colors. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good

¹⁷⁴ (*vid.* II Ki. 5:15-19).

¹⁷⁵ Jn. 3:1

¹⁷⁶ Jn. 19:38

works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven".¹⁷⁷

Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand. (Daniel 3:15)

This verse indicated that the temptation was made almost irresistibly appealing. Having been brought to the very jaws of death by their initial steadfastness, the very goodness of the king in offering them a second chance—a chance that appears to have involved the entire repetition of the ceremonies for their special benefit—must have strongly impelled the confessors to abandon their intransigent position.

This is the fourth and last enumeration of the musical instruments used in the Babylonian "orchestra." Six different instruments, as well as "all kinds of music" are mentioned. The names of the instruments are really unimportant to the story except that unbelieving criticism long claimed that the names of those instruments prove that this book could not have been written before the coming of the Greeks into Asia with Alexander in the 330's B.C. Occasionally even some contemporary critic will repeat the charge. The whole thing rests on the allegation that the names of certain of the instruments are Greek. It is by no means certain, however, that even one of the names was originally Greek. In case the one most likely word, "Dulcimer" (AV, *sum-pon-ya* Aramaic), should turn out to be derived from the Greek word *symphonia* (symphony), then it still is entirely unnecessary to think that the Greek armies and the Hellenistic culture which followed them had to arrive in Asia before the names of a few musical instruments got there. The instruments travelled through exchange of culture brought about by travel and commerce. Scholars now even know the routes the commercial caravans and fleets took. As is often the case with all such things, the names traveled with the objects of trade to which they belonged, just as names like banjo, piano, guitar, cornet, etc. have traveled to the United States without any previous conquest by the Italians and Greeks who gave us both these instruments and their names.

This verse directs another important truth our way: that God's name and reputation are intimately connected with the obedient faith of his people. Nebuchadnezzar had learned to brow-beat his own gods. If they would not help him he could stop supporting their temples and feeding their priests. So he was quite prepared to declare that the Jewish God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego was not one that "shall deliver you out of my hand." In spite of the admirable earlier confession of chapter two,¹⁷⁸ Nebuchadnezzar had not yet learned well enough that the Jewish people not only were different on account of their faith, but that their God was different. A century and a half earlier Sennacherib had challenged the ability of Jehovah and on a single night had lost one hundred eighty thousand warriors to the death angel of that Jehovah.¹⁷⁹ So now the faithfulness of these men showed in what esteem they held their God, and his subsequent deliverance of his obedient servants showed how great God really is.

D. The Demonstration of Faith (3:16-18)

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we

¹⁷⁷ Mt. 5:17

¹⁷⁸ (*vid. v. 47*),

¹⁷⁹ (II Ki. 19).

are not careful to answer thee in this matter. (Daniel 3:16)

There has been some discussion as to whether or not the manner of address involved disrespect for the king, and whether their answer displayed arrogance. Some say that they were both disrespectful and arrogant. We think not. It is better to say that now that the final impasse had come there was no need for further palaver. If they had explained their real reasons for defying the king's order he would not have understood anyway. After all, there -really is no courteous way to say some things. When they said, in effect, "There is nothing more to say," it was true. Perhaps it may be a bit of American pride in an inheritance of defiance of tyrants and of impatience with impossible legal procedures, but even if they did "tell the king off," the present writer can not but feel a rising bit of pride that they did so. After all, was not Paul a bit rude with the time-serving officials up at Philippi when, after they wanted to slip their unwelcome guest out the back door of jail quietly, he defiantly demanded, "Let them come and fetch us out"?¹⁸⁰

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. (Daniel 3:17)

It is hard to find any lack of confidence in God's ability to save them. The opening words, "If it be so" appear to express a kind of sublime, but very practical, lack of further concern about mere talk. Perhaps these troublesome words mean, even if there might be some use for further talk as far as you are concerned, our words are at an end. It should be noted that they had received no revelation as to whether or not God would preserve them alive through the furnace. God, as they knew, is quite chary in use of miracles. There was no obvious reason why God should make a special case of these Jews' extremity and perform a miracle to save them. God often lets his faithful martyrs (martyr means witness) die for their faith. So, when they said, "he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king" they may have been quite grimly conscious of several possible ways in which deliverance from the king might take place. It might be by death. Death puts a blessed end to persecution from man. It does but deliver the Christian into the tender hands of God and transports him into the bosom of Abraham. So, whatever the fire might do they were "Safe in the arms of Jesus, safe on his gentle breast."

Deliverance might also come by a miracle. But they knew it was by no means certain, for they had no promise of it.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. (Daniel 3:18)

The expression of doubt implicit in "But if not" does not imply any doubt as to God's power, but rather of what has been called "ethical ability." That is they were by no means sure what the good providence of God would make necessary. If God had good reasons for letting some "martyr blood" tell the world about Himself they would die. If His plans could be better served, say the encouragement of other persecuted Jews, by being delivered alive, then they would be delivered alive.

There at least four elements common to all overcoming Christian faith demonstrated in these verses. Their faith, in the first place, *was a full committal*.¹⁸¹ "We are not careful to answer thee" or "There is no need for further talk." This was the only answer Nebuchadnezzar got to his question, "Was it on purpose?" This cast the die. From here on there was no turning back. How

¹⁸⁰ Acts 16:37

¹⁸¹ Dan. 3:16

important it is that faith be a final act never to be reversed or repented of! In the second place their faith involved *full confidence*.¹⁸² "Our God whom we serve is able" they declared. They understood, as all should, that to deny God's omnipotence is really to deny his existence. This was their answer to the king's blatant question: "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands"?¹⁸³ In the third place there is a *recklessness of faith* to be observed. Verse 18 fairly rings with this quality. They answered the implied question of the king, "What are you going to do?" In faith they declared: "We will not!" This element of recklessness, however, would have been quite foolish—a thing born only of the tense emotion of the moment—if it had not been for still another element, foundational to all the others: *full knowledge*. They knew that God would deliver in one way or another because they knew their Hebrew Scriptures. The mighty works of God at the time of the Exodus and at other junctures in their history as well as their own recent experiences in connection with the king's dream simply left no room for doubt in their pious hearts. It is this which accounts not only for their commitment, confidence, and recklessness but for these qualities of faith in all ages. Any believer can join in so claiming: "So what we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me".¹⁸⁴

E. The Salvation Wrought Through Faith (3:19-30)

Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. (Daniel 3:19, 20)

There was immediate abandonment of any tentative plans for a repetition of the ceremonies. Their seeming contemptuous refusal even to recognize benevolent intentions on the king's part angered him beyond measure. The Aramaic words used are all of the utmost force in expressing anger. The furnace was to be heated seven times hotter than customarily.¹⁸⁵ The mightiest, i.e., the leading generals and military men, were to execute the sentence. The furnace is not described, but, in the manner of ancient smelting furnaces, it was probably a kind of silo constructed of brick, and built into a mound or hillside with draft openings at the lower end at a lower ground level and with flue opening at the top. Presumably entrance for the victims of this manner of execution was made at the top through which the flames and smoke were belching. The king commanded the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual, we have already noted. This should be understood, like "ten times better",¹⁸⁶ as an extreme superlative rather than in any exact sense. We speak the same way outside of circumstances where exact measurements are necessarily understood, as in a laboratory or weather bureau.

Curiosity asks for some information as to the fuel for the fire. It is not known, except that the usual fuel in those days would have been charcoal. One author¹⁸⁷ suggests that oil and naphtha were added. Presumably by naphtha he means petroleum.¹⁸⁸ Petroleum and natural asphalt have long been used in that part of the world.

Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. (Daniel 3:21)

¹⁸² Dan. 3:17

¹⁸³ Dan. 3:15

¹⁸⁴ Heb. 13:6

¹⁸⁵ "One seven" is merely literal rendition of Aramaic idiom. The word "one" should be omitted in translation.

¹⁸⁶ Dan. 1:20

¹⁸⁷ R. Payne Smith

¹⁸⁸ Naphtha is originally the Assyrian or Babylonian word for petroleum.

The significance of this verse is in the fact that immediately and unceremoniously these men were thrown to the fire in the very clothes they wore. Ordinarily men wear special clothes for an execution and any articles of finery would be removed,¹⁸⁹ but on this occasion the king was in a big hurry. Strangely enough, no translators or commentators, ancient or modern, have attained any degree of certainty as to the meaning of the names rendered here coats, hosen, and hats. When the Septuagint (Greek) translation was made, about two centuries before Christ, the names had already been forgotten for that version shows ignorance on the part of the translators. This in itself is a very strong argument for the sixth century genuine origin of the book, for a man writing in the very era in which the Septuagint arose would have used currently understood words which the translators also would have understood. The most widely recognized authority on matters of Old Testament word meanings in our language gives the possibilities of mantle, trousers, and shoes for the first word. These are so far apart that it is clear that the meaning is simply unknown.¹⁹⁰ Their outer garments, especially their turbans, were apparently stripped off and used as cords to bind them.

Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. (Daniel 3:22)

These verses remind us how absolute a monarch Nebuchadnezzar really was. Precautions could have been taken which would have enabled the executioners to cast the three confessors into the fire without causing any loss of life besides. But, on account of the king's unreasoning mad fury, they were not taken. This king, as the Bible bears some record, and as secular history and archaeology also bear out, was capable of acts of true greatness. He was interested in architecture, art, literature, and even archaeology. He was known to be affectionate and kindly with his family. Years later his aged queen¹⁹¹ could say some fine things about him, as did Daniel also, but in a rage he was a veritable devil, careless of the lives and feelings of even his most loyal subjects. In such a condition he was still King Nebuchadnezzar, of whom it could truly be said by Daniel on that other tragic night,

"And for the majesty that he (God) gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down."¹⁹²

In the present epoch, wherein thousands of fellow Christians in South America, Europe, and especially in Asia, have been called upon to pay with their lives for defiance of godless rulers and disobedience of God-dishonoring laws, it is wise for us to reflect on the causes both of the king's vicious fury and of the confessors' calm faith. Further, in a day when large areas of the earth have lost the freedoms which they had gained in recent centuries it is well to consider the cause of the loss of these freedoms to tyrants like the one exposed in this chapter.

It was their religion, that is, the doctrines of it and the appropriation of them that had made these fearless Jews what they were. Their Scriptures told them that there is one true God, that they were personal beings as He is, and made in his likeness. They further knew that He is an ethical being¹⁹³ who expect his people to be the same; that He is not, like the many gods of the

¹⁸⁹ e.g., the crucifixion of Christ

¹⁹⁰ Brown, Driver and Briggs Lexicon

¹⁹¹ cf. Dan. 5:10

¹⁹² Dan. 5:19

¹⁹³ i.e., righteous

heathen, a petulant lord to be patronized, but an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-holy person to be obeyed. In such a climate of belief the conscience grows in strength, it is guided by right knowledge, it issues in the virtues of love, mercy, fairness—and above all—of loyalty and trustworthiness.

"And in this lies the importance of a true religion, that it raises and elevates men, and gives strength and nobleness to their lives. Every corruption of our creed, every erroneous doctrine and perversion of view is a distinct loss. As far as it goes it depresses our spiritual standards, enfeebles our conscience, takes away the inner bone from our characters, and makes us unequal to a firm and consistent walk with God. But a true and scriptural belief will not by itself suffice. There must be a living faith in the God which it sets before us."¹⁹⁴

Likewise it was the religion of Babylonia which produced its tyrants and which kept it in the trail of serfdom and slavery. There is an implicit pantheism, identifying the world and its processes with God, underlying all polytheism, i.e., the worship of many gods. Where all is god any ultimate distinction between good and evil is impossible. Such things as "certain inalienable rights" of free men are inconceivable. Though the present lords of India do not realize it, it is the pantheism of their native Hindu religion that is keeping their untouchables untouchable. The principles of freedom for which that land wistfully reaches did not come to birth there. They were imported by Christianity. Christians may deny these principles, or pervert them (as they even now are doing in many lands) but they are to that extent untrue to their faith.

The very nature of reality is such that where men lose the sense of their personal obligation to the transcendent, holy, personal, creator God they lose their freedoms. This being true, the real enemies of our political freedoms are the forces of impurity, of atheism, of Godlessness in our land. Our battles will not be won or lost in the halls of congress or in the battle fields. Rather they will be won or lost in our pulpits—and beyond that in our theological seminaries and training schools, above all in our homes.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said to his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. (Daniel 3:26, 25)

These words must be interpreted in the light of the king's own level of understanding. He was not trained in the Scriptures, hence, knew nothing of the second person of the Trinity whom Christians know to be our Lord Jesus Christ. A fair translation of his declaration would be, "the form of the fourth is similar to a son of a god." His declaration is similar to that of that other pagan, the centurion who superintended the execution of Jesus, and who exclaimed from the depths of his pagan heart, "Truly this was a son of a god." We cannot make either of these confessions mean anything like the great confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"¹⁹⁵ or that of Thomas, "My Lord and My God!"¹⁹⁶

The faith of these men had won a five-fold victory.

¹⁹⁴ R. Payne Smith

¹⁹⁵ Mt. 16:16

¹⁹⁶ Jn. 20:28

1. By faith they were loosed from their bonds.¹⁹⁷

This was literally true, for the king saw the men "loose." Morally speaking, there is also a great freedom of soul when one that final plunge of commitment to God, expecting nothing from man, knowing all things are his in God.

2. By faith they were protected from all harm.¹⁹⁸

The fire could not harm them. They were not even touched by the smell of smoke. Only those who work around wood fires can have the "poetic" appreciation this deserves. Did you ever smell an Indian? If you say yes, you are mistaken. What you really smelled were his wood-smoked buckskin moccasins. There is nothing quite like that odor—not unpleasant, but certainly unforgettable.

3. By faith they were confronted in trial.¹⁹⁹

"One like a son of a god;" as Nebuchadnezzar described him is apparently none other than the great "Angel of the Lord," the pre-incarnate Christ whom the New Testament identifies as the Son of God, our Lord Jesus. We are reminded of how the Lord stood by Paul²⁰⁰ in a similar situation, and of how on another occasion the Lord told him to be of good courage. We are further reminded of our Lord's words for his grieving disciples, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee ...Lo, I am with you alway ...I will send you another Comforter" and of many other similar words.

4. By faith God was glorified.²⁰¹

This is, in certain respects, the high point of the chapter. Men realize the purpose for which they were made only when their lives give God glory. Even the heathen king was convinced. Brave Christian testimony will always produce respect for the witness and his God. As says Paul: "that with all boldness, as always, so now Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death".²⁰² Time-serving bowing and scraping never draws forth such admiration from kings for their underlings. It produces (and deserves) only disgust.

5. By faith God's servants were rewarded.²⁰³

The devout will remember "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life".²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ Dan. 3:25

¹⁹⁸ Dan. 3:27

¹⁹⁹ Dan. 3:24, 25, 28

²⁰⁰ Acts 25:11

²⁰¹ Dan. 3:29

²⁰² Phil. 1:20

²⁰³ Dan. 3:30

²⁰⁴ Rev. 2:10

IV. Chapter 4: The Dream of a High Tree

A. Introduction

There have been those in the history of theology who have taught that God has no personal dealings whatsoever with those who are outside the "covenant of salvation." I think those men have not read their Old Testaments well, for here in the chapter before us is related the story of a heathen king in whom God took a great personal interest. It is true that he dealt with the king in judgment, but accompanying the judgment was a divine revelation which gave the king the meaning of the punishment, thus directing him toward moral improvement. That is, the punishment was gracious and corrective rather than penal. The fifth chapter of Daniel tells the story of another king to whom God sent judgment with an accompanying revelation—but in his case the judgment was wholly penal. It brought to an eternal end all hope for correction or improvement of the men concerned. In Nebuchadnezzar's case we are to regard the corrective judgments with accompanying explanations as manifestations of the "goodness of God" which according to Paul "leadeth thee to repentance".²⁰⁵

There are many very right-believing Christians who need to improve their characters by learning after Nebuchadnezzar the lessons of his terrifying experiences. They know all about the Holy Trinity and the deity of Christ. They have "correct" views of the Second Advent. But, even though they have truly committed themselves to these truths and to the God who gave them they have not fully bent their necks beneath the sovereign rule of God. They have not committed themselves to the corollaries of God's existence. If God is, then God reigns! "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men".²⁰⁶ A Biblical statement of the great confession includes, "that Jesus Christ is Lord"; another, "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus".²⁰⁷ To deny Christ the place of Lordship is to deny him the place of God; to deny the supremacy of God in the heart is to deny his supremacy in heaven; to deny his supremacy in heaven is to deny his existence as God.

Nebuchadnezzar's last words in the chapter that lies before us are: "Those that walk in pride he is able to abase." It is best to make one's self humble before God has to make one so. How good it is, then, to heed the words, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up".²⁰⁸

B. Introductory Matters (4:1-9)

1. Salutation of a State Paper (4:1-3)

Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. (Daniel 4:1)

These words form the official address of what was originally a state paper of the second king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabopolassar. Although that the paper is in the Bible by the prophetic authority of Daniel is clear, it seems equally clear that Daniel did not write it. Nebuchadnezzar speaks in the first person throughout, making indirect claim to authorship of it. The formal structure of the chapter, addressed to all the subjects of the king, shows it to be a public document.

²⁰⁵ Rom. 2:1

²⁰⁶ Dan. 4:17

²⁰⁷ Phil 2:11, Rom. 10:9

²⁰⁸ James 4:10

Nebuchadnezzar left behind him many building inscriptions, inscribed memorial stones, and the like in Mesopotamia and Syria. Those, now discovered and translated, run into hundreds of lines of translation. They show that the king took a personal interest in these writings, apparently composing many of them himself. Merodach, patron god of Babylon, is addressed and praised in most of them. As in our chapter, he frequently refers to himself in the first person and expresses himself in poetic parallels, as for example, in verse three of the chapter before us:

"How great are his signs!
and how mighty are his wonders!
his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and his dominion is from generation to generation."

As an excellent example of Nebuchadnezzar's writings, recaptured for the twentieth century by the archaeologist's spade and the translator's art, the following lines of "poetry in prose" are cited from a Neo-Babylonian document known as the India House Inscription.

"After that the lord of my god had created me,
that Herodach had framed the creature in the mother,
when I was born,
when I was created, even I,
the sanctuaries of the god I walked in.
Of Herodach, the great lord, my god my creator,
his cunning works highly do I extol.
Of Nebo, his true son, the beloved of my majesty,
the way of his exalted godhead highly do I praise;
with all my true heart
I love the fear of their godhead,
I worship their lordship."

Among the many ancient writings of Nebuchadnezzar which recently have been recovered there has appeared no copy of this chapter of Daniel. No one should be surprised if it should happen, however. Stranger things have happened. The striking similarity of style, outlook, and ideas, etc. of the above-cited example and many more of Nebuchadnezzar's writings to the chapter before us strongly supports the authenticity of our chapter.

I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. Daniel (4:2)

The miraculous events of Scripture are called "signs" because they have meaning or significance; "wonders" because they produce wonderment as effect among those who witness them.

The better rendering "most high God" shows that Nebuchadnezzar, though evidently still a polytheist,²⁰⁹ recognized the superiority of Jehovah the God of Daniel. The whole intellectual, moral and religious atmosphere of the ancient world made belief of a strict monotheistic sort difficult even for the Jews. Every town and village had its own local deity, to say nothing of the multitudes of supposed nature spirits. In the language of Paul, ancient men could naturally say, "there be gods many, and lords many" but they could not add with him, "But to

²⁰⁹ cf. Dan. 4:8, 9

us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things".²¹⁰ Evidence is that the Jews only gradually came to believe in the non-existence of their neighbors' gods, except as Satanic spirits stood behind the image worship. There is no doubt that many understood this. Paul did, *viz.* "We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but one".²¹¹ Several of the prophets declare the unreality of the pagan gods.²¹² But, if even a wise and well-informed king like Solomon could lapse into idol worship then we may be certain that belief in a plurality of gods had a firm grip on men's minds in ancient times.

This chapter, according to verse 2, is intended as Nebuchadnezzar's personal testimony of faith. It has an utterly sincere ring, like Peter's "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard".²¹³

How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation. (Daniel 4:3)

The exclamation of praise to God for his mighty works is the proper reaction of man to the attributes of God in manifestation, that is, God's deeds. The Bible presents such spontaneous expressions of praise as this of verse 3 as reaction to God's omniscience;²¹⁴ to his work of creation;²¹⁵ or to his benevolence.²¹⁶ Christian hymnody echoes these praises in such exclamations as "Amazing grace! how sweet the sound!" and innumerable other lines familiar to practicing church-going Christians.

2. Circumstances at Court Leading up to the Proclamation (4: 4-9)

The first circumstance was *successful accomplishment*. The king was "at rest" in his palace. This was the quiet that came as a result of his wars of conquest and completion of great construction projects in Babylon. It is the bright background against which the gloomy dream stands in contrast.

The second circumstance is personal and national *growth*. He was "flourishing in my palace." Ordinarily used of growing plants in Hebrew, from which the Aramaic word here seems to be borrowed,²¹⁷ the first readers would have thought of a luxuriant, green vine' in connection with "flourishing".²¹⁸ Thus the recital anticipates both the correspondence between the dream and the king's actual career and the contrast between the happy estate of the king before his insanity and the humiliating degradation during it is heightened.

The next suggestion is of *trouble* within. The king is prosperous and successful, but a frightful dream has upset him.²¹⁹ "Uneasy rests the head that wears the crown." The enemies outside the gates had all been subdued. But within the king himself was a dreadful enemy soon to break forth—"he that ruleth his spirit [is better] than he that taketh a city".²²⁰

To add to the king's distress was *frustration*. Again he caused his wise men to be brought

²¹⁰ I Cor. 8:5, 6

²¹¹ I Cor. 8: 4

²¹² e.g., Isa. 41:29

²¹³ Acts 4:20

²¹⁴ Rom. 11:33

²¹⁵ Ps. 8:9

²¹⁶ Ps. 107:8

²¹⁷ cf. Ps. 92:14, "they shall be . . . green"

²¹⁸ cf. Dan. 4:11

²¹⁹ Dan 4:5

²²⁰ Pr. 16:32

before him ²²¹ as he had done before and again they failed him ²²² even though the task was simpler than that of producing both a dream and its interpretation as in chapter two. It would seem from our point of view that this school of quack doctors should have been dismissed long since. They were failures ²²³ and they were jealous opponents of the ones who had discredited them.²²⁴ But, evidently there was enough national and personal pride about the king that he would not dismiss these most prestigious representatives of the traditional heathen wisdom of his country. Americans, who traditionally overturn a "brain trust" every four to eight years, may find it hard to sympathize or understand this persistent trust—if we think of the wise men as political counselors. Actually, however, they correspond more with the "intellectuals" of our day, who seem somehow to retain considerable respect in spite of their egg-head reputation.

There was finally an *appeal* to the very man whom the king's pride had tried to ignore, Daniel the prophet. And, since the interpretation Daniel gave of the king's former dream had not been hopeful for the indefinite continuation of Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty, he probably was more than a little afraid of what this frightening dream might portend in Daniel's view. Observe that the text does not say the wise men could not interpret the dream, but that they "did not" make it known. Actually the dream rather suggests a sad future even apart from special interpretation. It was a sad story to start with. Perhaps, being time-serving sycophants anyway, the wise men simply didn't have the courage to tell the king what they thought the dream portended. Daniel, the king could be sure, would always speak the truth. This kind of a prophet is seldom popular with a king, however much he may be respected. ²²⁵

C. Narration of the Dream (vv. 10 - 18)

1. The tree

Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: the leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. (Daniel 4:10-12)

Trees are the most useful of all plants. They provide fruit for man's table and food for beasts as well. They make shade for man and beast—no front yard is complete without one as is likewise no cow pasture. They provide fuel for warmth and cooking as well as lumber for construction of house, factory or barn. Hundreds of articles of commerce have always been made of wood. Trees, therefore, are frequent biblical symbols. A tree in the first garden stood for knowledge, another for life.²²⁶ A whole family of trees, olive, fig, vine, and bramble, are the central features in Jotham's fable.²²⁷ The blessed man is compared to a fruitful tree.²²⁸ An almond becomes a prophetic sign.²²⁹ A "vine tree" stands for useless Jerusalem and the mighty cedar for the mighty Assyria.²³⁰ So it was no new symbolic motif that appears as a

²²¹ Dan. 4:6

²²² Dan. 4:7

²²³ Cf. Chapter 2

²²⁴ Cf. Chapter 3

²²⁵ *vid.* I Kings 22:15-18

²²⁶ Cf. Gen. 2, 3

²²⁷ Jud.9:8ff

²²⁸ Ps. 1:3

²²⁹ Jer. 1:11, 12

²³⁰ Ez. 15:1ff; 31:3-18

tree in the fabric of the king's dream.

The records left by Nebuchadnezzar in his inscriptions, recently recovered and translated, show that he not only dreamed about great and high trees but also spent many of his waking hours thinking about them and working with them. He not only had an especial admiration for the cedar forests of Lebanon but also loved the arts of lumbering and carpentry. Except for Babylon itself the most precious and loved spot in his empire was the forested Lebanon. Out of at least four trips to Syria, at least, two were for the purpose (in part) of obtaining cedar logs for adornment of palaces and temples in Babylon. In the Wady Brissa Inscription B he speaks of how Lebanon *was* a "cedar mountain, the luxuriant forest of Merodach, whose scent is fragrant." He goes on to say that after quieting affairs in his kingdom he marched with his army to Lebanon, drove enemies out of the region and then "That which no other king had done, I did. The steep mountains I cut through, the rocks of the mountain I shattered, I opened the passes, a road for the cedars I smoothed. Before the king Merodach, mighty cedars, tall and strong, of costly value, whose dark forms towered aloft, the massive growth of Lebanon, like a bundle or reeds...I transported in the shape of rafts...unto Babylon." One is reminded of the great rafts by which Solomon transported cedar along the coast of the Mediterranean from Phoenicia to Palestine for construction of his temple.²³¹

The fact that the tree was seen "to the end of all the earth" suggests that the fame of the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar was world-wide. The fact that beasts gathered beneath it and birds in its branches, and that "all flesh was fed of it" brings to mind that Babylon became a very great metropolis and that Nebuchadnezzar and his successors are reputed to have stored immense quantities of grain and other foods within the city to care for the city's needs for many—some say twenty—years.

2. The Watcher

And I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven. (Daniel 4:13)

"Watcher" means wakeful one, and is almost certainly a name for an angel. The ancient Greek version renders it angel. The idea is of the wakefulness of those on guard. As watchers of God they are his "eyes." "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good".²³² The word "and" between "a watcher" and "an holy one" means "even." That is, the watcher is a holy watcher. Note that the watcher, even an holy one is the singular subject of the next verse.

3. The Decree

He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and fowls from his branches: Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and 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. (Daniel 4:14-16)

These ominous, details are the features of the dream, no doubt, which had made the king afraid. They indicate the near destruction of the person in whose career the events are to

²³¹ I Ki. 5:3, 9

²³² Pr. 15:5, cf. Zech. 4:11

take place. That it was a prophecy of a man rather than of a tree, as such, is indicated by the words of verse 16, *viz.*, the changing of the heart from a man's to that of a beast could be predicated only of a man. These suggestions of unhappy changes in the future were sufficient to upset the "rest" of the king "flourishing" in his palace.

If there was any natural psychological suggestion in the past experience of Nebuchadnezzar to bring on this dream it was most likely his experiences in Lebanon where he had personally directed and participated in the falling of many trees for transport to Babylon. There is something very impressive about the falling of a tall straight tree. No matter how good a purpose is to be served, it always seems as if something wrong is done when so great a majesty is laid low.

4. The Authority and Intent of the Decree

This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. (Daniel 4:17)

This verse is the very heart of the message of the book of Daniel, and especially of this chapter. Couched in simple language as an explanation of the authority and intent of the decree of the angels concerning the dream it gives us the very key to the understanding of the affairs of men and nations of every age.

Observe in the first place that the angels of God, called watchers and holy ones, are the ones who speak with God's authority here. The ministry of angels in general and in relation to the giving of Holy Scripture in particular is one of the most neglected areas of Bible study today. It does not fit in with our modern "scientific" and naturalistic outlook. It is usually deemed sufficient today to discover the natural cause of things without looking further at the divine side of things. Yet, according to Hebrews 2:2 the entire Mosaic Law was mediated through angels. These angels appear often in the stories of the patriarchs. And, further on in this book of Daniel the authority of God's angels over the affairs of nations is asserted.²³³

Nebuchadnezzar is reminded that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." This is affirmed throughout the Bible: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein";²³⁴ "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing".²³⁵ It does not often seem that way. Hitler claimed to recognize no god save the destiny of the German nationally. Mussolini acknowledged "no god save my own sovereign will." The Marxist rulers about the world today regard God as a superstitious notion provided by the upper classes to keep the poor in line. In professed Christian lands God is frequently only a name called up by politicians to help win elections. But, this verse reminds us that God reigns. If rebellion exists it is temporary and only by God's permission. If there is ignorance of Him that too will in time be corrected. "There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God".²³⁶ And, let the nations know that "he is the Lord of heaven and earth," and as regards the nations, He "hath determined the times appointed, and the bounds of their habitation".²³⁷

²³³ vid. Dan. 10

²³⁴ Ps. 24:1

²³⁵ Is. 40:15

²³⁶ Rom. 13:1

²³⁷ Acts 17:24, 26

But God has made men his "vicegerents" to rule in his place. To use Nebuchadnezzar's words, He "giveth it to whomsoever he will." This, of course, has its bright side. Human government is a necessary thing, not only to prevent violence and to secure physical safety but to "promote domestic tranquility" and to secure the "general welfare".²³⁸ We love the fatherland and wish to admire and respect our national leaders. But this also has a sad side. Nations and their rulers are held responsible to exercise justice, to protect rights, and to promote purity. If they do not they are punished by wars, pestilences, and other disasters. Damascus was to be punished for unnecessary brutality toward their neighbors (Amos 1:3); Gaza for kidnapping their neighbors (Amos 1:6); Tyre for breaking their national covenants (Amos 1:9); Ammon for inhuman atrocity (Amos 1:13) etc. This discussion could be extended indefinitely. This is sufficient to show that Nebuchadnezzar's report of the angels' decree is a most important bit of information.

Further, it is to be noted that God "setteth up over it [i.e., the kingdom of men] the basest of men." Basest here likely means humblest, most base-born. In our "land of the free and home of the brave" we are accustomed to accepting rail-splitters and former haberdashers as well as farmers and ex-coon-hunters as presidents of the land. But this has not always been true even in our land, and it most certainly was not the expected thing in the great nations of antiquity. It was usual even for "pretenders" and assassins who became rulers to try to trace their ancestry back to some famous person, or even to a god or goddess. But to keep man in his place God has raised up the most lowborn to become kings. The greatest empire of antiquity was the Roman. Its emperors were the scions of noble families who prided themselves in their Roman descent. Yet the later emperors were low-born Germans, Vandals, etc.—men whom the proud patricians of Rome would have labeled barbarians. On this point John Calvin wrote:

"And when there was no greater pride in the world than in the Roman empire, we see what happened. For God brought forth certain monsters which caused the greatest astonishment among the Greeks and all the Orientals, the Spaniards, Italians, and Gauls; for nothing was more monstrous than some of the emperors. Then their origin was most base and shameful, and God could not show more clearly how empires are not transferred by the will of man, nor even acquired by valorous counsel, and powerful troops, but remained under his own hand to bestow upon whomsoever he pleased."

5. The King's Appeal

This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee. (Daniel 4:18)

This appeal, for all its earnest sincerity, and in spite of all the fine things the king says about Daniel's God at the end of the chapter, is still the appeal of a pagan worshipper of many gods. He thinks the source of Daniel's wisdom is the presence of "the spirit of the holy gods" in him. The form of the words "holy gods" in the original Aramaic makes it clear that he is not referring to the one true God whose name *Élohîm* (Aram. *Élohîn*) is plural. He addresses Daniel by his pagan Babylonian Bel-honoring name, and obviously had called on his other counselors first.

²³⁸ See Rom. 13; Gen. 9:1-6; II Tim. 2:1-3

D. Interpretation of the Dream (4:19-27)

It is worthy of note that God's man was quite unhurried about producing an answer to the king. The interpretation had to wait for the moving of the Spirit of God upon the mind of the prophet. The Spirit of God will not be subject either to authorities or to coercion. Simon of Samaria thought the gifts of God could be purchased with money and was sadly mistaken.²³⁹ "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him",²⁴⁰ and one of the marked characteristics of the man who fears God is a willingness to be quiet and to wait for him. Daniel was "astonished one hour," that is, for a period of time. During this time "his thoughts troubled him." This was not because he was fearful but because the sad message brought about a measure of reluctance to deliver it. One wonders if Samuel did not feel in a similar way about the fearful message God gave him for Eli.²⁴¹ How frequently the Bible tells all those who would see the salvation of the Lord to "stand still and wait."

1. An Ominous Hint

Belteshazzar answered and said, My Lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. (Daniel 4:19b)

The king had said in effect, Speak up Daniel! And now Daniel did just that. His first words were to the effect that Nebuchadnezzar would get no immediate comfort from his words but that his enemies and detractors would. Again we understand that the king had intuitively recognized bad news in his dream and why Daniel had been hesitant to relate the interpretation in the king's presence. When later at verse 25 it is said that "They shall drive thee" etc. it is to be understood that "They" are these enemies within the king's own administration who were happy to demote him. Perhaps it was the loyalty of Daniel and others like him which prevented worse from happening to the king.

2. Interpretation of the Tree

The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the height thereof to all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. (Daniel 4:20-22)

The tree is the king reigning in his kingdom and pride. Daniel's recapitulation of the king's dream is almost exactly that which Nebuchadnezzar had related. Having thus assured the king he knew all about the dream he came straight to the point and this without either fear or harshness.

Aside from the value of the interpretation there is a mighty lesson in proper witnessing and preaching here. Calvin has captured it so well that we shall not try to improve on his words though now 400 years old.

"Here we see...how Daniel acted respectfully to the king, and thus was mindful of his prophetic duty, while he punctually discharged the commands of God. We must notice this distinction, for nothing is more difficult for ministers of the Word than to maintain this middle course. Some are always fulminating through a pretense of zeal,

²³⁹ Acts 8:18-24

²⁴⁰ Ps. 25:14

²⁴¹ I Sam. 3:11-18

and forget themselves to be but men: they show no sign of benevolence, but indulge in mere bitterness. Hence they have no authority, and all their admonitions are hateful. Next they explain God's Word with pride and boasting when they frighten sinners without either humanity, or pain, or sympathy. Others again, who are wicked and perfidious flatterers, gloss over the grossest iniquities; they object to both Prophets and Apostles, esteeming the fervor of their seal to have driven away all human affections! Thus they delude miserable men, and destroy them by their flattery. But our Prophet, as all the rest, here shows how God's servants ought to take a middle course. Thus Jeremiah, when prophesying adversity, feels sorrow and bitterness of spirit, and yet does not turn aside from unsparing reproof of the severest threats, as both sprang from God (Jer. ix. 1). The rest of the prophets also act in the same manner. Here Daniel, on the one hand pities the king, and on the other, through knowing himself to be the herald of God's anger, he is not frightened by any danger while setting before the king the punishment which he had despised. He felt no fear of the tyrant, although many do not dare to discharge their duty when an odious message is entrusted to them, which stimulates the impious and unbelievers to madness.¹²⁴²

Considering that Calvin wrote in the Reformation era when there were plenty of impious and cruel tyrants about, any one of whom would have been happy to kill Calvin, his words have special force.

3. Interpretation of the Watcher

And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him. This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king. (Daniel 4:23-24)

Most of this is repetition of what the king had already said. But there is one most important addition by way of interpretation! The decree which in Nebuchadnezzar's recital had been attributed to the angelic watcher is here said to be "of the most High." Nebuchadnezzar was to know that no puny Babylonian deity was to be in charge of these disasters. Neither were they to come at the instigation of the gods of any foreign enemies. Rather these angelic watchers are messengers of the sovereign Lord and Creator of the entire universe, God Most High, identical with Daniel's God. It may be regarded as still another road sign leading the king away from his polytheistic faith. In Nebuchadnezzar's mouth the expression "God most high" means that among the many high gods, Daniel's is the highest. But in Daniel's, and it is he who here speaks, it means that there is one God and he is supremely exalted, high over all his vast creation.

4. Interpretation of the Decree

That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven and seven times shall pass over thee till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. (Daniel 4:25-26)

²⁴² John Calvin

The decree is interpreted to predict a period of unpleasant humbling experiences for the king during which he would learn to acknowledge the sovereign rule of God, following which the king would be restored to his former happy state.

"They shall drive thee from men." Nebuchadnezzar was son of the great and lordly Nabopolassar, himself of a noble Chaldean family. It was this Nabopolassar who had asserted the independence of Babylon from the Assyrians in about 625 B.C. and a dozen years later had been a major force in effecting the destruction of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital. Nebuchadnezzar himself, had fought and won great battles, had shown himself to be an intellectual and generally progressive monarch. His capital city, Babylon, bore everywhere the marks of his greatness. To have been told, then, that he was to be demoted from aristocrat to peasant, from lord of Babylon to be one of its street-cleaners would have been bad enough, but to be driven even from human association was utterly devastating to his self-esteem.

"Thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field" etc. where his food would be from their pastures, mangers, and troughs was to lose all human dignity. His experience was to be similar to that of the prodigal son who "would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat".²⁴³ "A man's pride shall bring him low"²⁴⁴—and Nebuchadnezzar would learn just how low!

"Till thou know that the most High ruleth" etc. God was dealing with Nebuchadnezzar in grace rather than in penal judgment. It was to teach rather than to exact punishment that God was to bring these things on Nebuchadnezzar. If the king had been willing to reflect on the fate of his neighbor nations he might have been spared this painful lesson. At a time not more than a few months or years removed Ezekiel, another Jewish prophet in exile, was spelling out the lesson for the benefit of the Pharaoh of Egypt.²⁴⁵ The Assyrian had been a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches," whose "height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and all the fowls of heaven had made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt great nations." But God said "Because thou hast listed up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, *and his heart is lifted up on his height*; I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: *I have driven him out for his wickedness.*" Now Nebuchadnezzar himself had been recently the very one who carried out God's prophecy here by conquering the Pharaoh of Egypt. The similarity of the whole description, especially the underlined portion above, to the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's chastening is startling. Sad it is that each generation seems to find it necessary to learn all over again the lessons of their fathers!

"Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee," etc. This was somewhat reassuring to the king. He was to be "cast down, but not forever." When God chastens for gracious purposes "the latter end," as with Job, is always "more than his beginning".²⁴⁶ In fact, so like the treatment God gives his own is that reported here that one wonders if Nebuchadnezzar may not ultimately have been truly converted in heart.

"After that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule." This is about as near as the Old

²⁴³ Lu. 15:16

²⁴⁴ Pr. 29:23

²⁴⁵ *vid.* Ez. 30:20-31:18

²⁴⁶ Job 42:12

Testament level of revelation can come to Romans 10:9 ("that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus") and to Phil. 2:11 ("that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord"). Whether or not Nebuchadnezzar came to true heart confession (Romans 10:10) it remains true that to acknowledge that "the heavens" (God) is Lord is the heart of saving faith.

A special consideration is the light the phrase "the heavens do rule" sheds on our Lord's words for his kingdom "Kingdom of heaven" (in Matthew) and "kingdom of God" (in Luke). "Heavens" (always plural in Hebrew and Aramaic Scripture) is a figure of speech for the God whose throne is in the heavens. Matthew likely reported our Lord's own Aramaic words in literal translation since his Jewish readers would understand. For Luke's Greek-speaking Gentile readers to whom the figure would mean no more than "kingdom of the skies" or some similar meaningless phrase, the figure had to be changed to a literal expression. Certainly the basis of our Lord's conception of his own kingdom is laid in this very book of Daniel.²⁴⁷

5. The Advice of Daniel (v. 27)

Daniel's words of advice are quite like other Old Testament calls to sincere repentance, mentioning the outward marks or evidences rather than the inward change behind them.²⁴⁸ Yet those prophets believed there should be a rending of the hearts as well as of the garments and we may be sure that Daniel did the same.²⁴⁹

Perhaps there had been much personal impurity ("sins") which needed to be broken up by truly right living. His oppressive treatment of his subjects ("iniquities") needed to be replaced by showing mercy to them. At any rate he was to put his change of heart on display! It is ever so.

The suggestion of a lengthening of his tranquility points to a truth about all divine threats of judgment—that they are conditional upon obdurate, unyielding, continuing rebellion. God's repentance is conditional upon ours.²⁵⁰ The threats and warnings of the Bible are the very means God is using to bring us all to turn from our sins. Let us never empty the word of its warnings.²⁵¹

E. Fulfillment of the Dream (vv. 28 - 33)

At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. (Daniel 4:29)

Josephus, the famous first century Jewish historian has written of Nebuchadnezzar that he built a new palace besides that of his father. After describing its splendors he says: "Now in this palace he erected very high walks, supported by stone pillars, and by planning what was called a hanging garden, and replenishing it with all sorts of, trees, he rendered the prospect an exact resemblance of a mountainous country. This he did to please his queen, because she had been brought up in Media, and was fond of a mountainous situation." This, Josephus says, is a report extracted from Berossos a native Chaldean historian.²⁵² Excavation of Babylon in the past century has quite fully authenticated Nebuchadnezzar's building activity, especially the construction of an enormous palace, on which was probably super-added the hanging gardens, Here in the midst of trees like the ones he loved in Lebanon and like the one of his dream of a year before the

²⁴⁷ cf. Dan. 2:44; 7:14, 27

²⁴⁸ *vid.*, e.g. Joel 1:3, 14; 2:17, 18

²⁴⁹ cf. Joel 2:13

²⁵⁰ cf. Joel 2:12-14

²⁵¹ e.g., Heb. 10:26 ff.

²⁵² Against Apion. I, 19

fulfillment took place.

The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty. (Daniel 4:30)

As a matter of fact, everything the king claimed for his city here is quite strictly true. He could see stretching out endlessly a great street for religious processions. He had rebuilt it. There were new gates which he had built. There were several palaces and many temples to say nothing of the miles of walls,, "He also rebuilt the old city, and added another to it on the outside, and so far restored Babylon, that none who should besiege it afterwards might have it in their power to divert the river, so as to facilitate an entrance into it; and this he did by building three walls about the inner city, and three about the outer".²⁵³ The sad fact was that it really was all for his own praise and glory rather than for the praise and glory of his Creator.

Suddenly, without any further indication, "While the word was in the king's mouth" a voice from heaven declared that all the things prophesied by Daniel would immediately take place.

Commentators in general agree that some form of insanity overtook the unhappy king. The insane, especially those who are occupied with delusions about their identity, supposing themselves to be some important person, an animal, etc. have always required some kind of special treatment. Pagan people have frequently supposed the insane to be actually indwelt by the person or god whom the insane person supposed himself to be. They have been, therefore, sometimes treated with a great deal of deference and respect. If this is the case with Nebuchadnezzar, he may very well have been placed in one of the city parks with other zoological "specimens" to carry on as he pleased. There the symptoms and characteristics so simply described in verse 33 could have developed. Secular writings²⁵⁴ give some support for this view of things,²⁵⁵ but the inscriptions have not yet provided support. Yet stranger things than this have happened. There is no reason to doubt the story.

That the events described had something to do with a loss of mental powers is made certain by the fact that they came to an end by the return of the king's understanding.²⁵⁶

F. Conclusion; Restoration of the King (4:34-37)

The length of the period, "seven times" cannot be specified. Likely it was seven years, though this is not certain. Perhaps seven is intended (Calvin) only as a perfect number to mean "long enough."

An important psychological fact is that the king heard a voice from heaven and likely directed his eyes in that direction at the onset of his insanity, and after the passage of "seven times" again looked toward heaven, as if taking up where he left off, to receive from heaven a return of understanding.

The results of the king's chastening experience are clearly seen in the praise, confession and testimony displayed in this portion.

Taking the evil of sinful human pride as the theme of this chapter, its development can be seen

²⁵³ Josephus, *Against Apion*. I. 19

²⁵⁴ *The Legend of Megasthenes*

²⁵⁵ See Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*

²⁵⁶ Dan. 4:34).

clearly as follows.

There is first the *root of sinful pride*.²⁵⁷ This was two-fold: a sense of great personal accomplishment unmixed with any sense of dependence upon God and personal self-exaltation.²⁵⁸

There is in the second place the *essence of sinful pride*.²⁵⁹ It consisted mainly in taking to one's self honors rightly belonging to another. It was God who had delivered to the king the goods and powers by which he built this city. Nebuchadnezzar gave God no credit.

In the third place there is the *result of sinful pride*.²⁶⁰ Not only was there the abasement involved, as spelled out by such passages as Proverbs 16:16 and 29:23, but specifically insanity. Sin of any sort when engaged in without restraint is a kind of insanity.²⁶¹

In the fourth place there is the *cure for sinful pride* in a return to reason and to God.²⁶² Nothing is more reasonable than the gospel, even though the world in its wisdom does not know it. Dedication to God in Christian living is a "reasonable service".²⁶³

²⁵⁷ Dan. 4:1-28

²⁵⁸ *vid.* especially 4:4, 10, 11

²⁵⁹ Dan. 4:29, 30

²⁶⁰ Dan. 4:31-33

²⁶¹ cf. the case of the prodigal who returned only when he "came to himself," Lu. 15:17

²⁶² Dan. 4:34-36

²⁶³ Rom. 12:1, 2

V. CHAPTER FIVE: Belshazzar's Feast

A. Introduction

Even a hasty reading of this chapter is sufficient to show the discerning reader that here, as in several other chapters; the chief purpose of Daniel is not to recite history but to teach spiritual truth. The casual reader might think it a chapter of history, intended mainly to give important information concerning the fall of a great nation. But really, the demands of history are quite fully met by the first verse and last two verses—the last Chaldean king was killed by an opposing force of Medes and Persians with a Median king named Darius becoming the new monarch. The main part of the chapter, however, reports the foolish and wicked pursuit of sinful thrills and pleasures on the part of Belshazzar, that last Chaldean king, and of the harvest of death which he so quickly reaped.

The history we might safely get along without, The lesson we dare not miss. Never, probably, in the history of the human race, have so large a portion of a nation's population been thoroughly devoted to the pursuit of pleasure—and that successfully—as is the case right now in our own land. This has come to be so well accepted as right among us that this unfettered pursuit is sometimes equated with "the American way of life." Some others less devoted to Americanism follow the universal pursuit of sensual pleasure in less conventional ways. Join this with our passionate devotion to the accumulation of material "things" and our "American way of life" becomes potentially one of the most explosively dangerous situations in the history of man. It is bad enough to have a Belshazzar for a king. But to have a population of Belshazzar's is a terrifying situation of most destructive possibilities.

Seventy years have passed away since the events of chapter one when the story of this chapter opens before us. Dissimulation and assassination have actually changed the dynasties twice in Babylon though a measure of continuity with the great Nebuchadnezzar by marriages has been attempted. The union of two peoples, the Persians to the east of Babylon and the Medes to the east and north, under the Persian prince, Cyrus, had recently created a formidable enemy in the neighborhood. A doughty warrior like Nabopolassar, the founder of the empire, or a bold and resourceful king like Nebuchadnezzar might have been equal to the times. But neither they nor any others like them were to be found in Babylon. The information we have, derived from ancient Greek historians and from sundry Babylonian documents and inscriptions recovered and translated in the last 100 years, presents the history of those seventy years quite adequately for a fair reconstruction. Nebuchadnezzar who began his reign upon his father's death in 605 continued until 562. He continued to develop and expand his empire. As noted in connection with our studies of Daniel 4 he enlarged, strengthened and beautified the city of Babylon. His last notable military exploit was the invasion and conquest of Egypt in about 568 B.C.²⁶⁴ Upon his death he was succeeded by a son named Evil Merodach²⁶⁵ who appears to have been assassinated after a short reign of only two years (560) and was succeeded by a brother-in-law Neriglissar.²⁶⁶ After only five years of reign his reign was cut short by death (556) when he was succeeded by his young son, Labashi-Marduk. But he was deposed at the end of nine months and was succeeded (555) by Nabonidus, a Babylonian of priestly descent. This is the man whom the Greek historians represent as the last king of Babylon. He is not represented as being killed at the fall of Babylon but as being left alive and pensioned. This apparent contradiction with the story of our chapter will be treated in due season.

²⁶⁴ cf. Ez. 29:17-30:26

²⁶⁵ II Ki. 25:27, Amel-Marduk

²⁶⁶ called Nergal-sharezer in Jer. 39:3, 13

This passing over of the supposedly important affairs of nations and their kings and potentates by the Bible in favor of full report of small incidents exemplifying important spiritual principles deserves to be pondered. The lesson and lecture on the follies of pride and sinful pleasure are important to God and to His people. The fall of a sparrow or the wail of a neglected child may be more important to Him and to us than the fall of a government or party or the diplomatic exchanges of great nations.

B. Pleasure, the Pursuit of Belshazzar's Feast (5:1-4)

Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. (Daniel 5:1-4)

There are at least five sad facts to be observed about the sinful pursuit of pleasure by the stupid young king and his silly guests.

1. It was sinfully sensual

Anything in the ancient pagan world that would be called a "great feast" would have been thus. We have no direct detailed reports of the feasts in Babylon comparable to those of the ancient Greeks and Romans, but it is safe to say that what was true in Pagan Greece and Rome was true here also. There would have been overeating—actual gorging with food. When capacity to eat was exhausted emetics were sometimes taken to enable the revelers to disgorge their food and start in all over again. Distilled "hard liquor" as we know it today was not to be had for some centuries, yet even so, enormous quantities of wine were consumed to make the feasters drunken. One by one they drank themselves to the floors and under the tables. To demonstrate how lightly these things were held among ancient pagans it is only necessary to cite the tales about Socrates. He is the nearest thing to a "saint" the literature of Greece provides. Yet one of his best-known dialogues is reported as having taken place at a drinking bout where his companions discourse with him as they become progressively happy, then tipsy, finally senseless and under the table. At length, Socrates, who had greater staying powers at drink than any of the others, is represented as continuing on, no longer in a dialogue but rather in a monologue. Add to this feast of Belshazzar the overtones of sexuality provided by the presence of the wives and concubines—all drinking wine—and the details furnished by the readers imagination are probably no worse than the true facts of the case.

Shortly after the close of the late World War reports of diplomacy among the victorious allies at Yalta, especially, in just such an alcoholic atmosphere as this of our chapter, were circulated. The passing of the years has only added support to the truthfulness of those reports. Perhaps the present deteriorating international situation has its roots in alcohol!

2. It was unrestrained

All the bars were down. That the king "drank wine before the thousands"²⁶⁷ must be interpreted in the light of court procedures and royal protocol known to have prevailed in the ancient East. It would not be thought shocking for our president to eat and drink before a banqueting crowd. Even Queen Elizabeth and her consort eat publicly. But such a thing was

²⁶⁷ Dan. 5:1

nearly unheard of in ancient oriental countries. Kings and queens were cloistered, especially among the Persians, and probably no less among the Babylonians. Curtains shut them off from view at almost all occasions—and especially at feasts. An audience today could hardly feel more shocked at the president's being inaugurated in a bathing suit or at their pastor's preaching on Sunday morning standing in his stocking feet and underwear. Drink was already doing its work in the brain of Belshazzar.

Proper decorum and pure morality do not necessarily require the negation or repression of natural appetites and desires. But they do certainly require their control and lawful direction. It was not the eating and drinking in themselves that were sinful, and which were working the young king's destruction. It was rather his lack of temperate self-control. How many sins of lust and of violence are committed by otherwise law-abiding and virtuous people when under the influence of group spirit, fortified with "spirits"! "Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging."

3. It was sacrilegious

Under the inspiration of the wine Belshazzar sent for the "golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem" in order to have something special by way of table service for his feast. This order had not been given in his sober hours when the feast was preparing. He would not have dared to do it then. Now with alcoholic courage he thinks he can do anything.

There is a pointed lesson; here for the present generation. Nebuchadnezzar had been a courageous and ambitious man. He had performed true feats of military prowess, had been a man of action in peaceful pursuits at home, and had left behind a record of noteworthy accomplishment. Nabonidus, for all his short-comings, was something of a priest and scholar himself, as the contemporary records of that day show. But, reared in luxury and unequal to the great task of meeting the enemies of his country in the "broad field of battle" where he might be a true "hero in the strife," because of the weakness of his character and defects of his training, Belshazzar holed up behind the walls other men had built. Here he no doubt longed for self-respect and opportunity to assert himself in some heroic way. So like the true delinquent that he was he created a situation where he could perform daring, mischievous, destructive acts. He was not different essentially from the girl who drops her virtue for a thrill, or the boy who steals a car to make himself feel big. It is time, therefore, that parents realize that they do their children no favor when they shield them from work, from responsibility, from suffering the unpleasant consequences of wrong-doing. Let the labor of learning discipline develop spiritual calluses; let the experience of true accomplishment for themselves bring about true self-respect. When this takes place there will be no cause for mock heroics.

It should be added that for Nebuchadnezzar to remove the vessels from the Jerusalem temple as an act of war was according to the accepted practices of the time, and was not regarded as sacrilegious. For Belshazzar to remove them from their proper place of display in a national depository to use them in a drinking bout was sacrilegious..

4. It was stupid

According to an old proverb, "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad." Archaeology and ancient history join in reporting just how stupid the whole feast was and just how foolish the young king was. Let us take a look at the local circumstances in relation to Biblical prophecy.

Some time before the Persians became "top dogs" in the Medo-Persian combination Jeremiah

had prophesied that Babylon would be attacked by an invader from the north²⁶⁸ whom he identified with "the kings of the Medes".²⁶⁹ Babylon is described in the prophecy as stocked with provisions and protected by great towering forts, high broad walls and mighty gates.²⁷⁰ She would, however, be taken by a trick or snare²⁷¹ connected with drying up of certain water channels.²⁷² The "passages are stopped",²⁷³ the soldiers were to be taken by surprise, and the reeds were to be burned. Jeremiah further predicted that this would be accomplished while a great feast was going on in Babylon, a feast at which the leading men of the country would be gathered—at least this is the literal meaning of his words. Let the reader judge for himself: "In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the Lord ... And I will make drunk their princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts".²⁷⁴

Some 75 years after Cyrus conquered Babylon Herodotus visited the place and wrote his history. According to this Greek historian Cyrus neared the city in the spring of the year (539 B.C.). After being defeated in the field by Cyrus, the Babylonians retired behind their walls. "Here they shut themselves up," says Herodotus, "and made light of his siege, having laid in store of provisions for many years in preparation against this attack; ²⁷⁵ for when they saw Cyrus conquering nation after nation, they were convinced that he would never stop, and that their turn would come."

Herodotus' story continues by relating how Cyrus took the city, in spite of its fortifications and supplies, by a stratagem. A portion of his army he stationed at the point where the Euphrates entered the city on the upper side. Another force he set at the spot where the river emerged from the city with orders to both parties to march into the town by way of the river bed as soon as it should become shallow enough. Then he retired with a third part of the troops to a point up the river where there was a marshy basin formerly used to divert the river waters while the quay walls within the city had been lined with brick. On the very night of Belshazzar's feast this army diverted the waters of Euphrates into this reservoir. But let us listen as Herodotus tells his own story—

"Hereupon the Persians, who had been left for the purpose at Babylon by the river-side, entered the stream, which had now shrunk so as to reach about midway up an man's thigh, and they got into the town. Had the Babylonians been appraised of what Cyrus was about, or had they noticed their danger, they would never have allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them utterly; for they would have made fast all the street-gates which gave upon the river, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would so have caught the enemy as it were in a trap. But, as it was, the Persians came upon them by surprise and so took the city. Owing to the vast size of the place, the inhabitants of the central parts—as the residents of Babylon declare—long after the outer portions of the town were taken, knew nothing of what had happened, but as they were *engaged in a festival*,

²⁶⁸ Jer. 50:3, 8, 49

²⁶⁹ Jer. 51:11, 28

²⁷⁰ Jer. 51:53, 58

²⁷¹ Jer. 50:24

²⁷² Jer. 51:36 "I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry."

²⁷³ i.e., the ferries that joined the streets in lieu of bridges from one side of the Euphrates to the other, Jer. 51:32

²⁷⁴ Jer. 51:39, 57

²⁷⁵ cf. Dan. 4:12, Jer. 50:26

*continued dancing and reveling until they learnt the capture but too certainly."*²⁷⁶

These reports, the prediction of Jeremiah, and the history of Herodotus, whose truth is supported by other ancient accounts and by the findings of archaeology, make it plain that during the very hours of Belshazzar's ill-timed feast the armies of the Persians were stealthily moving through the river bed toward the inner gates, open and unguarded, opening on that river. By the time Daniel came to the palace they were likely moving toward that palace. Never in the annals of history was anything more stupid than the feast of Belshazzar.

C. A Portent, Gods Contribution to Belshazzar²'s Feast (5:5, 6)

In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. (Daniel 5:5, 6)

These two verses have made such an impression on the entire world that they have given the world a commonly understood expression in the words, "the handwriting on the wall." These words and the mysterious hand that wrote them were a divine portent, that is, a supernatural sign, or omen—not a warning of coming calamity to enable the observer to escape but rather simply to notify him that doom is certain. In Belshazzar's case the time of escape had long passed in those peaceful days when he whiled away the hours by developing a lot of bad habits and wrong tastes.

Daniel 5:5 Over against the candlestick. The word for candlestick used here appears nowhere else. There are no lexicographical sources from which to obtain an exact meaning. An ancient Greek translation (Theodotion) renders it *lampos*, which, as one would expect, means lamp or lantern. It would likely have been a large candelabrum containing many small lamps.

1. The sign came suddenly—"in the same hour."

That is, while the belching and slobbering crowd of noble revelers was sopping up their wine out of the holy vessels of Jehovah's temple they received their divine bill of attainder. The food soon lay unnoticed on the platters, the wine disregarded in the goblets. Drunken gaiety disappeared and in its place came apprehensive sobriety. How many a drunken person has looked at the sudden calamity—violent destruction, murder, or indecency—brought about by his stupidity and has turned quickly sober. This sudden sobriety is an old, sad story.

2. The sign was mysterious

The sign was mysterious for "there came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote"²⁷⁷ and "the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." This has called forth much ridicule from rationalistic critics and commentators. One of the standard books of introduction to the Old Testament states that such a miracle as a hand without a body writing a message on a wall lies "outside the realm of historical facts." The author goes on to say that historical research can deal only with matters "within the sphere of natural possibilities" and that such scientific study must refrain from affirming the truth of supernatural events. This is to say that the only genuine truths lie in the realm where man can understand all about them, where all may be weighed, measured, counted, seen, tasted, touched, heard, and felt. The truth is, however, that the "Arm" behind that writing hand was much more real than the hands which Belshazzar saw. Let every Christian believer, like Paul, "look not at the things which are seen, but at the

²⁷⁶ Italics mine, Herodotus, *Histories*. I, 191

²⁷⁷ Dan. 5:5

things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal".²⁷⁸ Let us all fervently thank God that he has presented irrefragable proof of the reality of the unseen world of God Himself in the resurrection of our Savior.²⁷⁹ ²⁸⁰

3. It was ruthless

It was ruthless for the part of the hand that wrote left a new inscription "over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace." Excavators have uncovered that palace and have exposed portions of the ancient walls where remnants of the white gypsum with which they were once covered could be seen. The great central room of the palace, half the size of a football field, was joined by the throne room which itself was over fifty yards long and a third as much in width.²⁸¹ If the usual customs of antiquity prevailed, the walls were decorated with murals and inscriptions celebrating the victories and Excellencies of the realm. Their gods and goddesses ²⁸² would have been glorified in those representations too. Over this proud and boastful display, in full glare of the "candlestick" (i.e., a prominent candelabrum or lamp stand) God wrote his own verdict concerning the empire and its stupid young king. With the signs all about of such a divine verdict of God upon our own age one is moved to pray in the words of Kipling's memorable poem—

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in as we,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!
(Recessional)

4. It was terrifying

It was terrifying for "the king saw...Then the king's countenance was changed, and ... the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." Everything about the situation inclined toward such an effect upon even the stoutest hearts and the most sober minds—of which there were few, in any, present. There were the dozens of open, saucer-like lamps distributed about the hall, each sending a thin column of smoke toward the ceiling in addition to the feeble light it cast about the room. Probably no one was devoting much care to their wicks. Perhaps there were still some musicians trying to furnish some background music. Into the murky sodden atmosphere came the sudden apparition. No wonder the king's knees knocked together! A thing like this would be frightening enough to a sober twentieth-century psychology professor in broad daylight.

²⁷⁸ II Cor. 4:18

²⁷⁹ Acts 17:31

²⁸⁰ Note - Daniel 5:5, 24 the king saw the part of the hand that wrote ... then was the part of the hand sent from him. The word for hand in Aramaic and Hebrew is not as specific as ours, for it sometimes evidently was used to refer to the entire forearm. Therefore qualifying words are used to make it clear that it was only the extremity of the arm that appeared. The word in verse 5 rendered "part" is the usual word for palm of the hand. The same is the case in verse 24. This joined with the mention of the "fingers of a man's hand" makes it clear that it was the part of the arm below the wrist that appeared.

²⁸¹ Note - In excavating the palace, Koldewey, who reports his findings in *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, found in the southern area of it a large hall 17 meters wide by 52 long which he identified as the throne room, or chief audience chamber. In the center of one of the long sides, opposite the entrance, there was a niche in which the throne must have been placed. The walls, he reports, were covered with white plaster. The combination of bright lamps and white plaster against the opposite wall of the long room made the writing fingers and their work most prominent.

²⁸² "which see not, nor hear, nor know" Dan. 5:23

D. Perplexity, the Effect of this Visitation at Belshazzar's Feast (5:7-9)

The King cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished. (Daniel 5:7-9)

A few items call for explanation and interpretation before continuing.

The "scarlet" with which the interpreter of the writing was to be clothed should be translated "purple." Purple was the color of royalty among Persians, Modes, and Greeks, and likely among Babylonians also. Artistic remains of that part of the ancient world show that golden chains were associated with high offices of government. One is reminded that when Pharaoh invested Joseph with high office he not only gave to Joseph his own ring and caused him to ride "in the second chariot," but also "arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck".²⁸³ The expression "third ruler" is uncertain of meaning. There is small doubt that the root of the word is the usual Aramaic word for "three," but according to language authorities this form of the word could easily mean something like adjutant or simply, "officer." The word "lord" used of a king's adjutant in II Kings 7:2 and elsewhere is the Hebrew word *shalish* meaning literally, third. So "third ruler" may be a reminiscence of the name of an officer in the Babylonian government. On the other hand, it may mean literally "third ruler." If so, then there is a very good explanation for Belshazzar's using it. Belshazzar's father had previously gone into the hands of the enemy when his defense of one of the neighboring cities broke down. Ordinarily, only he, the supreme monarch, would have had authority to make another "third ruler." But under the circumstances Belshazzar was the *de facto* supreme monarch and would, in granting the highest possible honor, have offered the position of third rather than second out of respect to his father the *de jure* king. All of these facts show that the small details of this story fit the historical and cultural situation and are thus the finest type of evidence for the authenticity of the account.

The immediate urgent cry for a solution to the mystery of the supernatural writing shows that there was a sudden end to all the merrymaking in the banquet hall, and that more than anything else he had ever wanted, King Belshazzar wanted to know what that writing meant. The inducements offered were such as would have called forth the best efforts of anyone qualified to try.

And how characteristic of the prodigal in trouble to cry for help from those whose wise counsel he had previously ignored! Spiritual quacks that they were, the wise men, after all, did represent a fair degree of scientific learning according to standards of the time and might have been counted on to have advised more prudent activity than a drunken festival in the floe of the dangerous and powerful enemy outside the gates.

But no one came up with a solution to the riddle. It was, after all, a divine miracle. No one has ever explained one of God's miracles and certainly no human education ever prepared one directly to know and believe the oracles of God. Education can help one to understand the meaning of words but it does not help, in itself, to place those words in their spiritual relation. A simple farmhand, or a peasant with no education at all, can, if he is born-again, know more of the truth of God's word in a minute than a Newton or an Einstein can know in a lifetime of study without

²⁸³ Gen. 41:42

benefit of spiritual understanding. The statement that "his lords were perplexed" (ASV) shows that there was a general feeling of helplessness and bafflement about the whole affair.

If someone wonders why the writing could not be read by the parties present, the question will be answered shortly in connection with Daniel's reading of the message.

E. Pronouncement of Doom, Daniel's Contribution to Belshazzar's Feast (5:10-29)

1. The queen-mother's visit and suggestion (5:10-12)

Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live forever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation. (Daniel 5:10-12)

Who is this late-comer to the banquet, called "the queen"? It is clear that she was not the king's wife. The wives were already there, and besides, she speaks as an older person who remembered better of days long ago. Furthermore, in the households of the polygamous kings of antiquity it was usually the king's mother, or even grandmother who was the "grand lady" or queen of the realm. This fact lies behind the regular report in Kings and Chronicles of the names of the various kings' mothers while the names of their wives goes almost unnoticed. She could have been the wife of Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father. There is also the possibility that she may have been a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar—in which case Belshazzar would have been Nebuchadnezzar's grandson. There is still another possibility that she had been a young wife of Nebuchadnezzar who had been married to Nabonidus to give his throne greater prestige and power. She is supposed by some, not without evidence, to have been none other than a famous "Nitocris" who was an ambitious and resourceful person. Space does not allow a full discussion of this complicated technical question. Proper interpretation of the spiritual meaning of the passage requires only that we understand that she was an older and wiser person, related somehow to both Belshazzar and to Nebuchadnezzar in such a way that she could deliver the advice and implied reproof reported here.

How could the queen refer to Nebuchadnezzar as "thy father"? Critics of a former generation made great sport of this supposed inaccuracy—it being well-known that several kings had reigned between the time of Nebuchadnezzar and this night. Even so, the death of Nebuchadnezzar had taken place less than 25 years before, and that famous king could, therefore, have been his father. The ancients of the Near East, however, used the word "father" of a number of other relationships than that of immediate male progenitor. Any male ancestor could be called "father." Even a predecessor in office could be called "father." As suggested above, he may have been a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar through his mother, or a child of a former wife of Nebuchadnezzar by Nabonidus. But, the view that seems to fit the materials furnished by archaeology is that Belshazzar was son of Nebuchadnezzar in a legal sense only. He appears to have been born some time before Nabonidus became king, and therefore not likely a child by a wife or daughter of the deceased Nebuchadnezzar. Rather, Nabonidus allied himself with Nebuchadnezzar's family by marrying a wife or daughter of the great Chaldean. It was thenceforth a matter of court etiquette to call Belshazzar son of

Nebuchadnezzar. Notice how punctilious the aged queen was about it. Three times in verse eleven she refers to Nebuchadnezzar as Belshazzar's father. Once in verse 13 Belshazzar claims Nebuchadnezzar as his father, and once in verse 22 Daniel calls Belshazzar Nebuchadnezzar's son. These multiplied occurrences make it clear that whatever the basis may have been for it, it was a matter of court etiquette to refer to Belshazzar as son of Nebuchadnezzar. There are similar situations in other portions of Scripture.²⁸⁴

How Daniel's former reputation could have been either ignored or forgotten between the days of Nebuchadnezzar and those of Belshazzar some 25 years later is not hard to suppose. He was, after all, a foreigner and of a captive nation. He had, moreover, repeatedly predicted the downfall of Babylonian power under the successors of Nebuchadnezzar which would have made him unpopular. And, inasmuch as men tend to forget that which is convenient or pleasant to forget, it is not hard to believe that Belshazzar simply hadn't thought of calling him in. It is doubtful if he was still master of the wise men of Babylon, for he would have been in the neighborhood of 85 years of age by the time of this fateful night.

2. The Entrance of Daniel (5:13-16)

The impression made upon the king and his crowd by the entrance of the venerable and saintly Daniel would have been quieting. There is every evidence of respect in the king's words. It should remind us in this age of grace, when the Son of God reigns from a "throne of grace",²⁸⁵ that when unbelieving neighbors and relatives come to the time of distress and fear of coming judgment they will often turn for help to the one whom they know to be a man of God. Thank God there is a more hopeful message for them than that which Daniel had to report to Belshazzar!

How completely men of worldly interests misunderstand the things which move better people is exemplified here. "Clothed with purple...a chain of gold about thy neck...third ruler in the kingdom"—what did they, what could they mean to this hoary-headed old man? He had started life in the Holy Land, soon thereafter to become a captive. He had seen kings and realms come and go. Through it all he had lived a quiet, godly useful life with faith toward God and respect for his fellow man. He saw the vanity of life behind him and likewise the glory of an eternal life with God looming before him. A purple robe, a chain of gold, to be third in a kingdom doomed to end in a few hours—he could not have cared less if Belshazzar had offered him a pink embroidery for his shroud.

3. The Message of Daniel (5:17-24)

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. (Daniel 5:17)

There is a certain sharpness about these words. If the king's conduct had been offensive to God it had been so to Daniel also. Daniel, therefore, while speaking with proper respect, could not use the customary flattering encomiums when addressing the king. Neither could he in good grace accept the gifts. One is reminded of Elisha's refusal of Naaman's gifts and of the sad result when his servant accepted them.²⁸⁶ And, besides, Daniel knew that the symbolic gifts of robe and chain together with the high office would all be meaningless or defunct before the night was over.

²⁸⁴ cf. I Chron. 3:17, Luke 3:27, 31

²⁸⁵ Heb. 4:16

²⁸⁶ II Ki. 5:15, 16

The main part of Daniel's message to the king was a simple review of the story of chapter four, Nebuchadnezzar's pride and the harsh discipline he received from God to make him humble. Nebuchadnezzar, however, was restored to his kingly power when he had learned his lesson. What about Belshazzar?

Before telling Belshazzar just what his fate would be and before interpreting the mysterious writing on the wall, Daniel stated just what were the sins charged against him. They were four.

- i. In the first place he had refused to acknowledge the divine revelation in the experience of Nebuchadnezzar: "thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this".²⁸⁷ Old men are not granted the excuses for their sins that are given youths—they should profit by years of experience and observation. Pastors and missionaries, and others who have had training like theirs, are not granted either by God or man the indulgence allowed to the untaught or the new convert—they should know better. The entire world is not without ritual knowledge. They know there is a God and that they are expected to do right. They all can see God in nature. But "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God....Wherefore God also gave them up".²⁸⁸
- ii. In the second place he too had committed the horrid sin of pride—"though hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven".²⁸⁹ Isaiah had prophesied "against the king of Babylon",²⁹⁰ "For thou hast said it thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down...".²⁹¹ Is it perhaps this Belshazzar whom Isaiah had in mind? This part of the prophecy, at least, fits him.
- iii. In the third place, he had engaged in a peculiarly offensive idolatry, a sacrilegious idolatry that was specifically insulting to the Lord—"and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know".²⁹² God had judged His own Jewish people with destruction of their nation precisely because they had mixed idolatry with their worship of Him. They had committed sacrilege. This Gentile reprobate could not expect to be spared for committing the same sin. God will not forever let his honor be taken by senseless idols.^{293 294}

²⁸⁷ Dan. 5:22

²⁸⁸ Rom. 1:21, 24

²⁸⁹ Dan. 5:23

²⁹⁰ Isa. 14:4

²⁹¹ Isa. 14:13-15

²⁹² Dan. 5:23

²⁹³ *vid.*, Rom. 2:21-25 and context

²⁹⁴ Note on sacrilege. Sacrilege may be defined as the willful and unnecessary use of holy things for common or sinful purposes. When David in order to preserve the life of his own men used show-bread from off the holy table for food it was not regarded as sacrilege (I Sam. 21:1-6 cf. Matt. 12:1-5). There are no hallowed "things" today, aside from Christian believers themselves and the church itself. It is in misuse of our hallowed bodies and in misuse of the church, i.e., the believers, that sacrilege takes place. When one uses the holy doctrines of our faith merely to satisfy his whims or to ostracize people he does not like, it is sacrilege. When the church and its doctrines are used as a cloak of righteousness to help a man or his party ride into political power, it is sacrilege. "When the Christian pulpit and the honors and sanctities of the holy office are laid hold of for mere personal display, the securing of notoriety, the building up of reputation or the putting forth of doctrines contrary to the Gospel, what is it else than a profanation of what is sacred to the Lord" (Seiss)? It has been pointed out by others that "something of the same is done when the sublime descriptions of the judgment to come, or the momentous history of our Savior's Passion, or the grand visions of the Apocalypse are taken for musical exhibitions, using the holiest of words to intensify

- iv. Finally, Belshazzar had refused to carry out the true purpose of his own and every other man's existence to glorify God— "and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified".²⁹⁵ All the fierce wrath of God upon idolatrous self-will worship described in Paul's mighty words of Romans 1:23-32 is here focused upon Belshazzar. Read it, disobedient wastrel, and tremble: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which do such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them".²⁹⁶

Terrible must be the fate of Belshazzar!

4. Interpretation of the Handwriting by Daniel (5:25-28)

"And this is the writing that was written, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. (Daniel 5:25)

The reader of the English Bible, or any other translation for that matter, has no way of knowing that these three words (MENE is repeated) were common everyday terms in the Aramaic language. Aramaic is the language of this portion of Daniel. It was likewise a common language on the streets and in the marts and courts of Babylon. An explanation is in order.

All ancient Semitic languages, of which Hebrew, Aramaic, and Babylonian were examples, were written without vowel marks. The alphabet employed for Hebrew and Aramaic had capital letters only. Now, holding in mind that Aramaic was written from right to left it would have appeared on the wall as:

←
SRP LQT NM NM

If we reverse it left to right according to our method of writing it would appear as:

MN MN TQL PRS

With no context to guide the reader²⁹⁷ they were incomprehensible. They could have been read as names of weights or coins, *viz.*, a Mina, a Mina, a Shekel, a Peres; like a Dollar, a Dollar, a Dime, and a Penny; or a Pound, a Pound, a Shilling, a Penny. If, as seems unlikely, they were written in the Babylonian wedge-shaped characters, some of which were signs for syllables that served also as ideograms, then it was even more complicated. This is somewhat like our "O" which may stand either for the idea "zero" or for the sound "Oh." Proceeding on the near certainty that it was Aramaic, it should be observed that with the vowels supplied and printed in our Bibles, the words would be simply translated: "counted, counted, weighed,

artistic performances, add to the emotions, deepen the effect and please the hearers, to secure applause to mere musicians." Certainly there is something wrong about singing the "Messiah" or the "Elijah" as a performance only.

The commonest kind of sacrilege today is the use of the talent, strength, and ability of the Christian man (or any other man for that matter), all given to man to bring God glory, for selfish purposes. When the beauty of the body of mankind is used as a pattern for art that is "art for art's sake" it is the worst kind of sacrilege. It is also a big step toward the animalizing of man. The man of God must always bring the use of his body to the judgment of his Lord, for "ye are Christ's" (I Cor. 3:23) and "your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost" (I Cor. 6:19).

²⁹⁵ Dan. 5:23

²⁹⁶ Rom. 1:32

²⁹⁷ e.g., NW YRK could be New York or (y=j) Now jirk!

divided." But these words have no subject or object supplied--thus still need for an interpreter. Except that the last word sounded like "Paras," Persia, there was almost no suggestion that it was connected with a victory by the enemy.

This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. (Daniel 5:26)

Better, read: "God hath numbered thy reign." The number of days during which Belshazzar might reign was fixed by God and now at a complete end. Belshazzar, the jig is up! One thinks of the last hours of Adolph Hitler as with his lover, Eva Braun, he spent moments listening to the sound of exploding shells come closer and closer.

TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. (Daniel 5:27)

A cross-arm balanced on a post at mid-point with platters suspended from the ends by chains or cords, like the scales still used everywhere in the Orient, now seen on display in some drug stores and used in some laboratories, is the picture. There is a certain breath-stopping expectancy about the process of weighing by this method. The standard weight is set on one platter; the substance to be weighed, on the other. If there is enough of the substance in question poured or set on to equal exactly the mass of weight on the other platter the weight is raised as the beam adjusts itself to level. If not, then the substance is not heavy enough. The weight never rises. In the eternal scales of the judgment of God Belshazzar has been weighed in God's scales but he didn't move the beam. He had failed as a king.

PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. (Daniel 5:28)

UPSHARSIN of verse 25 is replaced by PERES here. The explanation is as follows: "U" was possibly not part of the inscription at all. It is the Aramaic word for "and"—supplied by Daniel in reporting. "P" in Hebrew and Aramaic becomes "PH" or "F" after a vowel, hence the change from *PFARSIN* to *ÆRES*. The dropping of "in" is merely a change from plural to singular. The vowel changes are incidental to the other changes.

The plural form of the Word suggests that "they shall be divided," i.e., the various parts of the empire will be separated again. Jeremiah prophesied this.²⁹⁸ The word PERES was also a grim pun on the word "Paras" or Persia.

There is another grim suggestion in the tenses: "hath numbered... art weighed...is divided" etc., placing the judgments and decisions in the past. Even as Daniel pronounced the words the city had fallen and Belshazzar's executioners were on their way.

In the face of all this the foolish and unrepentant king still could not think it was really true that his time was up, for he went ahead to confer on Daniel the promised rewards as though he were still master of proudest realm of earth. One thinks of reports of the band of the ocean liner Titanic continuing to play as the great ship slipped beneath the waves, except that there was a certain resigned fortitude in the playing of that band—their tune the hymn, "Nearer My God to Thee."

²⁹⁸ Jer. 51:44

F. The End of the Feast of Belshazzar (5:30, 31)

In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, [being] about threescore and two years old. (Daniel 5:30, 31)

The punishment was no less startling in its sudden execution than the apparition of the fingers writing the inscription had been. Both were in just proportion to the rashness of the king in his sacrilegious use of the vessels of the Lord. When Uzzah rashly touched the ark God struck him dead.²⁹⁹ When Nadab and Abihu incautiously offered "strange fire" before the Lord "there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord".³⁰⁰ Says the Apostle Paul, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy".³⁰¹

The reader who knows his Bible well cannot help but be impressed with the demonstration herein of the certainty of God's promises and providence. A hundred fifty years and more before Isaiah, by the Spirit of the Lord, had prophesied that God would raise up one Cyrus from the east to "dry up the rivers",³⁰² in figure, in order that His people, the Jews might return to their land, re-establish their commonwealth, and re-build their temple.³⁰³ Now not far away stands this very Cyrus while his general Darius invests and takes over the city. Sixty-some years before Daniel had prophesied first of the coming of the Medes and Persians, "a kingdom inferior"³⁰⁴ and again just a few years later had repeated it to replace the Chaldeans as masters of the world.³⁰⁵ This chapter tells us exactly how it all came to pass.

In a different, but quite as impressive manner, the man who knows little of God's Word, the Bible, who may not even acknowledge the Savior, should see in the experiences of Daniel and Belshazzar something of the importance of knowing God in a saving way, and of bringing his life into obedient relationship to Him. Life moves on inexorably toward its end. Life is a time of sowing. At its end one will, if he has sowed to the Spirit, reap life everlasting. If one has sowed to the flesh, he shall of the flesh reap corruption. It is appointed unto man "once to die, and after that the judgment." At this judgment we meet a God who will without respect of persons render to every man according to his deeds.³⁰⁶ He will render "to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish".³⁰⁷

Let us not in that day hear, "Weighed in the balances and found wanting," but rather with sins forgiven by the grace of God through the blood of Christ, hear Christ, himself, supreme judge, say: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

²⁹⁹ II Sam. 6:6, 7

³⁰⁰ Lev. 10:1, 2

³⁰¹ I Cor. 3:17

³⁰² Euphrates and Tigris

³⁰³ *vid.* Isa. 40-45, especially 44:24-45:4

³⁰⁴ Dan. 2:39

³⁰⁵ cf. chapter seven, esp. v. 1

³⁰⁶ Rom. 3:11, 6

³⁰⁷ Rom. 2:7-9

VI. CHAPTER SIX: Daniel in the Lion's Den

A. Introduction

The message concerning faith and prayer conveyed by this chapter has its setting in a story of religious persecution. The story is of an attempt to destroy a good man by finding an "occasion against" him in connection with the "law of his God." This report is rendered specially lucid on account of the fact that it relates to Daniel, the author of the book. The Apostle John, whose person and record of service as well as whose writings are in many ways similar to Daniels, experienced similar persecution. For, after referring to his tribulation and endurance, he speaks of how he is imprisoned on the isle of Patmos "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus".³⁰⁸

Persecution of the worshippers of God is an old, old story. It starts with the murder of Abel, whose brother Cain hated him when Abel's works showed him up for the spiritual fraud he was.³⁰⁹ It continues throughout the Old Testament narratives of the ministry of God's servants. So pronounced was the tendency to persecute the prophets that Jesus could speak of Jerusalem as "thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee"³¹⁰ and Stephen could say to his Jewish accusers in the last moments before he, himself, also became its victim: "as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?"³¹¹

The story of persecution for righteousness' sake reached a climax in the crucifixion of our Savior, but it did not end there. He predicted that "men shall revile you, and persecute you",³¹² admonishing the disciples to "beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you...and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake".³¹³ A short while later Stephen died a martyr to his faith³¹⁴ and not long after that "Herod...killed James the brother of John with the sword" and then imprisoned Peter. Both Jews and Christians suffered from their Roman lords on account of their faith.³¹⁵ Shortly, in the seventh decade of the Christian era, Nero began burning Christians as accused incendiaries who had set fire to the city of Rome. This wave of persecution appears to have taken away the life of Paul, as thirty years later, in the days of Diocletian, another wave of persecution brought about the imprisonment of John. So, the Apostolic age began and ended with persecution of believers in Christ.

It is Peter, whose death as a martyr for his faith was predicted by his Lord³¹⁶ and who tradition claims did die by crucifixion at Rome, who gives the watchword for our era: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings".³¹⁷ And nothing has been more characteristic of the experience of true Christian believers throughout our age than persecution. Read Fox's *Book of Martyrs*. Trace the history of Waldenseans, Hussites, and others in their conflict with the Papacy. It is a bloody story. And while there is not space here to support the assertion with details of evidence, it is not true that the Christian opposition of Papal Rome characteristically answered blood with blood. Nor is it true that evangelical movements were

³⁰⁸ Rev. 1:9

³⁰⁹ I John 3:12

³¹⁰ Mt. 23:37 cf. Mt. 23:33-36

³¹¹ Acts 7:51, 52

³¹² Mt, 5:11

³¹³ Mt. 5:16-18

³¹⁴ Acts 7

³¹⁵ Acts 18:2

³¹⁶ John 21:18, 19

³¹⁷ I Pet. 4:12, 13

propagated with the sword, as some claim. The burning of poor Servetus in Calvin's Geneva cannot be made to carry that much freight!

The persecution of Christians is an issue of our time! Who knows how many of them have died in Russia? How many in China? Possibly more than in the ancient Roman Empire. Nobody knows when some new Hitler or Stalin or Mao may arise to carry off more. May the readers of these pages and those who profit by their ministry be prepared now in a time of domestic tranquility for the storm that is sure to come. The storm is sure to come because the Bible predicts that the end of this age will be enveloped in the worst persecution of believers the world has ever seen.³¹⁸ Our resources in such a time are the same as Daniel's were. Let us see what they are.

B. The Position of Daniel (6:1-3)

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom. (Daniel 6:1)³¹⁹

It is regrettable, but true, that the destructive Biblical criticism of two centuries has made it necessary for the serious student to give attention to defense of the historical truth of the factual reports of Scripture. This has already been observed in chapter five where the identity of Belshazzar and his relationship with Nebuchadnezzar are matters of dispute. Two matters call for attention here in this verse: the identity of Darius and the kingdom he is said to have had.

The ancient Greek historians make no mention of a King Darius as holding ruling power at the time of the capture of Babylon in 539 B.C. Several kings of that name of later date are known by these historians, Darius I, father of the famous Xerxes,³²⁰ and who with Xerxes launched the famous invasion of Greece did not come to power until 522 B.C. Furthermore, even the book of Daniel elsewhere³²¹ appears to regard Cyrus as the man who replaced Belshazzar. A century and a half earlier Isaiah prophesied that the destroyer of the Babylonian kingdom and the restorer of the Jews would be Cyrus.³²² This, and certain other considerations, say the unbelieving critics, show that the author of our book, living they say in the second century B.C., was confused about his history and supposed that there had been an independent Median kingdom ruling the Near East between the close of the Babylonian and the beginning of the Persian kingdom. To the present moment no prominent person named Darius has turned up in the known inscriptions relating to the fall of Babylon. This need not embarrass the Bible believer at all. In the first place remember that the situation is not dissimilar to that concerning Belshazzar 100 years ago. The respectability of the fifth chapter account of him is now thoroughly established to the satisfaction even of the critics. The same may yet take place with regard to Darius.

In the second place it was a common thing in antiquity for kings to have two names, frequently taking a new name at their royal accession. The kings of Israel and Judea furnish many examples of this.³²³ Cyrus himself might have had Darius as another name. What is more likely is that one of several other persons mentioned frequently in both the Greek histories and in the

³¹⁸ *vid.* Mt. 24:1-28; Rev. 13

³¹⁹ Note: Recent translations prefer satraps, a Greek word, to "princes" as translation. The word in Aramaic, *la-ahaš-dar-penî-yâ* is one of the longest words in the Hebrew Bible. Satrap is no better than prince, for there is no corresponding officer in any Western land today. It has, however, become customary to refer to subordinate rulers in Oriental countries by this name, satrap.

³²⁰ Ahasuerus of the book of Esther

³²¹ Dan. 1:21, 10:1

³²² Isa. 44:26-45:4

³²³ e.g., II Chron. 36:4; II Chron. 36:8, cf. Jeri 22:24

contemporary Babylonian temple records ³²⁴ is the Darius of Daniel. Dr. John Whitcomb of Grace Theological Seminary has made a most convincing case for identifying him with Gubaru who ruled Babylon for a good while during and following 539 B.C. in the stead of his lord, Cyrus. ³²⁵

If this be the case, then the problem of Darius' kingdom has been cleared up. It has been pointed out by Daniel's detractors that a different division of Cyrus' realm from that of "an hundred and twenty princes" is reported in secular sources. But Daniel has no reference to what Cyrus did with his extensive dominions the Medo-Persian Empire—rather it has reference to what Gubaru (Darius) did with his large, but less extensive, dominions in and around the city of Babylon. ³²⁶

And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. (Daniel 6:2)

"No damage," i.e., no loss, makes it clear that the purpose of the king's new governmental structure was concerned mainly with financial matters rather than the administration of justice. These ancient monarchs had no conception of the administration of government "for the people"—to borrow the great emancipator's phrase. Government was for the king. Occasionally a benevolent man would arise to give the people something like fair treatment, but it was exceptional. The evils inherent in an ancient monarchy—even in a limited one like that of Saul, David, and Solomon,—were made very clear by Samuel when the people asked for a king. ³²⁷ It is only an enlightened, Bible honoring, Christian public that can make democracy work, even today. If we lose the Christian Biblical orientation of our public life we will inevitably drift back toward monarchy—though today it is apt to be called dictatorship.

Darius is not to be criticized for taking steps to insure fiscal soundness to his realm. Any degree of national integrity, to say nothing of justice, will require fiscal soundness. No way will likely ever be found to spend a nation rich, nor to waste resources without resulting national poverty.

Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. (Daniel 6:3)

The fact that Daniel was selected as one of the three indicates that he may have been already an international figure, comparable say to a Benjamin Franklin of the early years of our republic. Sixty some years of distinguished public service in the greatest realm on earth would have made him that. Furthermore it establishes as near certain that Daniel's activities on that last fateful night of Belshazzar, when he denounced the dissolute young monarch, announcing his impending destruction, had been reported to Darius.

There are several important truths suggested by these things. Does not the appointment of a man well past 80 years of age to high government office suggest the value of years where wisdom is necessary? "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child". ³²⁸ That leadership abilities are the gift of God is suggested by the fact that an excellent spirit was in him." The same expression at Daniel 5:12 clearly has reference to his gifts of wisdom. In that case, even the queen and the pagan king regard it as a divine gift. We need "gifted men," indeed, but let us never forget that

³²⁴ Babylonian priests record the fall of Babylon in detail.

³²⁵ *Darius the Mede*, Eerdmans, 1958

³²⁶ The interested reader should consult Dr. Whitcomb's book. See also Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*; Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*; Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel*.

³²⁷ *vid.* I Sam. 8

³²⁸ Prov. 10:16

they are, both in ordinary society and in the church, God's gifts.³²⁹

Daniel's exaltation to high office in the new administration, and the proposed further promotion, were the occasion of new dangers. He was, after all, not only a carry-over from the hated Babylonians but a member of a captive people, the Hebrews. It is almost as if supposing Hitler had won the recent war he would have appointed some British Jew governor of Great Britain. Such a man in such a position would almost inevitably be attacked by rivals among the conquering people. Add to this the peculiarity of Daniel's monotheistic faith and trouble becomes a near certainty.

C. The Plot against Daniel (6:4-9)

Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful neither was there any error or fault found in him. (Daniel 6:4)

A very common situation was developing: envy driving men to attack a professional colleague more competent than themselves. Daniel had been wisely promoted to the position of the king's "prime minister," the other princes and presidents being passed over. His superior moral and intellectual qualities apparently were well-known. It was envy of his excellence that led the brothers of Joseph to reject and then to sell him.³³⁰ And, when the priests and scribes hailed Jesus before him, charging the most kindly and winsome man who had ever lived with the blackest of crimes, even a cynical Pilate "knew that for envy they had delivered him".³³¹ Joab, the truly great and often magnanimous captain of David's host, committed a horrible murder for envy of a possible rival.³³² Nothing is more true to the common experience of our fallen race than the proverb: "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?"³³³ Daniel was in real danger.

It is much to Daniels credit that no fault of any kind could be found in connection with his civil life and civic duties. How few of us there are whose reputations could stand the examination of government agents prying into all our past: no arrests for speeding; no errors in our income reports; no brushes with the banking laws; no public outbursts or known private moral failures. The FBI, we are informed, sometimes finds these things when the man concerned has forgotten them. Do not doubt that if such there were, these ambitious snoopers would have found them!

Then said these men, we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. (Daniel 6:5)

Daniel's danger lay only in the high elevation for which his lord, King Darius, was responsible, but also in the fact his integrity guaranteed exactly how he would act in certain situations. His future conduct in a simple situation between right and wrong was predictable. In any contest of this sort the initial advantage always lies with the side of evil. The devil and his children may use any method, either good or evil, in their warfare. They may strike either above or below the belt; stealthily or in the open. God's people may only "strive lawfully" whether it be in sport or in warfare.³³⁴ They may not suspend their morals until danger is past. So, these crooked politicians knew well that Daniel would not be disloyal to his God, whom he regarded as the one Creator and

³²⁹ *vid.* Eph. 4:6 ff, I Cor. 12

³³⁰ Acts 7:9

³³¹ Mt. 27:18

³³² II Sam. 20:4-10

³³³ Prov. 27:4

³³⁴ II Tim. 2:5

Sustainer of the universe, for any reason or for any consideration whether of gain or loss. Herein lay their advantage and Daniel's danger. Is our public display of faith and faithfulness such that our own school friends or associates at work would be sure of our response to a situation where in our allegiance to our Christian faith was to be tested?

Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live forever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. (Daniel 6:6-9)

The strength of this plan lay in taking advantage of the king's vanity. Their honorific manner of addressing him: "King Darius, live forever" coupled with the vain self-praising proposal that the king actually assume divine honors were just the sort of things which would appeal to a pagan king's vanity. Darius had been only a general of the great Cyrus up till his "being made" king of Babylon. And, being past 62 years of age³³⁵ he had waited long for the recognition of his military talents only recently acknowledged by his appointment, and accordingly had not many years in which to enjoy the glory.

There is an old German folk-story which enforces the danger to which vanity exposes those in high authority. Two crooked tailors proposed to a certain king, notoriously vain, that he give to them, master tailors, money to make garments of materials so fine they were invisible to any stupid or incompetent person. The king hired them, paid their fees, paid for their alleged materials, and often visited them at their work. He was, however, humiliated that he could see nothing in their hands as they worked and could see no garments forming, supposing it to be because he was stupid and incompetent. None of his courtiers would tell him they could see nothing, but only praised the beauty of the crafty tailor's work, since to admit they could see nothing would brand them also as stupid and incompetent. Finally the supposed clothes were declared ready and the king determined to wear them in a great parade. Of course, when he took off all his other clothes and put on the "invisible" [non-existent] garments he appeared in the parade completely naked. All went well, for no one wished to brand himself as stupid and incompetent, much less offend the king by telling him he was naked. Finally a little child cried out: "The king is wearing no clothes. The king has nothing on!" Obviously the child was not incompetent and his observation showed him to be bright. So now the king knew himself to be not only stupid, but vain and incompetent. Of this fictional king, as well as of Darius and countless others, it is true then "The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee".³³⁶ One or two matters call for at least brief attention. One is that a lie was involved in the plotter's speech. They said "all the presidents have consulted together, whereas Daniel had not consulted with them. It is not unlike some committee meetings to which by "accident" some members are not called.

Another is that the method of execution, being fed to lions, whereas the fiery furnace was used by the Babylonians,³³⁷ is a truly authentic touch confirming the truth of the story. The ancient Persians of that time were Zoroastrians. Their religion, which is perpetuated today under the name of Parseeism ("Persianism"), held fire to be sacred. It would not be thought proper, therefore, that fire should be contaminated by corpses.

³³⁵ cf. Dan. 5:31

³³⁶ Obadiah 3

³³⁷ Dan. 3

A further note is the sly remark of the plotters' about Medo-Persian law—"which altereth not." It was this feature of their jurisprudence that made their plot workable, and which effectively placed even the unhappy monarch at their disposal. This characteristic of the law, as we shall see, is a fulfillment of Daniel's words of chapter two about the future of human governments.

Calvin suggests that the plot may have been larger than one would initially suppose. Says he, "Although Daniel alone was cast into the lion's den...yet, unless he had been liberated, the condition of the people [the Jews] would have been more grievous and severe.... If Daniel had been torn by the lions, all men would have risen up in a body against the Jews. God, therefore, here exercised the faith and patience of his servant, and also proved all the Jews by the same test, since they saw themselves liable to the most extreme sufferings in the person of a single individual, unless God had speedily afforded the assistance which he rendered."

Therefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. (Daniel 6:9)

Actually the original says nothing of a "signing" of the document. Ancient kings used rotary seals pressed on clay or wax instead of our now customary signature. A literal translation which makes very awkward English is "the writing was written."

In three respects the king by the action reported here showed himself to be a poor ruler. 1) Personal vanity, about which we have previously spoken at length, is the worst trait displayed. 2) Unfairness to his appointed subordinates is seen in his failure to consult Daniel. This should not occur even in the administration of a Sunday School. His precipitous decision shows a kind of impromptu judgment most unfortunate in those whose decisions affect many people. Of this sort is announcement of a meeting without consulting the schedule of other meetings. These failures of Darius as king would be failures of any leader, in whatever capacity he might be.

D. The Prayer of Daniel (6:10, 11)

Before examining the prayer a bit of reflection on just whose prayer it is should take place. He is a man famous in his own day among fellow believers for his righteousness. God, Himself, shared in this popular estimate of him for in God's message of destruction of Judah, said, "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness".³³⁸ Furthermore, only a few years later, God's angel addressed him: "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved",³³⁹ according to the report of this book. Such a man as this is worthy of close observation and emulation, whatever he does—out especially in a holy exercise like that of prayer.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing, was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforesaid (Daniel 6:10)

The word for house is the ordinary word, but the word for chamber is a special word meaning roof-chamber. Such a roof-chamber would have been built upon some corner of the house-top or even on a specially constructed tower. To allow free circulation of air its sides would be really lattice windows. There are many Scriptural references to such roof-top arrangements to provide relative privacy for prayer and meditation. In the case of Daniel's prayer room he had pushed back the frames of the lattice to provide free view toward Jerusalem several hundreds of miles to the west. The language appears to mean that Daniel had been leaving the windows open during

³³⁸ Ezek, I4:14

³³⁹ Dan. 10:11

the time of prayer, and now, when more complete privacy would have seemed cowardly, he did not close them.³⁴⁰

Before entering this holy room with the expositor's spade of analysis let us look at the two facts which make it significant. They are firstly that the praying took place "when Daniel knew that the writing was signed," and secondly that it was prayer "as he did afore-time." The sublimity of holy courageous faith which these words suggest cannot be explained; it can only be felt.

The act of prayer was the only step Daniel took in the face of what he knew to be an inescapable trap. Perhaps he had read: "In returning the rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength",³⁴¹ or "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him".³⁴²

Had he been a younger or weaker believer there might be a longer story at this point. By means of protests and remonstrances, legal and personal, he might at least have employed a delaying action. His silence, except for prayer to God, is not to be interpreted as "what's the use" resignation, but rather as "God will save" commitment.

When nothing whereon to lean remains,
When strongholds crumble to the dust,
When nothing is sure but that God still reigns
That is the time to trust.

There's many a cloud and many a night
In this path of yours and mine.
But the pitch-black night, when there's no other light
Is the hour for faith to shine.

1. Daniel's prayer was courageous

He prayed "when he knew that the writing was signed" which proscribed prayer to any god save the king an act of treason, making it punishable by death. This was the kind of courage that enabled John Hus to make a good confession at the Council of Constance (1414, 1415). As matters progressed:

"...the condemnation of Hus to the stake was a foregone conclusion. He himself knew it. His letters bear the stamp of approaching death. During the four weeks that followed, efforts were made to induce him to retract, but in vain.³⁴³ On Saturday, July 6, 1415, the sentence of the council was pronounced in the cathedral, condemning him as a heretic, and condemning his books to be burned. He fell on his knees, and, lifting up his hands, appealed to Heaven, and prayed for his enemies. Thereupon followed his degradation from the priestly office, and all cried out together, 'Thy soul we deliver up to the Devil.' Hus answered, 'And I commend it to the holy Lord Jesus.' Then a paper cap a yard high was placed on his head, with the writing, 'Archheretic!' He was then led forth to the

³⁴⁰ For references to other roof-top prayer rooms see I Samuel 18:33, I Kings 17:19, Acts 1:13, 10:9.

³⁴¹ Isa. 30:15

³⁴² Isa. 59:19

³⁴³ He had advocated publically what came to be the Reformation evangelical doctrines in opposition to Papal doctrines.

judgment-square, his neck bound by a chain to a stake. As the flames rose around him, he refused again to recant, and died singing, 'Christ, thou Son of the living God, have mercy on me.' His ashes were thrown into the Rhine".³⁴⁴

2. Daniel's prayer was truly pious

It was "pure religion and undefiled".³⁴⁵ He did not go to the market place to make his prayer really a kind of political act. Neither did he send a note to the authorities announcing his intentions and then go home to pray. He simply "went into his house ... and prayed and gave thanks before his God." There was no parade of religion. True piety does not care whether its exercises are observed or not. How different from the longwinded harangs described by our Lord and attributed by him to the hypocrites.³⁴⁶

3. Daniel's prayer was according to the word of God

This is especially important for our instruction and should accordingly be given careful and somewhat extended attention. The captivity of Judah had been foreseen by God and announced by his prophets ahead of time, just as the replacement of judges by kings had been foreseen long before the days of Samuel and Saul. And just as God had provided guidance for the people after that they should receive a king ³⁴⁷ so he provided guidance for them, especially in the carrying on of religious life without their temple ritual, in exile in foreign lands. Deuteronomy 28:36 ff. contains Moses' most specific portrayal of the anguish they would suffer in their captivities. These warnings were, like all Biblical warnings to believers, deterrents to the sins thus to be punished. Knowing, however, that the warnings would not always be heeded, and that captivity would come, God gave instruction for them in their captivity. The best summary of it, coming from a prayer of King Solomon, is to be found in II Chronicles 6:36-39. This must be carefully studied to understand Daniel's actions.

"If they sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not), and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near; yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; if they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their *land*, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the *city* which thou hast chosen, and toward the *house* which I have built for thy name: then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee".³⁴⁸

Thus with full regard to what he knew and believed in God's Word, Daniel prayed. I suggest that there are at least seven or eight distinct elements involved in prayer according to the word of God as exemplified by this man of God.

a. It involved faith

It involved faith for, with his window opened toward Jerusalem, it was "toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers," howbeit, likewise "in the land of their captivity." His

³⁴⁴ Schaff-Herzog, *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*

³⁴⁵ James 1:27

³⁴⁶ Mt. 6:5 ff

³⁴⁷ Deut. 17:14-20

³⁴⁸ II Chron. 6:36-39

action involved confidence that the land guaranteed by formal covenant promise to Abraham and his descendents would truly be restored to them. As is to be seen in chapter nine, he even believed that he was living in the very days of its restoration. He did not come to prayer as a last resource supposing that "somehow" it might help. No! On the basis of God's promises he came expectantly. "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."³⁴⁹

Note also the remark in Daniel 6:24: "because he trusted in his God." It should be observed that this is not part of Darius' speech. Neither is it a report of Daniel's feelings at the occasion. It is rather God's own opinion as to the reason for Daniel's deliverance, reported here by Daniel as an author of Scripture.

b. It involved worship

It involved worship for this also is seen by the windows open toward Jerusalem. Solomon's language directed him "toward the city which thou hast chosen." In the Mosaic epoch, worship was not to be held just anywhere. It was to be at "the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come...and thither ye shall bring your...offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes...and there ye shall eat before the LORD your God".³⁵⁰ By a series of remarkable miracles God had designated the city of Jerusalem and Mount Moriah, the site of the temple, as the place of his choosing.³⁵¹ Jesus acknowledged the validity of this arrangement when he corrected the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar by saying in effect that the Samaritan temple was illegal and that only the temple worship "of the Jews" at Jerusalem was the legal one.³⁵² So, Daniel, recognizing that effectual prayer is only possible when respect is had to God in worship, and that in a worship that is according to God's own prescribed way, directed his prayer toward the city of Jerusalem wherein God had ordained his people's ritual worship. It was a regard for what in New Testament language reads, "Neither is their salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved".³⁵³ If God says Jerusalem is the only place then there is no other place; if Jesus is the only way to God, then men dare seek no other.

c. The ground of sacrificial blood atonement

Further involved in the direction of Daniel's prayer was the ground of sacrificial blood atonement. Prayer "toward the house built for thy name" was toward a temple whose main purpose was the perpetuation of a complicated, but necessary, ritual of blood atonement. Twice daily there were burnt offerings for the welfare of the whole nation. Once a year, there was the ritual of national atonement. At all times of the day there were individual sacrifices being made for the sins of conscience-stricken Israelites who came there to get right with their God. Access to God then was by blood. How joyously the book of Hebrews reports the application to us: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and

³⁴⁹ James 1: 6, 7

³⁵⁰ Deut. 12:5-7

³⁵¹ I Chron. 11:4-9; 13:1-14; 15:25-29; 21:9-30; II Chron. 3:1-2; 5:1-14; 7:1-3

³⁵² Jn. 4:20-22

³⁵³ Acts 4:12

our bodies washed with pure water"!³⁵⁴ This is the significance of our prayers "in Jesus' name."

d. Humility is the characteristic

Humility is the characteristic indicated by the fact that "he kneeled upon his knees." Perhaps a better word is *submission*. The kneeling posture is the posture of submission. Calvin wisely explains, "...not that bending the knee is necessary in prayer, but while we need aids to devotion...posture is of importance. First of all, it reminds us of our inability to stand before God, unless with humility and reverence; then, our minds are better prepared for serious entreaty, and this symbol of worship is pleasing to God. Hence Daniel's expression is by no means superfluous: he fell upon his knees whenever he wished to pray to God." Again our Lord's words about prayer bear attention. After vividly portraying the proud prayer of the self-exalted Pharisee Jesus spoke of the grief-stricken publican, saying, "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified...for...every man that humbleth himself shall be exalted".³⁵⁵

e. Daniels pray was regular.

Daniel's prayer was regular—"three times a day" formally addressing prayer to God. Though the Bible nowhere commands any special frequency of prayer, prayer thrice daily appears to have been practiced in Bible times by other saints. David, for one, says, "I will call upon God; and the Lord will save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice".³⁵⁶ There is no legal virtue in this, but "unless we fix certain hours in the day for prayer, it easily slips from our memory".³⁵⁷ Prayer at meals, at least, sets men apart from brutes as at least recognizing their dependency upon God. Nothing is more characteristic of true piety than regularity in prayer.

f. Daniel's prayer contained petition

Daniel's prayer contained petition. Such is the emphasis in the words "and prayed," for it distinguished this aspect of his devotion from the giving of thanks. We are not told precisely what his requests were, but, remembering his prayer of chapter two and that of his three friends in chapter three we may be sure there was fervent request for deliverance.³⁵⁸

g. His prayer was also marked with thanksgiving

His prayer was also marked with thanksgiving, for he "gave thanks before his God." This complies fully with instructions for prayer in Philippians 4:6 "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

h. Daniel's prayer was constant

Finally, Daniel's prayer was constant. Knowing that men so easily let unexpected telephone calls, guests, family squabbles, overwork, and a thousand other things

³⁵⁴ Heb. 10:19-22

³⁵⁵ Luke 18:13, 14

³⁵⁶ Psa. 55:16, 17

³⁵⁷ Calvin

³⁵⁸ cf., Dan. 6:11

interrupt family and private devotions it is most important to emphasize that now under the most difficult situation, Daniel prayed "as he did aforetime." The man who has been in a habit of praying when life provides no special danger or stress is likely to find God's ear more readily "in the floods of great waters." In the spring of 1944 when the whole world was tense with expectation of the invasion of the mainland of Europe by the Allies based in England on the Channel facing France, many churches planned special prayer meetings at their places of worship whenever the news should come that the invasion was in operation. The writer, then pastor of a church in Ohio, announced as his topic for a June Sunday night, "Will it Do Any Good to Pray on Invasion Day?" His answer to the question, propounded from this text, was Yes, if your church has been in the habit of praying—if it has already learned the art of prayer. Prevailing prayer is apt usually to be "as ... aforetime."

E. The Success of the Plot against Daniel (6:11-17)

"The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel"³⁵⁹ and never were men either more wicked or more cruel—unless it were when the leaders of Judaism crucified the Savior. The plot of the scheming bureaucrats worked like a charm.

1. They plotted against him

They had "sought to find occasion against Daniel" not in his civil administration (which they complimented by acknowledging to be flawless), but "concerning the law of his God." They could not have chosen a more vulnerable aspect of his character—vulnerable not because he would yield his principles but precisely because he would not. So—

Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. (Daniel 6:11)

The word assembled (as in verse 6 also) is one meaning to be in tumult, to assemble noisily and with a measure of violence. In the former case the idea is that they mobbed the king with their excited suggestion. In the second case they appeared noisily to have interrupted the old statesman at his private devotions. Both notices are intended to report their actions as unworthy of dignitaries of a great empire.

His windows had been open before; he did not close them now. He had prayed where he could be observed before; he did not cease to do so now.

2. They portrayed him as a traitor

If they had wanted the law of Daniel's God to appear to make him a traitor to the law of the kingdom, in this also they were eminently successful. For—

Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which altereth not, Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, Coking, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day, (Daniel 6:12, 13)

³⁵⁹ Prov. 12:10

No mention is made of their self-serving purposes. All is made to appear as if their concern were for the king and his laws. How seldom the real reasons for actions ever come to the public eye! It was only their envy that made it necessary for them to get rid of him. Any legal cart would do to haul him off! How unhappy a situation it is that such things often occur even in church circles. No one knows how many innocent men have been removed from their places of service for God by malicious trumped-up charges or gossip. Heresy is a terrible tag to hang on a man, especially if it is untrue. Yet that is precisely the theological cart that has oft-times been used to get rid of people whose persistent questions were not answered. Nothing, of course, is more precious than divine truth, Let it never be championed or supported by liars or lies!

3. The plot involved the king

If the plotters had schemed to catch the gullible king in the technicalities of his own laws their plans worked to perfection,

Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. (Daniel 6:14, 15)

The unhappy ruler found himself bound and gagged by his own law. Thus the story demonstrates the prophecy of Daniel that the kingdom to follow the Babylonian would be "a kingdom inferior"³⁶⁰ as regards the character of the sovereignty exercised by the rulers.³⁶¹ Nebuchadnezzar had unlimited authority as an absolute monarch. "Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive." In the Medo-Persian,

"and in each empire that followed we find imperial power more and more curtailed, and the voice of the people making itself heard with ever greater force and intensity until the days of the feet of the image, part of iron and part of brittle pottery—a union of social democracy and imperialism".³⁶²

4. Daniel's death was their goal

They had schemed to do away with this godly, guileless and harmless old man who had served God and man well for three-quarters of a century. In this also they appeared to be successful, for the king finding his efforts at deliverance unavailing except at the price of his own royal dignity had Daniel thrown to the lions.³⁶³ Yet that God would ultimately thwart the artful schemers, delivering his faithful servant, was suggested even by the king, himself. He cried, even as Daniel was committed to the den, "Thy God whom thou servest continually [even when worship was proscribed], he will deliver thee."

F. God's Answer to Daniel's Prayer (6:17-28)

And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords. (Daniel 6:17)

³⁶⁰ Dan. 2:39

³⁶¹ *vid.* Notes on chapter two

³⁶² Ironside

³⁶³ Dan. 6:16, 17

The word for "den" used in other verses as this verse is more literally "pit." Apparently the pit was covered with a lid or cover. Through this door food was passed to the beasts. This door was not closed and some plastic substance as clay or wax placed over its edge and marked with the king's own signature ring. Thus Daniel's friends would not be permitted to help him out during the night and his enemies would not be able to harm him in case God should in some manner deliver him. This was further guarantee to the king that God had indeed worked a miracle when he found Daniel still in the den but quite unharmed. The parallel with the case of our Lord's body, sealed in the tomb by an official Roman seal, is most striking. Jesus' enemies could not enter to desecrate his body, nor could his friends enter to steal the body.

Daniel does not report precisely what he asked of God in his prayer, but we may be sure that God answered the prayer and granted that for which he asked. The course of events, directed by the overruling power of God, suggests the nature of his requests.

1. If he prayed for the king

If Daniel prayed for the king, and most likely he did, then God responded initially by doing a work of grace in the king's heart. For,

Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. (Daniel 6:16)

Evidently the faith of Daniel had been contagious to the extent of affecting even the king. "He is able to deliver thee!" It was quite a royal confession! Any God arousing such loyalty to Himself, and such devotion as Daniel had shown is bound to be highly esteemed by observers. The kind of faith which the king saw in Daniel affected his own estimate of the God toward whom the faith was directed. What a challenge for overcoming public faith today! After a night of fasting (a religious exercise frequently recommended in the Bible) the king rushed out early in the morning to see what had happened. He had more faith, apparently, than many Christians now have.

2. If he prayed for himself

If Daniel prayed for himself, then verses 21-23 describe the answer. Like his friends who were not even affected by the smell of smoke, Daniel escaped from the lions' den with "no manner of hurt."

3. If he prayed for God's glory

If Daniel prayed that the incident should glorify his God and benefit His kingdom, then verse 24-28 describe the three-fold answer. In the first place God's enemies (and Daniel's) were destroyed. God is not to be blamed, however, for the excessive fury which Darius directed toward the families of the plotters. Such executions, were, in fact, forbidden by Mosaic law. Darius' action was, however, in keeping with the general standards of the time. In the second place, Daniel's God was specifically confessed to be the living God. The king's Zoroastrian faith was a kind of metaphysical and ethical dualism in which on the one hand matter and evil were associated as one eternal principle while light and good, on the other, were regarded as a second eternal principle. This was much closer to the ethical monotheism of Judah than the prevailing polytheism of antiquity.³⁶⁴ The king's words³⁶⁵ read almost like a Jewish statement

³⁶⁴ *vid.* Isaiah's contrast of the "living God" with the gods of the heathen which are "no gods, but the work of men's hands," (Isa. 37:4, 19)

³⁶⁵ Dan. 6:26, 27

of faith.

VII. CHAPTER SEVEN: Four Beasts, the Ancient of Days, and the Son of Man

A. Introduction

There are two important changes in the Book of Daniel beginning with this chapter. Heretofore the material has been mainly narrative of events in Babylon wherein on two occasions Daniel himself only receives dreams, vision, etc. and a great angel, Gabriel by name, appears to him, and who provides the interpretation of his dreams and visions,³⁶⁶ occasionally adding direct information in addition. This is the first major change—a change of revelatory method. The second change is a change in Daniel's standpoint in reporting. Heretofore the author's reports have been in the third person, but after a transition at verse one the author takes the standpoint of first person reporter. The third person reporting ends with Daniel 7:1, *viz.*; "Then he [Daniel] wrote the dream." But the next verse begins: "Daniel spake and said, 'I saw in my vision' etc. "I saw" is the beginning of the first person reporting, carried on to the close of the book. Thus the latter part of the book is more intimate, taking the readers into the very heart of the prophet. The careful study of this section, therefore, cannot but deeply influence the good and tender-hearted reader.

The student must prepare himself for greater exercise of his mental powers and for deeper consideration of doctrinal matters in this second half. The entertaining stories are now at an end. Some of the most difficult questions to occupy the attention of devout interpreters of the Bible, relating mainly to God's dealing with the human race, lie in these six chapters. The keys to very important matters in the study of prophecies elsewhere in the Bible, especially the book of Revelation are also here. So, the student must be willing to spend time elsewhere in Holy Scripture, as the passages are suggested, if he is to appreciate and understand what lies before him here.

Devout interpreters agree that the climax of the chapter, like that of chapter two, is in a prediction of the coming of Christ, and of his kingdom. The same difference of opinion as with chapter two regrettably prevails as to whether the "coming" is the first advent, and the kingdom an invisible spiritual affair, the church, or the "coming" is mainly the second advent of Christ, and his kingdom not the church merely but a visible outward kingdom in a Millennium after his second coming as well. The standpoint adopted here is that while the first advent of Christ may not be excluded from the prophecy, the emphasis is on the second, and that while the church is part of Christ's kingdom, the term is used in a much more comprehensive way herein, focusing mainly on the rule of Christ over all of mankind after he comes in power and glory to rule for a thousand years. This structure of end-time events is provided by Revelation, chapters 19 and 20, and is supported by many other passages. This outlook is known as "Premillennialism." Happily, this controversy does not require Christians to disagree on most of the main teachings of the passage.

Inasmuch as most of the rest of the book is predictive prophecy, and since chapters two and seven are basic to the rest of the prophecy, it is necessary to give some attention to a comparison of the second chapter (which we have studied) with chapter seven (which we have not studied). Beginning with Babylon, the nation in chief control of the civilized world at the time Daniel lived, both chapters related how Gentile world rule would be passed on through four successive national custodies up to the coming of the "Son of Man." Then with His coming the everlasting kingdom of God is introduced. Some features of both chapters related to events at the second coming of Christ. The New Testament clarifies some of these prophecies, but some are not treated further in the New Testament, and for that reason much of the material awaits the return of the Savior for

³⁶⁶ *vid.* Dan. 7:16; 8:15-17; 9:20-23; 10:10-14

full exposition.

Having observed that chapters two and seven relate to the same general subject, and that both present the succession of four Gentile kingdoms succeeded immediately by the kingdom of Messiah, it remains to emphasize that there are important differences between the two treatments. Chapter two relates to the course of world dominion as revealed to and understood by a heathen king, the great Nebuchadnezzar. Thus bare outlines only are given. Spiritual truths, especially the relation of God to his covenant people Israel, are omitted. The outward political aspect of world dominion is emphasized. The kingdoms of this world are seen as the figure of a rational man, with the beauty, dignity, and civilization that go with man's culture. The kingdoms of this world and their culture are to be admired and appreciated. The excellencies of the great national art galleries, universities, libraries, monuments, edifices, cities, etc. are brought to mind. The majesty of the pyramids of Egypt, the beauty of the hanging gardens of Babylon, the dignity and wealth of the Achaemenid kings of Persia, the learning and culture of Alexander's Greek successors, the power and peace of Rome and the nobility of European culture are all suggested by the grand shining image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. But Daniel, the Hebrew saint and prophet whose initial independent vision is reported in this seventh chapter, was given to see things in their inward spiritual aspect. With startling change of character the nations appear as ferocious wild beasts—snarling and devouring one another. What realism! What likeness to the facts of past and contemporary world history! How frightening to him whose hope is "in this life".³⁶⁷

The story ends with the final form of national dominion under Antichrist slain like a wild beast and "committed to the burning flame." We are reminded that the "world passeth away, and the lust [desire] thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." We are taught to recognize the world today as bearing the very "mark of the beast".³⁶⁸ Washington, New York, and Chicago—like Berlin and Shanghai—are yet to be "given to the burning flame." In our preaching we contemplate an imminent situation wherein "cities" shall "be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and the Lord have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land".³⁶⁹ "Only one life 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last."

B. The Historical Setting (7:1)

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. (Daniel 7:1)

"The first year of Belshazzar" was likely a period of international turmoil. Likely the Persians had already begun to close in on the Babylonians by conquest and absorption of portions of the empire. According to best authorities this would have been 553/552 B.C., 14 years before the events of the fifth chapter of Daniel.

The distinction between "dreams" and "visions" (both words are used here) is not always clear in the Bible. Probably the dream is the condition of having the mind active during sleep. "Vision" is intended to represent the successive scenes (or "acts," to borrow a word from the theater) of the dream. "Dream" is singular; "visions" is plural. Hence we are to understand that Daniel had one dream in which there were several scenes or visions. In Daniel 4:9 Nebuchadnezzar refers to "visions of my dream" which supports this view of the matter.

³⁶⁷ Ps. 17:14, 15

³⁶⁸ cf. I Jn. 2:15-19; 5:19

³⁶⁹ Isa. 6:11, 12

That Daniel "then...wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters" is a very important bit of information on an obscure matter—the manner in which these Old Testament prophets received and reported the revelations God gave to them. Evidently an immediate record ("then") in written form ("he wrote") was made. This record was an abbreviated ("sum of the matters" i.e., a summary) truthful report by the same man who received the revelation. The act of seeing, i.e. of receiving information by dream and vision from God was "revelation." The matter received was "revelation." The record he wrote was an "inspired" one.³⁷⁰

C. The Details of Daniel's Visions (7:2-14, 21, 22)

The prophet received an additional vision after the interpreter appeared. Thus analysis of the material must not follow a strict literary order.

Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. (Daniel 7:2, 3)

"Upon the great sea": G. H. Lang³⁷¹ has demonstrated, with admirable scholarship, that this is not an indefinite reference but to the Mediterranean, thus indicating that until the consummation the center of biblical prophetic interest will remain the Mediterranean area.

Four different wild animals come before the prophet's attention. In a preliminary action "Four winds of heaven brake fourth".³⁷² Usage here and elsewhere³⁷³ indicates that the winds represent the heavenly powers by which God sets the nations of the world in motion (or commotion), and by which he controls them. "Upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them towards all those winds".³⁷⁴ "Thus saith the Lord: Behold I will raise up against Babylon...a destroying wind. And I will send unto Babylon strangers, that shall winnow her; and they shall empty her land".³⁷⁵ The word far wind (*rûach*) may be translated either wind or spirit, as the context requires. It appears to be purposefully ambiguous here, indicating that behind the symbolical winds are divinely sent spirits (Jerome thought angels). Daniel 4:17 directly teaches that behind the rise and fall of nations is the ruling providence of God. Except as He holds the forces ("winds") in they would always be in commotion. This is why we should pray for peace.³⁷⁶

It is to be observed that the first three of the beasts—a lion, a bear, and a leopard—were all beasts with which residents of the Near East were familiar. Many references in the Old Testament let us know that all three of them (as well as the hippopotamus) were prevalent in the Jordan Valley and environs in ancient times. The fourth beast is abnormal, a destructive phenomenon like nothing ever seen in nature. This suggests the unnatural strength and ferocity of the final form of the Gentile power.

Tie origin or the four great beasts, "up from the sea," is interpreted as the earth in verse 17. The sea also indicates unrest,³⁷⁷ boisterous talk,³⁷⁸ and warfare.³⁷⁹ Jesus used the same figures in

³⁷⁰ II Tim. 3:16

³⁷¹ Lang, *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*,

³⁷² Dan. 7:2, ASV

³⁷³ cf. Rev. 7:1-3

³⁷⁴ Jer. 49:36

³⁷⁵ Jer. 51:1-3. Cf. Jer. 23:19; Zech. 6:1-6; 7:14

³⁷⁶ *vid.* I Tim. 2:1, 2

³⁷⁷ Is. 57:20

much the same way when he spoke of how at the time of his return there would be "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring."³⁸⁰

Again we should remind ourselves that the nations of earth and their governments, though ordained of God,³⁸¹ are never spoken of in complimentary terms in Scripture. They are regarded as being in Satan's control. In fact, Satan so claimed at the time of his tempting Jesus, and Jesus did not dispute his word—in fact Jesus' response appears to admit the Devil's claim to be true.³⁸² This is the world of First John, which the believer is not to love.³⁸³ It is the world that crucified the Savior³⁸⁴ and upon which the fury of God's judgments will someday be directed.³⁸⁵ This does not mean that we can get out of serving our nation nor that we should refuse to vote or hold public office. Daniel held very high offices in two kingdoms. It does mean that we should not be too hopeful, even as we pray for peace, that the world will ever know true peace until Jesus comes again. The student should direct his attention to the 24th chapter of Matthew for full development of this theme.

1. The first beast

The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand to upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. (Daniel 7:4)

The lion is a symbol of Babylon here, as also in Jeremiah 4:6-7. The "eagle's wings" speak of swiftness of movement, just as the lion pictures strength. The two symbols are brought together at II Samuel 1:23 where David laments of Saul and Jonathan: "They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions".³⁸⁶ Nebuchadnezzar's powerful conquests came mainly in the early years of his reign and were indeed accomplished swiftly. Plucking of the wings apparently speaks of an early end to expansion. The last part of the verse appears to be a direct reference to the experiences of Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest of the Babylonian kings, recorded in chapter four of our book.

2. The second beast

And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. (Daniel 7:5)

The bear has always been regarded high on the scale of strength among animals. Its strength and ferocity are prominent in almost every one of the 13 references to bears in the Bible.³⁸⁷ Its ponderous bulk (some bears weigh over half a ton) fits well the massive ancient Persian armies. Some of them are reported to have contained, counting supporting crews, as many as two-and-a-half million men. It is said that Xerxes invaded Greece with that many behind him. Duality of the Medo-Persian kingdom appears to be indicated by the fact that the two sides of the bear are indicated.³⁸⁸

³⁷⁸ Jer. 6:23; 39:42

³⁷⁹ Jer. 51:42; Rev. 17:15

³⁸⁰ Lu. 21:25

³⁸¹ Rom. 13:1ff

³⁸² Lu. 4:5-8. See Isa. 34:2; 40:15-17; Joel 3:2 in further study of the spiritual character of the nations.

³⁸³ I Jn. 2:15 ff., 5:19

³⁸⁴ I Cor. 2:8

³⁸⁵ II Pet. 3:10

³⁸⁶ cf. Jer. 49:19-22; Ezek. 17:3, 7, 12

³⁸⁷ vid. concordance

³⁸⁸ Compare the two arms, two breasts, etc. of the image of chapter two.

3. The third boast

After this I beheld, and lo, another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; and the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. (Daniel 7:6)

The leopard stands, like the belly and thighs of Nebuchadnezzar's dream-image, for the so-called Grecian kingdom of Alexander the Great and his successors.

The sinewy, lithe, swift leopard aptly stands both for the first great king of the empire, Alexander, and his kingdom. If Nebuchadnezzar moved with two wings, then Alexander moved with four. Alexander's kingdom unlike either the Persian or the Babylonian, soon become subdivided, as is indicated by the four heads. This is elaborated in chapters eight and eleven of Daniel.

Rulership passed to Babylon from Nineveh (Assyria) in 612 B.C.; from Babylon to Medo-Persia in about 539 B.C. (as described in chapter 5), from the Medo-Persians to Alexander late in the fourth century B.C. in a series of engagements in Asia Minor, Syria, and Mesopotamia.

Alexander's father, Philip, by warfare united Greece in 338 B.C. Upon his death two years later, his son succeeded him. During the 13 years of his reign (336 - 323 B.C.), Alexander performed some of the greatest feats of military valor known to man before or since. Tutored as a child by the great philosopher, Aristotle, and trained in feats of physical strength and skill by a stout father as well as in pagan Greek sexual immorality by an unchaste, half-crazy mother, he was quite a dynamic person. Blessed with great natural physical and mental powers he was a born leader of men. Crossing the Hellespont with an army of 35,000 (334 B.C.) he began his successful challenge of the Persians. With that small army, which followed him for another 12 years—the remainder of his entire natural life—he carved up several armies of the Persians, some of them close to a million strong. By that short career of conquest Alexander became master of Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, and vast areas east, north and southeast of the lands of his Babylonian and Persian predecessors.

The four heads of the leopard appear to stand for the four-fold division of his empire shortly after his death among four of his generals. One part (Thrace and Bithynia) went to Lysimachus; Syria and the eastern portions to Seleucus; Egypt to Ptolemy. Macedonia, his original kingdom, went Cassander. "Dominion" is said to have been "given unto" this monstrous leopard, and nothing could be closer to the exact truth. Nothing less than a special divine providence can account for such astounding conquests as were accomplished by this little man (he was short). Alexander could conquer about anything except himself—he died of dissipation (at least many historians think so) at Babylon, in the 32nd year of his age, 323 B.C.

4. The fourth beast

After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. (Daniel 7:7, 8)

The revealing angel picks out this beast, its ten horns and the little horn among them for special explanatory treatment later in chapter seven, thus cursory attention only is necessary

here. Just as in the dream-image of chapter four, the fourth stage of world dominion is the Roman. Inasmuch as this stage of dominion is presented as prevailing until the destruction of Antichrist and the establishment of the eternal kingdom of Christ, it must be regarded as continuing in some sense today, and as operating in a very lively way at the very consummation of the present age. Observe that a ten-fold division of this kingdom, as was suggested by Daniel chapter two, and as verified by Revelation 17:3 ff., is indicated here by ten horns. The little horn is identified with the Antichrist of the last days later in the chapter.

5. The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, ten thousands times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set and the books were opened. (Daniel 7:9, 10)

"Till the thrones were cast down" should be rendered "till thrones were set in position." With this small explanation a truly magnificent scene flashes up before us. This is the awful Majesty, the Godhead, sitting to judge and bring to an end the course of human government in the hands of wicked men. This is the great vista to which all of the book of Revelation from chapter four onward to the twentieth chapter is devoted. The several thrones are for the Almighty and for his four and twenty elders.³⁸⁹ "Ancient of days"—the very aged one—is none other than "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy".³⁹⁰ The whiteness of his hair suggests holiness. The fire of his throne and the "river of fire" coming from his throne suggest judgment. The wheels remind the Bible-versed reader of the magnificent vision of the Godhead in Ezekiel's earliest chapters. The thousand thousands and the ten thousands times ten thousand standing at reverent attention show with what respect God is had in heaven, and yet to be had on earth.

I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. (Daniel 7:11, 12)

When the majesty of the Godhead appeared, Daniel thought again of the blasphemous words of the "pipsqueak" horn and of its big mouth,³⁹¹ in other words, of the blasphemies of antichrist. What is to become of him and his supporters? He and the final form of gentile world domination of which he is head are to be destroyed forever. A full description, with lurid details, is provided the reader in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation. "The beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army (the returning Christ with his saints). And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone: and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, even with the sword which came forth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh".³⁹²

"The rest of the beasts" are the first three of the series: the winged lion, the bear, and the

³⁸⁹ Rev. 4:2-4

³⁹⁰ Isa. 57:15

³⁹¹ Dan. 7:20

³⁹² Rev. 19:19-21

four-winged, four-headed leopard. That "their lives were prolonged" etc. means only that each lived out its time in world dominion in accordance with the plan of God. It does not mean that they survive the fourth kingdom in any sense. So agree most commentators.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13, 14)

These two verses constitute one of the most important links in the Bible between the Old Testament and the New. Practically everything in this verse the New Testament claims for the one known therein as Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus' favorite name for himself was "the Son of man." He is reported as referring to himself by this name no less than 27 times in the book of Luke alone. The Aramaic of Daniel 7:13, to be sure, may be read simply "one like a son of man"—i.e., a human being. But, the fact remains that Jesus applied it to himself sometimes apparently in the special sense of the *one representative man*. Paul calls him "the last Adam" and pointedly connects the phrase with heavenly origin.³⁹³ In this context the phrase implies, if not deity, then close connection with deity. His coming "with the clouds of heaven" has similar connections. Jesus describes his second advent as "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory".³⁹⁴ He could hardly have more specifically interpreted Daniel 7:13 if he had quoted the verse. Those clouds were seen at his ascension³⁹⁵ and will be seen again when he returns.³⁹⁶ The references here to his "kingdom"³⁹⁷ are unmistakably the basis for our Lord's frequent references to his kingdom—"of heaven" as in these verses. Again he could scarcely have more directly interpreted the Old Testament and related his own mission to its fulfillment if he had specifically cited Daniel. When Jesus came announcing the "kingdom of heaven",³⁹⁸ the Jews understood that he was speaking of the same kingdom Daniel was talking about. Granting that there is great difficulty in interpreting the precise meaning of "the kingdom of heaven" or the "kingdom of God" in the New Testament, it ought to be recognized by all that interpretation of "the kingdom of heaven" or "the kingdom of God" in the New Testament must begin right here at Daniel 7:14.

It should be clear to men today that the final manifestation of the kingdom has not yet arrived. The details of this passage cannot be applied to conditions or events of the present age. The arrogant beasts are still running things and the loud-mouthed, blaspheming "little horn" has not even yet appeared, even though he has had many similar predecessors.

The kingdom predicted here is the theme of dozens of chapters in the Old Testament prophets. It is of major interest in the prayer our Lord taught his disciples: "Thy kingdom

³⁹³ I Cor. 15:45-47

³⁹⁴ Matt. 24:30

³⁹⁵ Acts 1:9

³⁹⁶ Acts 1:11; I Thess. 4:17; Rev. 1:7

³⁹⁷ *vid.* also Dan. 7:22, 27

³⁹⁸ Mt. 4:17, 23, *et. Al.*

come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Its establishment is the goal of history when "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign forever and ever".³⁹⁹ Now would be a good time to stop and sing the great "Messiah," but we must hasten on.

The student should now read the concluding portion of the visions, before considering other matters.

6. The War of the "little horn" with the "saints"

I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. (Daniel 7:21, 22)

A practical matter and a doctrinal matter are each suggested.

- i. The right kind of people are at last to come into their kingdom.

Those are known as "saints", which really means, "holy People" are they whom God has chosen to be in charge at last.

- ii. The victory is only temporary. God is still on his throne.

Careless came our great Avenger, history's pages but record
One dost grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and Thy word.
Truth forever on the scaffold; wrong forever on the throne!
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and beyond the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadows, keeping watch above his own.

Specifically and doctrinally considered, however, this passage is affirming that God's ancient holy people, the Hebrews, scattered and oppressed at the time of the prophecy, are yet to receive their kingdom on earth as promised to a whole succession of prophets from Abraham to the Apostle Paul. Daniel 8:24 is clear that the "holy people" are the Jews. C. A. Auberlen, though writing over 100 years ago expressed the matter precisely as follows.

By the 'people of the saints of the Most High,' to whom dominion is then to be given (Daniel 7:18-27), Daniel evidently could only understand the people of Israel, as distinguished from the heathen nations and kingdoms which were to rule up till then (2:44); nor have we, according to strict exegesis, a right to apply the expression to any other nations; hence we cannot apply it immediately to the church...The prophet's words refer to the re-establishment of the kingdom to Israel, concerning which the disciples asked our Savior immediately before His ascension; and our Lord, though refusing to reveal to them the date or chronology did in no way negative the subject matter of their question, and thereby confirmed it (Acts 2:6, 7).⁴⁰⁰

It is true, of course, that the New Testament many times affirms that Christian believers of this age already share in a present kingdom of God⁴⁰¹ and shall yet reign with Christ in a future kingdom.⁴⁰² We do affirm, however, that such does not appear to be what Daniel is

³⁹⁹ Rev. 11:15

⁴⁰⁰ Auberlen, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the revelation of St. John*

⁴⁰¹ Col. 1:13

⁴⁰² Rev. 22:3-27

talking about.

D. The Method of interpreting Daniel's Visions (7:15, 16)

I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. (Daniel 7:15, 16)

This is one of the really strange occurrences of the Bible. A man has a dream. He sees strange wild beasts. He sees one "ancient of days" (i.e., very old). He sees a Son of man (i.e., a human being). He sees myriads upon myriads of angels. Troubled to know what was going on in his head he, in his vision state, approached one of the visionary angels to ask him the meaning of it all. Whereupon this visionary angel turns out to be not a vision at all, but a real angel, Gabriel the archangel.⁴⁰³ Throughout the rest of the book, whenever Daniel receives prophetic visions, Gabriel is at hand to explain their meanings, that is, insofar as they are explained.

This is briefly presented by Daniel, and I give it only passing attention here, but it is an important feature of our book.

E. Details of Interpretation of Daniel's Visions (7:17-20, 23-27)

1. The lesser emphasis: the four beasts in relation to God's kingdom

These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever. (Daniel 7:17, 13)

The lines of interpretation of the passage, as paralleling the four stages of Gentile dominion, succeeded by Christ's kingdom as predicted in chapter two I have already. There is, however, another respectable evangelical view of the four beasts. Taking their cue from the angel's statement that these beasts are "four kings, which shall arise," and observing the Babylonian kingdom was already in the position of world dominion, a minority of interpreters insist that all four kingdoms are "eschatological," i.e., related to the final form of dominion just before the return of the Lord. Holding that the visions do not go again over the ground of the dream-image prophecy of chapter two they assert that this chapter relates to how in the future the kingdom at the time of the "feet and toes" of the image will develop. The arguments furnished by supporters⁴⁰⁴ are very convincing. Since in any view the last beast of the four is that final form of Gentile dominion and the chapter devotes major space to it, these gentlemen agree with most of the expositions presented here.⁴⁰⁵ Lang says:

Thus the vision of the beasts shows the political movements by which the feet and toes of the image will develop. It is not a repetition of the whole image, but an expansion in detail of that final stage of world-empire which is to be the culmination of "man's day" and is a chief subject of prophecy.

2. The greater emphasis: the final form of the fourth beast in relation to the kingdom of God.

Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass, and stamped the

⁴⁰³ cf. 8:16, 9:21

⁴⁰⁴ chiefly Sir Robert Anderson and G. H. Lang

⁴⁰⁵ *Vid. The Coming Prince*, Anderson and *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*, Lang.

residue with his feet. (Daniel 7:19)

Thus he said, the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon the earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. (Daniel 7:23)

This corresponds with the statements in chapter two concerning this fourth kingdom that as iron it would break in pieces and subdue, shattering in pieces and bruising.⁴⁰⁶ It is evidently that system of world government which was introduced by Rome in the last two centuries before the Christian era, and became supreme at the conquest of Egypt by Caesar in the middle of the middle of the first century B.C. The system prevails today in what is called western civilization, and continuing to expand daily, may be expected to be in vigorous condition at the very end of our age.

Without attempting to predict precisely what political or geographical shape it will assume, there are many reasons for believing some "Romish" form of empire will prevail till Jesus comes again. (1) Chapter two teaches that the fourth of these kingdoms will be in existence until violently destroyed by Christ at his coming. This has not yet occurred. (2) The ten-fold form of the kingdom is the form of the kingdom at its destruction.⁴⁰⁷ Such a form of world dominion does not seem yet to have occurred in history. (3) The similarity of this fourth beast to the beast of Revelation 13:1, 2 and of 17:3-8 suggests identity. John's prophecy is of a kingdom to be destroyed by Christ at his second advent. John's beast, like Daniel's, comes out of the sea,⁴⁰⁸ both have ten horns,⁴⁰⁹ both are blasphemous,⁴¹⁰ and both are in connection with a leopard, a bear, and a lion.⁴¹¹ John looking backward on the three saw them in reverse order from Daniel's.

And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. (Daniel 7:20)

And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. (Daniel 7:24)

The verses are saying that ten horns are ten kings who shall rise in the final stage of the fourth kingdom, corresponding to the ten-toed stage of the image, and who shall reign contemporaneously in the end-time as is prophesied likewise in Revelation 17:12 ff.

The little horn is the coming Antichrist. This is the common view. All interpreters, Jewish, evangelicals, radical critics, and men of about every kind of persuasion concerning "last things" agree that he is some kind of consummate antichrist. The radical critics think Daniel seven was written at the time of Antiochus Epiphanies (about 165 B.C.) and that the author supposed that Antiochus the sacrilegious anti-Semitic tyrant of Syria who desecrated the Jewish temple would be the final wicked oppressor before the coming of Messiah's victorious kingdom, with the Jews as its elite. They also think the author of Daniel to be mistaken!

⁴⁰⁶ Dan. 2:40

⁴⁰⁷ Dan. 7:7, 8, 24

⁴⁰⁸ Rev. 13:1

⁴⁰⁹ Rev. 13:1

⁴¹⁰ Rev. 13:5

⁴¹¹ Rev. 13:2

Let us read the rest of the material about him here and then summarize the information given about this one called by Paul the "man of sin," "the son of perdition"⁴¹² and "that wicked [one]".⁴¹³

And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. (Daniel 7:24, 25)

a. The Antichrist will arise

The Antichrist shall arise after the ten-fold form of the final world dominion has developed. The "little horn" was observed by Daniel after he had "considered" the ten horns awhile ⁴¹⁴ and he is said to come "after them".⁴¹⁵ He will evidently not create a confederacy of ten kings but will absorb such a confederacy.

b. He is just another king

He is only "another...horn"—just another king. For all that Satan may energize him he is mortal and will die. These matters are made clear in the New Testament, *viz.*:

"And the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and his great authority";⁴¹⁶
"And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan".⁴¹⁷

c. He starts as a little horn

He begins as a "little horn." We may expect him to be obscure at first, not bursting upon the world with a glare of Satanic splendor, but winning his way gradually.

d. His march to world dominion

He will begin his march to world dominion by first subduing three other kings of the ten-fold alliance, for "there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots".⁴¹⁸ In verse 24 Gabriel adds that "he shall subdue three kings." This is to be the beginning of world conquest. What Hitler only dreamed about; what Napoleon unsuccessfully impoverished the whole of Europe to accomplish, this man will really do. "And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour. These have one mind, and they shall give their power and authority unto the beast.... For God did put in their hearts to do his mind, and to come to one mind, and

⁴¹² II Thess. 2:3

⁴¹³ II Thess. 2:8

⁴¹⁴ Dan. 7:8

⁴¹⁵ Dan. 7:24

⁴¹⁶ Rev. 13:2b

⁴¹⁷ II Thess. 2:8, 9a

⁴¹⁸ Dan. 7:8

to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished.⁴¹⁹

e. He is unique

Though he is only "another" horn yet there will be something unique about him, for "he shall be diverse from the first"—i.e., the ten kings. He will indeed have a different form of government. His will be the most absolute dictatorship the world has known. He shall enforce worship of himself⁴²⁰ and shall impose sanctions successfully that have only been tried before. He shall cause "all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their forehead: and that no man might buy or sell, save he had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name".⁴²¹ This appears to be a requirement of some tattooed mark or "brand" for all who wish to stay alive. This is secular state authority gone wild.⁴²² He will also be "diverse" personally. Some of the strangest sounding statements in the Bible are about him, almost all of them cryptic remarks, still not fully understood. His "coming is after the working of Satan with all power, and signs and lying wonders, and with deceivableness".⁴²³ He will have ability to do "great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth".⁴²⁴ Perhaps, certain have theorized, he may appear to be a man risen from the dead.⁴²⁵ Some of these specialties appear to be the property of another evil person associated with him.⁴²⁶

If something different by way of a king is what the "earth dwellers" of that day want, this man, indeed, will provide it! Perhaps this is what the "now generation" is unconsciously waiting for.

f. He is intelligent

Antichrist is to be unusually intelligent, or perhaps the meaning is commanding personality. This is suggested not only by the many statements about his amazing career, but by the information that the horn will have "eyes like the eyes of a man",⁴²⁷ for human eyes can tell a lot about the intelligence of their human possessors.

g. He is an orator

He will also be an orator of ability—he had "a mouth speaking great things".⁴²⁸ He will doubtless be a self-exalted braggart—suggested by translating "a mouth speaking big things"—but probably the vision intends to suggest persuasive ability. The invention of radio and television have enlarged greatly the value of persuasive oratory for political aspirants. Many successful politicians, good and bad, ancient and modern have employed strong oratory with success. One thinks of the power exerted by Churchill and F. D. Roosevelt through their broadcast speeches. Both Hitler and Mussolini rode to power on waves of oratory, as those of us old enough to have witnessed their careers will never forget.

⁴¹⁹ Rev. 17:12, 13, 17

⁴²⁰ Rev. 13:15; II Thess. 2:4

⁴²¹ Rev. 13:16, 17

⁴²² Karl Barth

⁴²³ II Thess. 2:9, 10

⁴²⁴ Rev. 13:14

⁴²⁵ cf. Rev. 13:3

⁴²⁶ Rev. 13:1, 2 cf. 13:11 ff

⁴²⁷ Dan. 7:8

⁴²⁸ Dan. 7:8

h. He will look the part

His personal appearance will correspond with his position—he will “look the part” as the say in the theater, for Daniel observed that “his look was more stout than his fellows”.⁴²⁹ We might better translate, “his appearance more impressive than that of his contemporaries.” In this he will be in great contrast to the true Christ who “hath no [kingly] form no [regal] splendor that we would desire him”.⁴³⁰ Jesus was a man who did “not strive nor cause his voice to be heard in the street”—no noisy demagogue.⁴³¹ Likewise the Apostle Paul, though acknowledged to be mighty in his words, was regarded as being mean in appearance. This man, we may be sure, will be dressed for his part and will have a well coached and staged entrance upon the platform of world affairs. Modern professionally managed sales and political campaigns suggest what a great show this man may really stage on the platform of world-wide radio and television.

i. He will be a blasphemer

He will be a blasphemer, speaking “great words against the Most High” (v. 25), as John writes, “speaking great things and blasphemies...against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven” (Rev. 13:5, 6). Neither John nor Daniel were given to foresee the general victory of anti-supernatural attitudes in the world today, but it seems that these blasphemies will be some consummate form of the secularistic, naturalistic philosophy steadily gaining ground in our day. Our western culture has become accustomed to it. We even crowd God out of daily speech. How much “naturally” we say, “It rained” than to say “God gave rain.” The school teacher of our day finds it most difficult to teach anything about God in classes at the public school. Perhaps there is coming a day when the teacher will be forbidden to go to a Bible-believing church on Sunday too. Already suggestions not very far from that are appearing in the educational philosophical journals that perhaps “theistic faith” is incompatible with either science or education.

j. He establishes his kingdom

Antichrist will seek to establish his kingdom and himself as the beginning of a new epoch: he shall “think to change times and laws”.⁴³² One can safely imagine that even dating a letter as such and such a year A.D., the Year of our Lord, will be personally offensive to this “man of sin.” Like the French revolutionists he may seek to abolish the traditional week and the year of 12 months. Marriage and other common civil laws will likely come in for attack. He will, however, only “seek” to make these changes. Some of these institutions, like the week, are so deeply written into the very structure of God’s creation that they cannot be eradicated. He will have no more success than the “Encyclopedists” and the “Bolsheviks” have had in this regard.

In verse 25 comes a most important transitional statement—the statement that changes the subject matter of Daniel as well as the language of his book. This beast, we read “shall wear out the saints [the holy people] of the most High. God’s people, the holy people of Israel, become now the subject of the book onward to the end, and accordingly at the end of this vision the language shifts from Aramaic back to Hebrew, left off at Daniel 2:4.

⁴²⁹ Dan. 7:20

⁴³⁰ Isa. 53:2, 3

⁴³¹ Isa. 42:2

⁴³² Dan. 7:25

k. He will seek to destroy God's people

Antichrist will seek to destroy God's people, especially the Jews, bringing on their Great Tribulation. This writer feels that when Jesus speaks of the "elect" as coming into a great trial immediately before his coming, the sufferers of the trials are not Jews, as such. He quite obviously is referring to his disciples, to Christian believers, who will be living on earth when at last the sad events just before the end of the age shall come.⁴³³ But that is not Daniel's revelation. These words should be read in connection with the opening verses of Jeremiah 30 where "the time of Jacob's trouble" ⁴³⁴ is described in an eschatological context and Daniel12:1 where a similar unique "time of trouble" for Daniel's people comes under prophetic exposition.

l. His power is unrestricted for a time

The period during which Antichrist shall have unrestricted power is limited to a brief period. What appears to be best understood as three and one-half years ⁴³⁵ is elaborated by John to be 42 months.⁴³⁶ Daniel later refers to the same as a period of one-half a "seven".⁴³⁷ This limited period of time is a matter of great interest and of elaborate treatment in the Bible. Later chapters of Daniel will provide opportunity to study it further.

m. He shall come to his end

But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. (Daniel 7:26, 27)

Two words herein call for some explanation: "kingdom and dominion." "Kingdom" is derived from the word for king, and is pronounced *malkûth*. It may refer either to rulership, the act of ruling; to the right of rulership or sovereignty; or to the realms, that is the sphere, in which rule is exercised. Sometimes one, sometimes another of these ideas is paramount. "Dominion" is *sholtag*, related to the Arabic word, sultan, used of rulers in Mohammedan countries. It is a synonym with almost exactly the same range of meanings.

Antichrist shall come to his end. He whose name is "The Word of God" shall destroy this loathsome beast with the "breath of his lips." His armies shall likewise be destroyed.⁴³⁸ There shall follow a Millennium during which these poor persecuted people of God, the Hebrews, shall inherit their promise of peace in possession of their ancient land of Canaan.⁴³⁹ In their resurrection bodies the saints of the church age shall join with them to "reign with him [our Lord Jesus] a thousand years".⁴⁴⁰ This thousand-year period is only an initial stage of this coming kingdom, for his kingdom is "that which shall not be destroyed" and shall be possessed by his saints "forever, even forever and ever".⁴⁴¹

⁴³³ See Mt. 24, Luke 21, Mark 13

⁴³⁴ Jer. 30:7

⁴³⁵ Dan. 7:25

⁴³⁶ Rev. 13:5, cf. 11:2

⁴³⁷ Dan. 9:27; *vid.* also Dan. 12:7, 11, 12

⁴³⁸ Rev. 19:11 *ad fin*

⁴³⁹ *vid.* Isa. 2:1-5; Jer. 31:22-40

⁴⁴⁰ Rev. 20:1-6

⁴⁴¹ Dan. 7:14, 18 cf. 2:44

3. The end of the vision

Two expressions of the prophet help us to respond properly to his writings: the visions of my head troubled me ⁴⁴² and "my cogitations much troubled me".⁴⁴³ Daniel began to be "upset" when he first saw the visions. He was still unsettled and disturbed when the angel had finished his explanations. The readers of the chapter, for all the light that is shed on the course of the present age, are upset too. Those who wish to teach this chapter to others will be especially upset when they try their best to get some of it across and discover that the callous, the shallow, the impudent, and the lazy simply do not care for such a heavy diet. The temptation just to skip it for lesser fare must be resisted. There will be some whose interest will be a spell-bound kind of fascination. Let us all be like Daniel ⁴⁴⁴ who "kept the matter in my heart" and like Mary, our Lord's mother, who in a similar quandary "kept all these things, and pondered them in here heart".⁴⁴⁵

F. Conclusion

Since a particular view, heretofore referred to as Premillennialism, has been assumed in this exposition, I feel that I have a duty to mention competing views and to present some of the main reasons why I adopt the view I do. Most postmillennialists, who expect the Savior to return after a period when Christianity shall have prevailed over all the earth for a thousand years (i.e., for the Millennium), feel that the "little horn" or Antichrist, is either the Pope or the Roman Church. The victory of Christ's kingdom is thought to be accomplished gradually during the present age. Most contemporary Amillennialists feel that the Millennium of Revelation 20 is the present reign of the deceased saints in heaven with Christ, and that at the end of this age they will come with Christ to destroy the beast, whom they, with us, feel to be a real gentile king. Their view of the course of the present age, when good and evil grow together, is similar to our own. There are at least five reasons, all drawn from the context of this chapter, why I (as most premillennarians) feel these competing views should be rejected in favor of the one adopted herein.⁴⁴⁶

- i. The kingdom of Messiah is clearly to follow the appearance of Antichrist, and his destruction, events still future. These events are in near connection with Christ's return. This is the strongest reason, and appears to make both Amillennialism and Postmillennialism impossible.
- ii. The prophecy requires that the visible kingdom of Christ, as considered in Daniel seven, follow the kingdoms of the Gentiles—they are not to be at any period contemporary. This would eliminate the amillennial scheme.
- iii. The visible kingdom of "the most High" succeeds a final form of the fourth Gentile dominion (a ten-fold one) which has not yet appeared. John, apparently, predicted it as still future in his own day, and the visible kingdom of Christ is then yet future today.
- iv. The visible kingdom of Messiah to be established, as predicted in the chapter, appears to take over the realms of the earlier kingdoms, and to be, as many other predictions specify, one of outward power and glory. The present reign of Christ in

⁴⁴² Dan. 7:15

⁴⁴³ Dan. 7:28

⁴⁴⁴ Dan. 7:28

⁴⁴⁵ Lk. 2:19

⁴⁴⁶ These and other arguments are treated in length in the author's volume, *Daniel and the Latter Days, a Study in Millennialism*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954, 1964, especially Appendix II).

the hearts of believers or in heaven hardly meets these specifications. Christ's realm on earth, at the present time, appears to be one where his spiritual subjects continue to suffer and to bear crosses.

- v. In some special sense the kingdom of Messiah is going to be Jewish, as the language of this chapter requires. This is not true of any present kingdom of Christ on earth, except that the Savior Himself, and the original founders of the church (apostles) were Jewish.

VIII. Chapter Eight: A Ram, a Goat, and a Little Horn

A. Introduction

One who becomes acquainted with the whole Bible will discover a great deal of repetition therein. If he is a thoughtful person, seeking to learn the will of God in everything, he will react in a positive manner to the repetition. Mothers, in order to teach their children, have a way of repeating small but important matters. God also, for didactic purposes, repeats his message in the Word. The entire history of the Old Testament is covered twice in the Old Testament: once in Genesis through II Kings, a second time in the books of Chronicles. The life of Christ is presented four times in the four Gospels. The prophets of the Old Testament repeat one another in their predictions, too. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel present similar oracles against several of the nations round about them and the downfall of Assyria is predicted many times in Isaiah alone.

Yet none of the repetitions is an *identical* repetition. Each presentation is from a different point of view; new details are added; new emphases are made. Those who have read the four Gospels carefully are made well-aware of this.

Chapter eight of Daniel is a third prophetic discussion of two of the four great kingdoms of the Gentiles: the second (Persian) and the third (Greek). The breasts and arms of the image prophecy of chapter four, the second beast (a bear) of chapter seven, and now the two-horned ram of chapter eight are all figures of the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. The belly and thighs of the image, the four-headed leopard of chapter seven, and the one-horned buck goat of the present study are figures of the coming kingdom of Greece, under Alexander.

Chapter eight, however, reminds the student of an important fact about the whole Bible—that it presents the story of the preparation for and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who said that the Seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head⁴⁴⁷ laid the real foundation of Old Testament and New Testament interpretation at Genesis 12:1-3 when he said to Abraham, "I will make of thee a great nation...and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The Bible thenceforth is the story of Abraham, that is, of his family. At the time Daniel wrote that family was in dispersion among the nations. Shortly, a representative group was to return to their God-given country to restore their commonwealth, in vassalage to the Persian king, Cyrus. In another two centuries their overlord would change, that is, the Grecian kings would take the place of the Persian kings. In the period of their submission to the Grecian kings a sad crisis of affliction would arise. This affliction, involving conflict with a hateful, devilish, Grecian king was to be a kind of miniature of a final conflict of Israel with Antichrist in the last days. It is to inform His people against the day of this conflict with the Grecian king that the chapter is directed. We, in this age, look over the shoulder of God's people Israel, as it were, to observe what God said would come to them. Then we will look also at what historians tell us really happened. Our historical sources will be mainly certain books of the Apocrypha—chiefly I Maccabees—and the writings of the first century historian, Josephus.

The Christian has a unique opportunity herein to study a bit of New Testament backgrounds in the inter-testamental period. The state of affairs revealed on the face of the gospel records at the time our Lord was born is not that of the books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the book of Malachi—the latest Old Testament books. It is a situation which developed in the four hundred years following cessation of the voice of prophecy, when there were no proper persons to provide authentic inspired Scripture. That is why we must go to the predictions of Scripture about those

⁴⁴⁷ Gen. 3:15

"silent centuries" and to non-Scriptural sources (the Apocrypha, and other histories). As an outstanding example of the illumination therein for New Testament understanding is the fact that the origin of the "feast of Dedication" ⁴⁴⁸ lies in the inter-testamental history predicted in this eighth chapter of Daniel.

Furthermore, the faithful watch-care of the Father God over his ancient people Israel is no less than his faithful care of his people today. Faith will be immeasurably strengthened by understanding these things. And, since the chapter provides a prediction by way of type of sufferings of believers under Antichrist yet to come, it could be of utmost pertinence. It all depends on the manner in which God may choose to answer the Psalmist's question, "How long?" and when He may choose to answer the church's prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

B. The Historical Introduction (8:1)

In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first. (Daniel 8:1)

The third year of Belshazzar, according to evidences now available, would likely have been about 551 R.C. A vision had come to Daniel two years earlier, the vision of the four beasts and the Ancient of Days.⁴⁴⁹ Considering the fact that this would have been some years before the sacrilegious feast of Belshazzar and the end of the Babylonian kingdom (539 B.C.) it may account for Daniel's eclipse as a royal advisor during Belshazzar's reign, for no monarch would likely care to exalt the man who was prophesying his own doom. On the other hand, it may be that Daniel waited for some time to publish his record of the vision. We may suppose, however, that he made an immediate record of it as he had of the earlier vision.⁴⁵⁰

Many of the prophetic oracles of the Old Testament are carefully dated in relation to the reigns of the prevailing kings. Some are not. A careful examination of the historical background suggested by the date will usually uncover something significant for interpretation of the oracle so dated. In this case the date, more than ten years before the end of the seventy years of servitude to Babylon,⁴⁵¹ was one when the people of Israel would have been needing encouragement to hope for restoration to their land. It was information which Daniel might have hopefully shared privately with his people to give them cheer.

C. The Visions (8:2-14)

1. The scene of his visions (8:2)

And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai. (Daniel 8:2)

There has been a good bit of discussion whether Daniel was in Shushan in vision, transported there in spirit only, or if he was literally there on business of the king⁴⁵² and while there had the vision. The best-known parallels to transportation "in the spirit" are those of Ezekiel, who travelled from Mesopotamia to Palestine "in the spirit"⁴⁵³ and of Paul, taken to the "third

⁴⁴⁸ Jn. 10:22

⁴⁴⁹ cf. Dan. 7:1

⁴⁵⁰ *vid.* Dan. 7:1

⁴⁵¹ Jer. 25:11, 12

⁴⁵² cf. Dan. 8:27

⁴⁵³ *vid.* Ex. 8:1-3

heaven".⁴⁵⁴ Jeremiah may be cited as an example of a prophet who literally in the flesh, made a long trip to carry out symbolical prophetic activities,⁴⁵⁵ though there are interpreters who think that Jeremiah's trip also was "in the spirit." As far as Daniel's experience is concerned, the language of verse 2 seems clearly to state that it was not in the flesh but only in the vision he was in Shushan. A literal translation clarifies this even further *viz.* "And I saw and it came to pass as I saw, that I was in Shushan...."

Elam at various times was an independent nation. At the time of the prophecy it was subject to Babylon. At the time of the Persian Empire, predicted by the vision, it was a province of the Empire, and its capital city, Shushan, usually spelled Susa, was one of several capitals of the Empire. Susa was not an important place in the third year of Belshazzar, but this city, only 250 miles due east of Babylon, became the Persian capital nearest to Babylon in a few short years. This appears to be why the scene of the vision is that place.

"The palace," then would not have been a Babylonian structure but a Persian one, perhaps not yet in literal existence at the time Daniel saw it, like the New Jerusalem of John's Patmos vision.⁴⁵⁶ The word may also be rendered "fortress," but since palaces and castles of kings in ancient times were forts as well, either translation is correct. The same ambiguity exists in words for *palace*, *castle*, and *fort* in several modern European languages.

Josephus is the source of an interesting story about Daniel. After his deliverance from the fiery furnace, so he, Daniel built a fortress in Ecbatana of Media which lies about 300 miles E. NE. of Babylon. Josephus claims that in his own time the building was still being used as a mausoleum for the kings of Media, Persia, and Parthia. If this report is factual, then Daniel evidently believed his own prophecy, and wanted a residence in a capital (for so Ecbatana was) of the coming Persian Empire.⁴⁵⁷

Travelers of the nineteenth century have given extensive descriptions of the ruined site of Susa. The remains may still be seen, if identification be correct, scattered for ten or twelve miles. Among these is a place known locally as Daniel's tomb. A hundred years ago it was observed that:

"It is a small building, but sufficient to shelter some dervishes [members of a Mohammedan religious order] who watch the remains of the prophet, and are supported by the alms of pious pilgrims... The dervishes are now the only inhabitants of Susa; and every species of wild beast roams at large over the spot on which some of the proudest palaces ever raised by human art once stood".⁴⁵⁸

Several modern excavations have been made at ancient Shushan (Susa), known to the local Arabs now as *Shush*.

"The palace"—granting that Daniel has reference to the great palace which the Persian kings were to build—was truly magnificent. Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of Esther (486-465 B.C.), was its builder. There Esther would have lived.⁴⁵⁹ Covering over 2½ acres, the palace included a magnificent throne-room in which were 36 fluted columns, each 67 feet high, all together

⁴⁵⁴ II Cor. 12:2 ff

⁴⁵⁵ Jer. 13:1-7

⁴⁵⁶ Rev. 20, 21

⁴⁵⁷ The claim of Josephus is probably incorrect.

⁴⁵⁸ Quoted by Barnes, *Commentary*.

⁴⁵⁹ Esther 1:3

supporting a ceiling of the cedars of Lebanon. Capitals on the pillars were formed of

"...the heads and shoulders of oxen, placed back to back. The cornices and friezes on the interior of the room had decorations of colored glazed bricks which were arranged in the form of rosettes, lions, men, and other attractive patterns".⁴⁶⁰

The archaeological finds from Susa are displayed in the Louvre. It should be added that most of the great events of the book of Esther took place at this palace in Shushan.⁴⁶¹

One further geographical notice, "by the river of Ulai," calls for some attention. Though this river is not mentioned in Esther, it is mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions relating to Susa. The Greeks (whose spelling of Ulai is fairly close—*Eulaeus*) report that Alexander sailed down this stream to the Persian Gulf. For many years geographers wondered how Alexander could have done this, for Ulai was usually identified with a canal in the region. About a century ago it was discovered that a now extinct branch of a large river flowed near Shushan. It was likely on this river branch that Daniel was situated in his vision.

These data provide further evidence that Daniel was written by the man whose name the book bears, at the time he, himself, claims, not as certain irreverent critics claim, by a Palestinian Jew of the second century B. C.

2. The vision of a ram (8:3, 4)

Then I lifted up mine eyes and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high but one was higher than the other and the higher came up last. (Daniel 8:3)

The Hebrew word for ram, *'ăyīl*, is derived from a verb which means to be in front. In both domestic and wild state a flock of sheep moves with the strongest male in front. So the word was a natural term for human leaders and kings.

It is not necessary that there be any historic connection between the symbols used in the vision and the countries involved. As in chapter seven the horns stand both for kings and kingdoms. Here the duality of the Medo-Persian dominion is indicated by the two horns. Their union is indicated by the ram itself. The fact that the older power, the Median, had been superseded by the younger, the Persian, is indicated by the fact that though the shorter horn, it had appeared earlier than the other. The Medians are mentioned with great frequency in ancient records. They came to special international note by joining with the Babylonians under Nabopolassar, first king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, in 612 B. C. to destroy the Assyrian power at Nineveh.

Herodotus reports tales about Cyrus to the effect that he was of mixed Median and Persian ancestry, and has a fascinating story about his being reared in Persia incognito. Whatever his manner, of origin, it was under Cyrus' leadership that the Persians became masters of the Medes in the coalition. Cyrus had been a subject king under the authority of the Median king, Astyages. In his province of Persia he improved his opportunities and consolidated his forces. The capital he built at Pasargadae, about 25 miles northeast of Persepolis, the older capital, was a great palace-fortress still impressive today after passage of 2500 years. In 553 B. C. he rebelled and in became master of the Medes and Persians when the Medes betrayed their

⁴⁶⁰ Free, *Archaeology and Bible History*

⁴⁶¹ *vid.* Esther 1:2

king into his hands. He then took over Ecbatana, the Median capital city. It is this bit of ancient history that Daniel prophesied in the verse before us.

And I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but did according to his will, and became great. (Daniel 8:4)

Northward. The Hebrew word "northward"⁴⁶² simply means "the unknown." Perhaps the cold winds and fierce peoples who seemed always to come from that way inspired a fear of northern parts, then as now.

Most of two books of Herodotus' Histories is devoted to the narrative summarized in this brief prophecy. Some of these conquests took place before Cyrus captured Babylon, some afterward. Some were accomplished by the great Cyrus, some by his son Cambyses. To the northwest (where the first victories came) were chiefly Lydia, and later to the north, the rest of Asia Minor and the Caspian regions. West were Syria and Palestine (after Babylon and Mesopotamia). To the south of Palestine were regions in Africa, of which the most important was Egypt. It is interesting to note the East is not mentioned as a direction of Cyrus' conquests. Cyrus and his son Cambyses who succeeded him were irresistible. No kingdom could stand against them. Indeed they did what they willed and that quite despotically. Their Empire became the richest of all empires of antiquity. By means of those riches, in later decades, they bought the submission of the several Greek states in Asia minor and about the Aegean Sea and the subversion of others. No important set-back took place until a determined little army of Athenians under Miltiades defeated Darius at Marathon in central Greece and sent him packing home (499 B.C.). When ten years later the vainglorious Xerxes came with both an army and a navy, the Greeks whipped him at sea in a naval battle at Salamis in the Gulf of Aegina (near Athens). Naval warfare was the Greek major forte. Xerxes should have known better than to try. The famous little band of Spartans, led by Themistocles, at the same time held off the might of Persia at the pass of Thermopylae long enough to prevent their mastery of Greece.

But the ram did "become great." The whole world still remembers its greatness and tries to imitate it. The oriental splendor of later Muslim-Arab and Muslim-Turkish courts was in imitation of the Persian court manners and traditions. Perhaps the same may be said of the Byzantine court.

3. The Vision of the he goat (8:5)

...as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. (Daniel 8:5)

The Hebrew words for directions were all graphic. That for the west, though frequently simply "the sea"⁴⁶³ from the fact the Mediterranean Sea was the western border of Palestine, is here *mā-arabh*, a very strange word indeed. It is derived from the word *'erebh* for evening which was in turn from a verb meaning to enter. Since the sun enters night in the west the idea of "entering-of-the-sun" is the meaning of this word for west.

By now everyone will have observed that both the animals of this chapter are largely

⁴⁶² Dan. 8:4

⁴⁶³ as in Dan. 8:4

domestic animals. They are far different from the voracious bear, standing for Persia, and the fierce swift leopard for Greece of chapter seven. The change is likely due to the fact that in chapter seven the nations are chiefly represented in their relations one to another, in that they were ravenous, seeking to devour one another. Here, their relationship to and treatment of Israel is chiefly in view. And, though firm lord and in secure control of Israel, Cyrus and his successors were kind to the Jews. Isaiah even called Cyrus the Lord's "anointed".⁴⁶⁴ It was he who allowed the Jews to return and who bountifully provided materials for their aid. Alexander, as we shall see, was likewise kind to the Jews, even doing religious obeisance (according to Josephus) to God's high priest. This seems to be why the two beasts are tame domestic animals. The treatment given the Jews by the wicked Antiochus (to be discussed later) was quite exceptional.

The typical use of sheep and goats in general and of the males of the two species in particular, is an interesting Scriptural study. Israel is frequently called God's flock (both sheep and goats) and their leaders rams and bucks. Says God;⁴⁶⁵ "I will judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats." Here rams and bucks are the princes. Zechariah 10:3 pictures the sheep as being oppressed by the goats. It is quite a surprise to find that when Isaiah says of the fall of the king of Babylon that all the kings and princes who have died before him shall rise to meet him,⁴⁶⁶ that the Hebrew word for "chief ones" is the usual word for "he goats." So, it was obviously a common thing to compare kings and princes to rams and bucks.

The buck of the goats was thought of, as he is in nature, as being superior in strength to the ram. So here is confirmation of the meaning of the image vision of chapter two and the four-beast vision of chapter seven: while the kingdoms may decrease in worth and the kings base their rule on a poorer grade of sovereignty, the kingdoms are nevertheless stronger as they progress toward their destruction at the coming of Messiah's kingdom.

Now, focusing attention on the he goat, observe that he comes "from the west." Macedonia was across the Hellespont, the narrow space of water separating Asia from Europe. When Alexander took his armies across that stretch of water he changed the course of history for the following two and one-half millenniums, and perhaps forever, for at that time, first in recorded history, the center of world dominion shifted from the Orient to the Occident. The East had been supreme before—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medes and Persians were all, of the East. Alexander was of the West. Never again did the balance of world power shift to the East. The advancing civilization of the world from that day to this has been the civilization of the West. Now the East is adopting Western ways, monetary systems, systems of measurement, dress, government, etc. Japan, for example, though still an officially pagan country, has adopted Western customs (even Santa Claus) at a rate that is startling. The same is true everywhere.

The goat came "on the face of the whole earth," i.e., he swept all before him, and since he "touched not the ground" it is understood that he came most swiftly.⁴⁶⁷ The most notable feature of the goat is his single horn, representing as we are later told, the first great king, Alexander. A brief summary of Alexander's earlier conquests is an interesting commentary on this verse. He crossed the Hellespont to challenge the hated Persians in 334 B. C. With his army of 35,000 men he soon encountered the armies of Darius III at the Granicus River in

⁴⁶⁴ Is. 45:1

⁴⁶⁵ Ez. 34:17, cf. context

⁴⁶⁶ "it stirreth up all the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth...all the kings of the nations," Isa. 14:9.

⁴⁶⁷ Remember the four wings of the leopard of chapter seven...

northwest Asia Minor, putting the whole massive collection to rout. Persian armies moved in style with special clothes for each kind of soldier. There were bowmen, spearmen, cavalry of horse, cavalry of elephants, etc. Alexander's army, superbly organized and equipped by his father Philip employed what was known as the phalanx—infantry formed in close and deep ranks with shields joined together and spears overlapping. The Persian forces simply were carved in pieces. The Greeks cut them up like a piece of pie. Alexander sent 300 suits of Persian armor back to Athens as a votive offering to Athena.

All of Asia Minor was Alexander's in a few months. Next spring he passed through the Taurus Mountains in southern Asian Minor, at the Cilician Gates, and shortly thereafter engaged the Persian armies at Issus near Antioch. This time Darius arrived in great style with a massive army and with his family and court in attendance, intending to recover lost prestige. His huge army of 600,000 was decisively defeated—the king's mother, queen, and children being captured. Darius himself escaped and returned to Susa to raise another army for the final encounter now sure to come.

But Alexander was taking "all the earth" as he came, so he turned southward, intending to take all of Syria and Egypt before turning eastward again. The capture of Tyre detained him seven months. It was two years before he gave further attention to Darius.

Josephus tells an interesting story of his relations with the Jews as he passed through Palestine. When Alexander sent from Tyre, demanding the tribute formerly sent to Persia, the Jews refused politely, saying they had given their word to the Persian king. Shortly afterward when on his march from Tyre toward Egypt, Alexander angrily approached the city, the inhabitants feared the worst. So impressed was Alexander when the whole city, including the priests in holy array, went out to meet him that instead of destroying them, he did obeisance to the high priest, saying he had several years before been directed to his conquests by a man in a vision who appeared in the very dress of the Jewish high priest. He was conducted to the temple, says Josephus, where he offered sacrifice to God according to the priests' direction. "And," says Josephus, "when the Book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended." Truth or fiction, this anecdote, shows what the ancient Jews thought of Daniel's prophecy. I, myself, am much inclined to think that the story is essentially a true one.

4. The victory of the he goat over the ram (8:7)

And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. (Daniel 8:7)

After the conquest of Egypt by Alexander, the he goat did, indeed, "come close unto the ram." Near the ancient city of Nineveh, on the plain of Arbela, the Macedonians met Darius and his immense army. This was the third meeting of the Greeks with the Persian army of Darius, the second, with the Emperor himself in command. The army of Darius was hopelessly defeated and he himself was assassinated on the field by Bessus, satrap of Bactria. Alexander, with characteristic impulsive generosity, avenged Darius of his murderer and had him buried with regal pomp. He moved on and after taking Susa, where he seized an estimated \$57,000,000 worth in gold, "moved with choler [anger]" against the ancient Persian capital of Persepolis (Persian, *Parsa*) he utterly destroyed the city and the neighboring Ecbatana which was likewise burned. Historians are glad Alexander burned Persepolis, for the

fires in the public buildings served to vitrify the many clay writing tablets, and thus preserve them to be read in recent years.

5. The vision of the final growth and division of the "notable" horn's dominion (8:8)

Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. (Daniel 8:8)

After the destruction of the last Persian resistance (331 B. C.), Alexander continued his conquests eastward, conquering the territories we now know as Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, marrying a captive Bactrian princess, Roxana, along the way. As a sample of behavior indicating the kind of man he was, at Sogdiana in a drunken brawl he killed his best friend, Clitus, the man who had saved his life at the Granicus, and then almost died of remorse over it. Finally, when his army refused to proceed farther (he wanted to go to the Ganges), with much grief he sailed down the Indus river, at the western edge of India, and then moved part of his forces by land, part by sea, back toward the west, finally setting up headquarters at Babylon. There in the thirteenth year of his reign and in the thirty-third year of his life (323 B. C.) the little genius died, the victim of fever and alcohol.⁴⁶⁸ Thus it was that "the great horn was broken."

Though he had intended that his child by Roxana should have his throne, it was not to be. Instead, after about 20 years of international brawling and quarrelling among Alexander's leading supporters, his lands were divided among "four notable ones," just as Daniel had said.⁴⁶⁹

Only two of the four new Grecian kingdoms are of special interest here: that of Egypt and adjacent lands under Ptolemy, and that of Syria and environs, under Seleucus. These two kings and their successors become the kings of the South and of the North respectively in Daniel, and out of the king of the North came the "little horn," which now occupies the center of the prophet's interest.

6. The vision of the "little horn" and his conflict with Israel (8:9-14)

This is the heart of the prophecy, for it prepared the people of Israel with knowledge of some of the very details of coming sufferings in the second century before Christ.

And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, toward the pleasant land. (Daniel 8:9)

The common Hebrew word for south was one meaning "the dry place." The dry part of Palestine was that toward the Sinai Peninsula. Sinai Peninsula was itself a very arid land. So for people living in Palestine "dry place" became the name for the southerly direction. The word for east was one meaning "the place of rising," an obvious allusion to the fact that the sun always rises in that direction.

Commentators of all shades of opinion generally agree on the identity of this new king. He is Antiochus IV, called *Epiphanes* (Magnificent) a king in the line of Seleucus, reigning in Syria about 175-169 B.C. The student should be very careful to distinguish this little horn out of the

⁴⁶⁸ So say some historians.

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. notes on Dan. 7:6

third or Grecian kingdom from the little horn of chapter seven: which is out of the fourth or "Roman" kingdom. Although it may be true, as we shall see, that Antiochus was a type of the final Antichrist symbolized by the little horn of chapter seven, the two are not identical.

The verse simply indicates that Antiochus would try to expand his holdings toward the south (Egypt) and toward the east (Mesopotamia, etc.). It also indicates that he would have interests in Palestine. Palestine is indicated as "the pleasant land." The word "land" is not in the Hebrew, and the word "pleasant" might better be "beautiful" or "glorious." This was the "land flowing with milk and honey" and of Jerusalem, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth".⁴⁷⁰ Only a Jew could have written this chapter. It truly reflects the "home-town" point of view.

And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. (Daniel 8:10)

Now obviously Antiochus did not destroy or cast down any literal stars of heaven, nor did he conquer any angels of God's host.⁴⁷¹ So the great majority of commentators interpret this verse as a prediction of Antiochus' attack upon the people of God in Judah, and especially upon the high priest and other legal priests. It is not uncommon in the Bible for people and their leaders to be called sun, moon, stars, etc.⁴⁷² Similar language is used of Antiochus at II Maccabees 9:10 and context. Antiochus did ruthlessly "stamp" upon God's people. The ambitious student should read I and II Maccabees to appreciate what he did.

Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. (Daniel 8:11)

Whether the "prince of the host" be God or the high priest, his earthly representative of the time, the meaning is clear. Antiochus was to attack the Jewish worship, and bring to an end the ritual worship centered there. The full story is told in I Maccabees 1:20-50. Since many of the readers of this treatment will not have access to the Apocrypha, the significant portions are here excerpted.

According to this report Antiochus "entered the sanctuary, And took away the golden altar, and the candlestick, and all the vessels thereof; and the table of shew-bread, the pouring vessels...and stripped the temple of the ornaments of gold." Two years later he again "smote it very sore, and destroyed much people of Israel, and when he had taken the spoils of the city he set it on fire, and pulled down the walls thereof on every side." In addition to this "Her [Jerusalem's] sanctuary was laid waste like a wilderness, her feasts were turned into mourning, her Sabbaths into reproach, her honor into contempt."

He outlawed all worship of Jehovah in the city and polluted and defiled everything in connection with the sanctuary. "For the king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, that they should follow the strange laws of the land [i.e., new laws commanding worship of Greek gods and goddesses and vile pagan rites], and forbid burnt-offerings, and sacrifices, and drink-offerings in the temple; and that they should profane the Sabbaths and festival days; and pollute the sanctuary and holy people; set up altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh, and unclean beasts; that they should also leave their children uncircumcised, and make their souls abominable with all manner of

⁴⁷⁰ Ps. 48:2

⁴⁷¹ The word host means army in contemporary English.

⁴⁷² Cf. Joseph's dream Gen. 37:9, 10; Is. 24:21; Rev. 12:1 ff.

uncleanness and profanation; to the end they might forget the laws and change the ordinances."

It is beyond words that very many Jews cooperated with Antiochus, and except for the single-minded determined resistance or a godly few who risked their lives to oppose him, he would have succeeded.

And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered. (Daniel 8:12)

This means that because of the sins of the Jews in Palestine, they who were the very descendents of the redoubtable exiles who returned under Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, etc. who became apostate, God allowed this sad thing to happen. The worst of it was, as is always the case with religious apostasy, the "truth" is "cast down to the ground" also.

Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleaned. (Daniel 8:13, 14)

Change the word "saint" to "holy one" (i.e., an angel) and the words "two thousand and three hundred days" to "two thousand and three hundred evening-mornings." The "evening-mornings" were of course the morning and evening burnt-offerings prescribed in Leviticus. This would be only 1,150 days, somewhat over three years. It is true that the temple was desolate for a period about that long after Antiochus desolated it and until the Maccabean forces restored the worship. No exact correlation with known historical events has yet been found for this, by reason of the fact that our information is incomplete.⁴⁷³

7. Gabriel, the revealing angel (8:15-16)

This is the first time in Scripture that the name of an angel is given—Gabriel. The name means "hero of God." Mentioned also at Daniel 9:21 as well as Luke 1:19, 26 he is associated with Michael.⁴⁷⁴ Review notes on Daniel 7:16 for further information about Gabriel.

8. The effect of the vision on Daniel (8:17, 18)

That such a man of well recognized holiness as Daniel should be "afraid" fall upon his face at the approach of the angel demonstrates something of the moral gulf that separates God and his holy angels from mere mortals. In fact, every time a similar approach to man is made, the results are the same.⁴⁷⁵ It is with good reason that men fear death on such occasions (Exodus 33:20, Judges 13:22 "we shall surely die because we have seen God"). Imagine with what immense relief Daniel heard Gabriel's reassuring words and felt his touch.

Incidentally, this passage demonstrates some basic similarity between the normal visible form

⁴⁷³ Note: (Dan. 8:14) "Unto two thousand and three hundred days". RSV renders "evening and mornings"; ASV is the same except that "and" is italicized to indicate that it is not in the Hebrew. The Hebrew is literally "unto evening morning a pair of thousands and three hundred. It is a mystifying expression at best. Probably it has reference to the same as the "continual" (8:11 ASV). If so, then it refers to the custom of offering a burnt offering every morning and another every evening, as commanded in Exodus 29:38-42. It is there called "the continual burnt offering." In Daniel 8:14 it is likely that evening is put before morning on account of the fact that the Hebrew calendar day began with sunset rather than sunrise or midnight. So likely the 2300 evening-mornings are to be counted as just half that many days, or 1150.

⁴⁷⁴ Dan. 10:19

⁴⁷⁵ cf. Dan. 10:9, 15; Ez. 1:29; Is. 6:5, Ex. 3:6; Acts 9:3, 4; rev. 1:17

of angels and the form of men.

9. The scope of the prophecy (8:19)

By "scope" I have in mind the times during which the predictions would be fulfilled. It would seem obvious from the standpoint of today that all was fulfilled during the times of the ancient Persians and Greeks. But is this strictly true? In 8:19 Gabriel says, "I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the *indignation*: for at the time appointed *the end* shall be." In Dan. 11:36 "the indignation" is a period of divine wrath at the close of this present age. And while "the end" could be the end of Antiochus' dominion or of the trials connected with him, yet it also frequently has eschatological connections. This is the first suggestion that perhaps the vision relates not only to Antiochus and persecutions of Jews in ancient times, but also to something in the "last days." If so, this is not an unusual feature of prophecy, which quite frequently contains elements of the near future together with the more remote future in a comprehensive grasp.

10. Medo-Persia, Greece, Alexander, and his successors (8:20-22)

The interpretation of these verses has already been presented in connection with the earlier verses on the same subjects.

11. "...the king of fierce countenance" (8:23-26)

These words interpret the vision of the little horn with the addition of several details not furnished in the vision. It is obviously the main point of the revelation. ⁴⁷⁶

This "king of fierce countenance" will come in "the latter time of their kingdom," that is, of the Grecian kingdom, when Jewish "transgressors" have come to the full. This king shall understand "dark sentences," i.e., riddles, conundrums, difficult matters. He shall successfully attack the holy people, gaining power over them by trickery and diplomacy. But when he stands up against the Prince of princes he shall be destroyed by divine judgment.

As the stone cut out of a mountain without hands ⁴⁷⁷ represented the divine origin of the stone kingdom of Messiah, so the breaking of a man "without hand" here (8:25) designates a divine visitation of judgment. This really happened to Antiochus. He left his capital in Syria for Persia, hoping to gain booty and tribute there, and committed his wars in Palestine to a certain Lysias. Repulsed in the East, Antiochus was forced to retire to Babylon. At the same time Lysias and his armies were driven out of Judah by the embattled army of the Maccabees which also retrieved not only much of their own stolen goods from him but that of other lands. Says the Maccabean writer: "Now when the king heard these words, he was astonished and sore moved: whereupon he laid him down upon his bed, and fell sick for grief, because it had not befallen him as he looked for. And there he continued many days: for his grief was ever more and more." Then calling his friends to tell them he knew he was to die, he said, "I remember the evils that I did at Jerusalem...I perceive therefore for this cause these troubles...I perish...So king Antiochus died".⁴⁷⁸

Now there are commentators of strong evangelical loyalty who think that this was entirely fulfilled in Antiochus. There are others of no less scholarship and evangelical commitment

⁴⁷⁶ Note: (Dan. 8:24) "the mighty and the holy people:—There is a word for "mighty" or "many" or "much" which is used of Israel frequently. That word is used in verse 25. Here the word is a different Hebrew word. So Keil is correct in asserting that "mighty" refers to mighty men in general, especially heathen rulers. The "holy people" are as usual, the Jewish people. This then is a cryptic way of saying this wicked king shall destroy both Gentiles and Jews.

⁴⁷⁷ Dan. 2:45

⁴⁷⁸ I Maccabees 8:8-16

who feel that Antiochus only partially fulfills it, that there is in the section much which refers to none other than the final Antichrist, or some person associated with him. They point out the several expressions which are difficult to apply to Antiochus. He was not noted as a particularly wise man in handling the "dark sentences".⁴⁷⁹ True he was a tricky diplomat, but good diplomacy is another matter. That his mighty power would be "not by his own power" sounds strangely like the declaration of John concerning the great beast of the end-time that "the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority".⁴⁸⁰ It is not evidently applicable to Antiochus. The "Prince of princes" sounds like too much exaggerated language to apply solely to the ancient high priest; but more appropriate for the "great high priest," the Son of God. While not incapable of application to ancient happenings, the expressions "last end of the indignation" and "the end"⁴⁸¹ as well "when the transgressors are come to the full"⁴⁸² seem more appropriate when applied to the situation at the end of this age at the time of our Lord's second coming.⁴⁸³ The same is true of "it shall be for many day".⁴⁸⁴

It is not at all unusual, as we have observed, to discover a union of the near view and the far in one prophecy. In his last great discourse on predictive matters, the Olivet discourse,⁴⁸⁵ Jesus mixed together prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and of his second coming in such a way that many sentences seem equally applicable to either series of events. So, it should not be considered surprising if such should also be the case here. The description of Antiochus here is more than a little like predictions of Antichrist elsewhere in the Bible. A line of interpreters throughout the generations since the prophecy was written follow this line of interpretation.

D. The Historical Conclusion (8:27)

Daniel was "done in," as a more literal translation would state in quite modern-sounding phraseology. After being laid aside for a while he went back to his work, evidently still pondering the meaning of what he wrote.⁴⁸⁶

The events in Judah during the days of Antiochus have real applications to the church in the world today.

- i. In the first place, it should be noted that Antiochus was only the instrument of affliction. The real source was in the apostasy from their faith and in the other sins of the Jewish people. They had become spiritually soft and interested mainly in ease and pleasure. His smooth speech and persuasive flatteries won them over too easily. Numerous elements among them were anxious to secure the popularity and honor he offered if they would conform to the pagan ways he was introducing. His was a time of conformity not unlike our own.⁴⁸⁷
- ii. Observe further that one of the chief evils for which God allowed them this suffering was the secularization of their religion.⁴⁸⁸ A Greek-style gymnasium, with its offensive

⁴⁷⁹ Heb. *chidoth*, parables, riddles, etc., cf. II Chron. 9:1 where it is rendered "hard questions".

⁴⁸⁰ Rev. 13:2

⁴⁸¹ Dan. 8:19

⁴⁸² Dan. 8:23

⁴⁸³ *vid.* I Tim. 4:1 ff., II Tim. 3:1 ff

⁴⁸⁴ Dan. 8:26

⁴⁸⁵ Mt. 24, Mk. 13, Lk. 21

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. I Pet. 1:10-12

⁴⁸⁷ Read I Maccabees 1:10-15

⁴⁸⁸ I Maccabees 1:14

- nakedness, was set up in Jerusalem so the youth could learn the pagan ways of Greece. They imitated Grecian styles, and in every way tried to become less Jewish and more Greek. There was greater interest in Greek literature, foreign travel, and Greek philosophy than in study of the ancient Hebrew language and the Holy Scriptures. Some went so far as to deny their circumcision. Even high priests cast aside their Hebrew names for Greek names. These same religious leaders ostracized and opposed the loyal adherents to the old faith, castigating them as out of date and standing in the way of progresses. Religion became only an instrument of state, its holy offices to be bought and sold for money.
- iii. The most noted apostates came from the official clergy; the leading defenders of the truth, whom the book of Hebrews honors as men "of whom the world was not worthy" and who "obtained a good report through faith",⁴⁸⁹ came from the common people, though their leader was a godly priest and his five sons.⁴⁹⁰
 - iv. The spirit that brought on the "indignation" was what today would have been called a "liberal" or "broad-minded" spirit. It is the spirit that stole from the churches of our land most of its Bible-focused centers of learning in the name of liberal arts several generations ago.

He would be foolish indeed who did not discern the parallels with our own days and feel something of a shiver of fright on account of it!

Nothing is more conducive to these conditions than to hold the forms of religion without warm faith to go with them. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word!".⁴⁹¹

Take another look at the response of Daniel to his visions and the angelic interpretation. He was "done in"—greatly weakened in body by what he saw. He was full of grief that the lessons of their exile would not fully cure them of their spiritual adultery. He knew the grief of concern for the calamities of soul in other people. Can we say we have a similar concern? We should have it.

- v. Daniel's response shows that he really believed in his prophecies. And, though he says "none understood it" we may be sure that he knew the general nature of the interpretation, for the Angel made a great deal very plain. This should be somewhat of a guide to the proper attitude toward the study of prophecy today. We cannot understand all of it. We do not know "the day nor the hour" of our Lord's second advent, but we do know that he is coming. We do not have all the problems solved as to the precise order of all the events of the future, but we have been given to know what many of the events will be and we do know something about the order. The prophets of old did not understand quite all that "the Spirit of Christ that was in them did signify" but they did know that the "sufferings of Christ" were to be first, and that the glories were to "follow".⁴⁹²

After a period of neglect, reaching back to the early years of the Second World War, when a good bit of shallow prophetic interpretation was rendered out-of-date by the process of history, prophecy deserves a new emphasis and renewed study. It will take more than an ordinary amount of effort and will require more single-mindedness than our

⁴⁸⁹ Heb. 11:38, 39

⁴⁹⁰ I Maccabees 2:1 ff

⁴⁹¹ Is 66:5

⁴⁹² I Peter 1:11

generation is accustomed to, but the results will be satisfying.

IX. Chapter 9: The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks

A. Introduction

The last previous revelation had left the aged prophet physically overwhelmed and puzzled.⁴⁹³ And although about 10 years has passed by,⁴⁹⁴ the literary proximity of the chapter before us (Dan. 9) with that exertion and puzzlement strongly conveys the answer to an important question: What shall a saint do when he is baffled by the deep things of God —faint, exhausted, astonished, and still mystified in spite of the angelic revelations? A mature and godly man takes the only course open to him: further study of the Word of God and prayer.⁴⁹⁵

When a little knowledge of divine things brings confusion to the minds of some, they throw up their hands and resign from all effort at further understanding, leaving it for the "experts" to consider. This is especially true of the study of prophecy where a truly comprehensive knowledge of all of the Bible is necessary for full understanding. Paul's message to the Bereans was concerning Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Jesus Christ.⁴⁹⁶ It was these Bereans who "were more noble...in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so".⁴⁹⁷ They were willing to pay the price in study effort. Precisely on that account "many of them believed." Still others will make up their minds and set forth comprehensive pronouncements about the course of the future on the basis of very incomplete study. Some of them rush into print and require, not infrequently, that others of many more years of study fall into line with complete agreement. A few will give many years to study and then, too timid to make up their minds about anything requiring the weighing of evidence, refuse to take any stand whatsoever.

The best way is simply to continue studying, in prayer waiting for the leading of God. "The Lord giveth wisdom.... He layeth up sound wisdom for the *righteous*".⁴⁹⁸ His spirit must illuminate the understanding. A little more observation of human nature and of the ways of God helps much. When opinions are reached in this manner there will be a humble spirit in the presentation of views that will stifle unnecessary controversy and promote Christian fellowship rather than hinder it.

Let Daniel's own example, then, be our guide as we further study the prophecies. The chapter before us devotes two verses to the historical setting, 22 verses to a prayer of Daniel for himself, his people, and his country, and four verses to an answer to the prayer in the form of the most comprehensive chronological prophecy in the entire Bible. Though from the standpoint of doctrine, especially the unfolding in the New Testament of the four-verse prophecy with which the section closes, the prediction is most important, it seems wise that we keep our expositions in approximate proportion to the amount of Scripture devoted to each type of material. We will, therefore, give special attention to Daniel's prayer.

B. The Historical Setting of the Prophecy (9:1, 2)

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet,

⁴⁹³ Dan. 8:27

⁴⁹⁴ Dan. 9:1, cf. 8:1, 27

⁴⁹⁵ Dan. 9:1-3

⁴⁹⁶ Acts 17: 2, 3

⁴⁹⁷ Acts 17:11

⁴⁹⁸ Pr. 2:6, 7

that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. (Daniel 9:1, 2)

The first year of Darius was the year 539-538 B.C. This puts the events of chapter nine in the neighborhood of 67 years after Daniel was taken captive from Jerusalem at its first subjugation by Nebuchadnezzar in the summer of 605 B.C. It would have been about sixty years from the captivity of king Jehoiakim and his priestly subject, Ezekiel, who were taken to Babylon in the year 598 B.C. It was a bit less than fifty years after the complete destruction of the city in the summer of 586 B.C. As shall be explained shortly this explains Daniel's interest in the prophecies of Jeremiah concerning 70 years of "desolations" for Jerusalem at this particular time, and for that matter his interest in the "books" of prophetic Scripture in general. .

The passage of greatest interest to Daniel was undoubtedly Jeremiah 25:11, 12. After naming Nebuchadnezzar as the king who would come against the Jews, the passage reads, "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity." Now Daniel must have been persuaded that the seventy years were now up—not almost over, but finished—for the king of Babylon had already been destroyed, and Cyrus, with Darius as his lieutenant was resigning instead. On the basis of these calculations Daniel would have concluded that Jeremiah's "seventy years" were to be taken as an approximate number, not an exact one, for actually a year or two less than 70 had passed by since the initial subjugation of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

But there were other prophecies, especially one by Isaiah, made a century and a half before, concerning the restoration of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon to their homeland. Here are the famous words: Speaking of the Lord, Isaiah says, "that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built...that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem: Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus".⁴⁹⁹ Here the restoration of the Jews to their own country, the rebuilding of both their cities and their temple are predicted. Isaiah had even given the name of Cyrus, the very Persian king whose recent victories had brought about the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy about Babylon. There were gaps in information in both Jeremiah's and Isaiah's predictions. Jeremiah, for example, had not said explicitly that Jerusalem should be rebuilt, nor that the Jews would be sent home, *immediately* after the destruction of Babylon. Besides, Daniel might justifiably have wondered if the beginning of the prophetic 70 years might not be 586, when the temple and the city were burned. If so, there were in the neighborhood of at least 20 years before the restoration might occur. All this surely filled the prophet with a breathless expectancy.

There is a certain analogy with the informed Christian believer's anticipation of the Lord's return. We know Jesus' Second Advent has been promised. Yet He never set a date. He did, however, say that men should look for his appearing, and that when certain things should "come to pass" believers should "then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh".⁵⁰⁰

When, in Jeremiah's time, the captivity was still only a prophecy, the prophet insisted that among the causes of the coming judgment was the fact that while people were placing great stock by their elaborate ritual and newly refurbished temple they were not heeding their prophets. Not only did they fail to "speak the truth" (Jer. 9:5), but they were "not valiant for the truth",⁵⁰¹ and,

⁴⁹⁹ Is. 44:25, 26, 28; 45:1

⁵⁰⁰ Lu. 21:28

⁵⁰¹ Jer. 9:3

worst of all, "the word of the Lord" was "unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it".⁵⁰² Bible study was not a joy but a task; not a pleasure but a duty; not a delight but a burden! It took the wounds of the captivity to teach them some love for the truth and some interest in prayer. But not so Daniel: this man, perplexed by his vision, turned to the Word, "the books," and having "understood" "set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer."

We will not have strong Christians and soul-winning churches till we have praying Christians; we will not have praying Christians till we have Christians who love their Bibles and who will study them long enough and diligently enough to understand them. And, as for understanding the Bible, there is no shortcut, for it is self-evident that before one can know what the Bible *means* he must have knowledge of what the Bible *says*. In this epoch of spiritual slothfulness men want the message of the Bible wrapped up in neat packages for easy assimilation without the burden of preparation. Our churches and Sunday Schools cannot be made into pedagogical supermarkets where everything will be smoothly arranged in cellophane packages for easy selection and quick assimilation.

C. The Exemplary Prayer of the Prophet (9:3-19)

Some portions of Scripture are creations of art. Like beautiful poems, paintings, gems, and statuary they must be seen whole to be appreciated. This portion of chapter nine, one of the lengthiest prayers reported in Scripture, is such a gem of literature. One really ought to read it several times to capture some of the beauty before attempting analysis of individual verses and words.

This particular prayer had an important place in the working out of the eternal plan of God. It is a principle that God not only ordains *ends* but *means* as well. God had foreseen and predestined the restoration.⁵⁰³ But restoration was not without conditions. It was necessary that there be previous repentance and supplication.⁵⁰⁴ In this respect the restoration of old was unlike the final restoration of the Jews which will apparently take place while they are yet in unbelief. Says God, "I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock".⁵⁰⁵ The restoration was not to come until there was "going and weeping" to "Seek the Lord their God" and they should be prepared to say, "Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord".⁵⁰⁶ Daniel in his position of prominence in Babylon was the very man, who now upon the very eve of Cyrus' decree of restoration could provide the prayer leadership that met God's requirement. The application of this principle to the need for prayer for souls of lost men needs to be emphasized. God has chosen some, but we must pray for them. It is doubtful if a soul has ever been won for Christ for whom previous prayer had not sometime been made.

This prayer reveals one source of its strength in the knowledge and appreciation of God it shows on the part of its author. Daniel was bold to remind God that the city of Jerusalem, then lying in ruins, was "called by thy name," as likewise the Jewish people.⁵⁰⁷ This reminded God that his own reputation was involved in the fortunes of the people and their city. The names of God, furthermore, are, as many names in Scripture, an indication of character. Daniel addressed his Lord first as *Lord God*.⁵⁰⁸ *Adonai* meant essentially master—lord in the old sense of the word—one's ruler. It emphasizes the sovereign rights of God. *Elohim*, the usual word for God, a plural

⁵⁰² Jer. 6:10

⁵⁰³ *vid.* especially Isaiah 42:24, 25; 43:14, 15; 48:9-11; Jer. 49:17-20

⁵⁰⁴ II Chron. 6:36-39

⁵⁰⁵ Ez. 36:37

⁵⁰⁶ Jer. 50:4, 5, 20

⁵⁰⁷ Dan. 9:18, 19

⁵⁰⁸ Dan. 9:3 Heb. *Adonai Elohim*

form, conveys the idea of his immensity. Daniel also called Him the *LORD my God*,⁵⁰⁹ in the Authorized Version, all in capital letters, always translates Jehovah. Thus Daniel recognized God as the self-existent source of all being, the one who keeps promise with Abraham.⁵¹⁰ Nine times the name Lord, *Adonai*, appears in the passage, showing that above everything else Daniel acknowledged God's sovereign rights, his power to do as he pleases. This is the primary confession of believers in all ages: "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father".⁵¹¹

Daniel's fervent reference to many of the attributes of his God shows even more in what knowledge and respect he held Him. He is "the great and dreadful God".⁵¹² His God, like Isaiah's, was "high and lifted up" before whose awful majesty the most exalted of God's whole creation can only cover their feet and faces while they cry "Holy, Holy, Holy".⁵¹³ Yet this dread majesty is matched by a compassion that keeps covenant "and mercy to them that love him and keep his commandments".⁵¹⁴ These seeming opposites are really one, having their unity in God's holiness. That God is not only holy in character but righteous in His actions is admitted.⁵¹⁵ And, Daniel in bold familiarity, born of long association, reminds his god of his reputation for "mercies and forgiveness".⁵¹⁶

Without any particular effort to achieve logical arrangement of the various elements, let us view this prayer as a model prayer, and see where the path may lead. More than once the disciples asked our Lord to teach them to pray. In each case he gave examples and illustrations rather than instructions of a "theoretical" or "propositional sort".⁵¹⁷ We may be certain that this also is an exemplary prayer, and the man an exemplary man, for he was declared by the angel to be "a man greatly beloved" of God.⁵¹⁸

a. A Life Long Exercise

In the first place, prayer is seen to be a wholesome life-long spiritual exercise. In chapter five Daniel is seen to have risked his life to maintain his regular devotions. A comparison of Daniel 6:1, 10 with 9:1-3 shows that his thrice daily prayer habit was tested at about the same time as this lengthy prayer.) Daniel was now a very old man. For nearly seventy years he had maintained his watching and waiting vigils. During this time he had been subject to extreme temptation. The previous chapters are the story of those temptations. "Wealth, luxury, splendor, authority have not hurt his soul. How marvelous, how exceptional!"⁵¹⁹ The truth and the people of God are still his concern. The holy city Jerusalem, which he had not seen it since childhood, the temple now in ruins, and the poor Jews of the dispersion—still his concern—precisely because they were God's. During these years Daniel had kept himself "unspotted from the world" and unspoiled by the subtle temptations of a luxurious court by this absorption in the things of God. We are reminded of Paul who by the same means was kept from spiritual harm in the Roman prison, actually using his prison cell as a pulpit from which to preach the gospel.

⁵⁰⁹ Dan. 9:4; Heb. *Jehovah Elohim*. LORD

⁵¹⁰ *vid.* Ex. 3:13, 14; 6:1-8

⁵¹¹ Phil. 2:11; Rom. 10:9, 10

⁵¹² Dan. 9:4

⁵¹³ Is. 6:1 ff

⁵¹⁴ Dan. 9:4 cf. Ex. 20:5, 6

⁵¹⁵ Dan. 9:7, 16

⁵¹⁶ Dan. 9:9

⁵¹⁷ Mt. 6:5-18; Luke 11:1-13

⁵¹⁸ Dan. 10:11; 9:23

⁵¹⁹ Lang

b. Marked with Fierce Determination

Daniel's prayer was marked with fierce determination. "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer" he says.⁵²⁰ It reminds us of the Lord, who when the time of his death came near "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem".⁵²¹ Isaiah, prophetically describing that determination, places these words in the Lord's mouth: "For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed".⁵²² This tenacity of purpose was the result of real appreciation of a desperate situation. Why should the new administration now replacing the Babylonians give the Jews any more kind attention than to a lost file-folder in the old Babylonian archives? Why should the insignificant descendants of captives from a petty state far away receive the attention of the mighty Persians? Furthermore, Daniel knew that his people had been but little improved by their sufferings. Perhaps the lonely years had only destroyed their hope and faith. And, as he was to see (and probably already knew), the very hosts of wicked angels were arrayed against any restoration.⁵²³ So, "he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head...and was clad with zeal as a cloak"⁵²⁴ thus joined determinedly in the fray, resolved that if he were to go down in the battle it would be with blood on his sword. We in the desperate spiritual crisis of our day likewise need to put on the "whole armor of God"⁵²⁵ and join with like determination in the fray.

c. Marked with Intensity of Spirit

Related to his determination was *importunity*, or intensity of spirit. There is fervor breathed into the tenor of the whole passage. This aged prayer warrior entered into his closet, and having shut the door, began "to seek".⁵²⁶ The very word implies intensity. W. C. Stevens has suggested that four decrees of progressive intensity are indicated. First, there is "prayer", *general address*. This is surpassed by "supplications" or *pressing entreaties*. This is augmented in the third place "with fasting," temporary letting go of physical necessities. Perhaps the fervent old saint simply forgot to eat in his importunity. The fasting was overpassed, fourthly when, laying aside his near-royal ropes of high office, he made his prayer in "sackcloth, and ashes." These expressed *utter unworthiness and extreme need*.

"He who *feels* that he has no personal claim (not merely admits it theoretically, as a matter of doctrine) will the more earnestly beg for help. One who believes he has a right, a claim, goes to his bank with quietness, with a sense of title. He takes for granted that he will receive without trouble what is his own. Not so the suppliant".⁵²⁷

The suppliant comes with fervent supplication, crying both distinctly and often.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁰ Dan. 9:3

⁵²¹ Lu. 9:51

⁵²² Is. 50:7

⁵²³ Dan. 10:12, 13, 20

⁵²⁴ Is. 59:17

⁵²⁵ Eph. 6:10-20

⁵²⁶ Dan. 9:3

⁵²⁷ Lang

⁵²⁸ *vid.* many Biblical cases where the sick and their friends call almost raucously for help; Mt. 9:27, 15:22, 17:15, 20:30, 31; Lu. 16:24, 17:13, 18:38, 39.

d. Marked with a Sense of Unworthiness

The importunity was in part a natural fruit of *humility*, or a sense of unworthiness, to which reference has just been made. Daniel had been honored by men as no Jew of his time; not even the captive kings and their sons had been so honored. God had exalted him greatly in making him the recipient of the great revelations and the seer of magnificent visions. With them had come no "thorn in the flesh" as with Paul, lest he be "exalted above measure".⁵²⁹ Yet there is not the slightest suggestion of pride. Not a hint of being puffed up. He still regards himself as a sinner, made of no different clay from that of other men, claiming that to him as to his brethren "belongeth confusion of face".⁵³⁰ How different from the Pharisee is his prayer; how like that of the penitent publican!⁵³¹ We can almost hear him plead, "God be merciful to me a sinner, and save me for Jesus sake. Amen."

e. Marked with Confession

The most prominent feature of Daniel's prayer, preliminary to all supplication and intercession, was *confession*.

And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and that keep his commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments. (Daniel 9:4, 5)

Though the word for "confession" is rendered to "give thanks", etc., in many other passages, the peculiar Hebrew form used here is usually given the sense of confession as regards sin.⁵³²

Here as elsewhere confession is primarily toward God. Though we may harm others by our sins, and though we may greatly injure ourselves, sin is ultimately and mainly against the Creator who made us to bring him glory. So Daniel addressed all his remarks about sin in such a way as to make it clear that it was "the great and dreadful God" whose honor was involved. David, stricken in conscience could cry in shame, "against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight",⁵³³ and in celebrating his forgiveness could exclaim, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin".⁵³⁴ And, though for good relations Christians are told to confess their *faults* one to another,⁵³⁵ their *sins* are against God and are to be confessed to him alone. This they may do in complete confidence that they are forgiven.⁵³⁶

The words for Daniel's own and the Jews' offenses against the Lord are in themselves an instructive study. They had "sinned".⁵³⁷ Translated also to err, neglect, fail, it emphasizes

⁵²⁹ II Cor. 12:7

⁵³⁰ Dan. 9:8

⁵³¹ Lu. 18:10-14

⁵³² e.g., Lev. 5:5 "confess that he hath signed"

⁵³³ Ps 51:4

⁵³⁴ Ps. 32:5

⁵³⁵ James 5:16

⁵³⁶ I Jn. 1:9-2:2

⁵³⁷ Dan. 9:5

the falling short of God's high purposes.⁵³⁸ They had secondly "committed iniquity",⁵³⁹ "Done wrong" (RSV), "dealt perversely" (ASV) or better, they had "incurred guilt" in the sense of obligation to pay for what they had done. God is keeping books and bringing every deed into judgment. Thirdly, they had "done wickedly" or engaged in "passionate rebellion against God" (Keil). These are the very three words Solomon had prophetically said would be used by the exiles. "Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whether they were carried captive and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have *sinned*, and have *done perversely*, we have *committed wickedness* [italics mine]; and so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies..."⁵⁴⁰

To them Daniel adds a fourth, "and have rebelled" and a fifth "by departing" etc. These are some of the very strongest words of the Hebrew language to express the idea of sin. Furthermore they cover the whole range of sin. Daniel was willing to name the thing by its right name. There was no hiding under verbal run-arounds such as modern psychological lingo has given the public; "complex," "compulsion," and the like. Daniel would not have recommended psychiatric treatment as the cure for any of his country's sins nor would he likely have blamed any wickedness on to a "Mother Fixation" or "Oedipus Complex."

Their sins consisted essentially in "departing" from God's "precepts and judgments." These are summarized in the Ten Commandments. Their sins were not complicated. In the years immediately before their captivity the prophet Jeremiah had laid them all bare. They were things like murder,⁵⁴¹ covetousness,⁵⁴² adultery and fornication,⁵⁴³ lying,⁵⁴⁴ treachery,⁵⁴⁵ Sabbath breaking,⁵⁴⁶ and stealing.⁵⁴⁷ Every one of the Ten Commandments, especially that against idolatry, was being broken every day until as the Scripture says, "...there was no remedy".⁵⁴⁸

Neither have we harkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, or princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. (Daniel 9:6)

The most adequate commentary on this verse is the rest of the Old Testament. The author of the books of Chronicles, writing long afterward in the period of the Restoration gives a summary of it all at II Chronicles 36:14-20.

It should be noted that though the leaders—kings, princes, priests and others—are singled out for special mention here and in the prophets, as being guilty of the sins which led to the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth, Daniel makes it very clear that all the people were guilty. Before noting these portions in Daniel's confession, a selection from Jeremiah's sermons is appropriate. Said Jeremiah sometime during Josiah's reign, "A

⁵³⁸ Rom. 3:23

⁵³⁹ Dan. 9:5

⁵⁴⁰ I Ki. 8:47, 48

⁵⁴¹ Jer. 3:24

⁵⁴² Jer. 6:13

⁵⁴³ Jer. 5:7, 8

⁵⁴⁴ Jer. 5:30, 31, 9:5

⁵⁴⁵ Jer. 9:8

⁵⁴⁶ Jer. 17:21, 22 and context

⁵⁴⁷ Jer. 7:9

⁵⁴⁸ II Chron. 36:16

wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so" (Jer. 5:30, 31). "My people love to have it so!" It is always like this. People usually find in their rulers what they demand in them.

Daniel continues his confession—having already mentioned the guilt of kings, princes, fathers, people ⁵⁴⁹—as follows:

O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou has driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee. (Daniel 9:7, 8)

Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing that they might not obey thy voice. (Daniel 9:11)

How easy it is to select some special group as the cause of all the people's difficulties! In the "twenties" we used to hear voices blaming the World War on the munitions makers. In the "thirties" there were those who blamed the depression on the rich or the factory owners or the Jews. With the coming of turmoil's in the "forties" and especially the rising price of goods and inflation in the "fifties" there were voices raised to blame it all on the labor unions, etc., etc. Let us remember Daniel's confession before God, and like him admit that our whole nation is to blame. The sins of Israel are the sins of America and of the world. Translate the stately language of the King James Version into the parlance of the daily newspaper, the addresses of Jeremiah and Daniel on the sins of their time read like the front page of the Chicago Tribune.

We have seen that Daniel's model prayer was exemplary of his daily practice; that it was with determination, importunity, humility; and that a major subject was confession of sins. Now the impression is laid heavily upon us that—

- i. The model "pray-er" associated himself completely with his people.

How easy it might have been for Daniel, since he really had lived an exemplary life, to disassociate himself in thought, sympathy, affection, and confession from his people. But this is not the force of his words: "*we* have sinned",⁵⁵⁰ "*neither have we* harkened",⁵⁵¹ "*unto us* confusion of faces",⁵⁵² "*neither have we* obeyed",⁵⁵³ "*therefore the curse is poured upon us*",⁵⁵⁴ "*he spake against us*"⁵⁵⁵ etc. Most striking in view of his prayer life and study of the Word is the admission, "*yet mad we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth*".⁵⁵⁶ There is a fact of life which we are inclined to ignore or reject, that we are joined with our neighbors, family, and others. What happens in a remote corner affects every one of us. Adam's sin

⁵⁴⁹ Dan. 9:6

⁵⁵⁰ Dan. 9:5

⁵⁵¹ Dan. 9:6

⁵⁵² Dan. 9:7

⁵⁵³ Dan. 9:10

⁵⁵⁴ Dan. 9:11

⁵⁵⁵ Dan. 9:12

⁵⁵⁶ Dan. 9:13

brought a whole race to ruin; the single assassination on an obscure archduke in remote Sarajevo of a small country (Serbia) June 28, 1914, set off a great war that embroiled the whole world, a war which appears really not to have stopped yet. The pastor or missionary who would help his people must be one of them in life, thought, affection, and interest. Does not Daniel make us think of Him who though "being in the form of God, thought it not a thing to be grasped to be equal with God;...took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men"? ⁵⁵⁷

- ii. Daniel's prayer was made in submission to the will and wisdom of God.

*Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and, brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.
(Daniel 9:14)*

Sometimes when we pray it is out of desperation—a desperation that is dissatisfied with what life has given us. We complain that our rights have been over-run or we have received less than we have deserved. Full of self-pity and self-interest we run to God and complain against him. Let us always remember that "the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth."

f. Marked with Petition

While, as observed earlier, confession is the major burden of the prayer, the purpose of it was to make *petition* and *intercession*. Petition, in the sense of prayer for one's self, and intercession, or prayers for others, are really joined in this prayer, for Daniel's interests and those of his people are the same.

The burden of Daniel's prayer was request for the restoration of his country, its people, its land, its worship at the temple.⁵⁵⁸ There are those who wish to interpret the answer of the prayer ⁵⁵⁹ as having really no reference to the Jewish people, their land and temple supposing it to refer to the New Testament church. Contrariwise the prayer is especially clear. Every word of it relates to "thy city Jerusalem, thy holy thy holy mountain [Zion]...Jerusalem and thy people".⁵⁶⁰

The reasons supplied by Daniel, for he does carry on a kind of argument, are 1) that God's own people are a reproach,⁵⁶¹ 2) God is, a merciful God, ⁵⁶² and 3) God's own reputation is at stake, for everyone knows that both the people and the city, to say nothing of the sanctuary therein, are called by the Lord's name and hence the request is made for God's own sake.⁵⁶³ It is not far different from Moses' prayer-argument in a similar situation.⁵⁶⁴

The prayer closes in the most intense and exalted manners "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city

⁵⁵⁷ Phil. 2:6, 7

⁵⁵⁸ Dan. 9:16-21

⁵⁵⁹ I refer to the angelic oracle of verses 24-27 with which the chapter ends.

⁵⁶⁰ Dan. 9:16

⁵⁶¹ Dan. 9:16

⁵⁶² Dan. 9:18

⁵⁶³ Dan. 9:19

⁵⁶⁴ Ex. 32:10-14

and thy people are called by thy name".⁵⁶⁵

D. The Angelic Messenger of the Prophecy (9:20-23)

Daniel 9:20—And while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplications before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

These words are important to understanding the continuity of the book, for by telling his readers that "the man Gabriel" is the same person who had interpreted his first vision,⁵⁶⁶ and since Gabriel is the revealer of the second series of visions also,⁵⁶⁷ we know that Gabriel is the revealing angel who interpreted all the visions and here imparts the news which forms the answer to Daniel's prayer.

Of great practical blessing for Daniel, and by way of encouraging precedent, to us, is the fact that the answer was immediate—while he was still on his knees in prayer. In verse 23 Gabriel reports that he was commanded to come as soon as the prayer began, evidently consuming some time in coming to speak to Daniel. God has said there would be days like that, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer and while they are yet speaking, I will hear".⁵⁶⁸ As we shall see in chapter ten, God sometimes responds differently, for sometimes he delays his answers, for our good. But he may, as an encouragement to faith, and as a necessary part of his answer, give his response immediately. Since God is sovereign in such matters, men must be submissive.

E. The Great Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (9:24-27)

It is this prophecy which makes Daniel unique as a prophet of the future, as nearly two thousand years ago Josephus observed: "We believe that Daniel conversed with God: for he did not only prophesy of the future, as did other prophets, but he also determined the time of their accomplishment".⁵⁶⁹ The four verses before us not only *state time* for the coming of the Messiah, being called specifically Messiah, i.e., the anointed one herein,⁵⁷⁰ but in the opinion of many interpreters, also provide a chronological framework of end-time events at the second coming of Christ.

Gabriel told the prophet that whereas Jeremiah had predicted seventy years of desolations for Jerusalem. God had still another prophetic period in mind for Israel. This period would be one of seventy *sevens* of years.⁵⁷¹ The force of comparison of "seventy years"⁵⁷² with "seventy sevens"⁵⁷³ is in effect that God is revealing a new period of God's dealing with the Holy People exactly seven times as long as the predicted, and now fulfilled, prophecy by Jeremiah of seventy years of desolation of Jerusalem.

Though there are some who demur, the preponderance of opinion among scholars is that

⁵⁶⁵ Dan. 9:19

⁵⁶⁶ Chapter 7

⁵⁶⁷ Chapter 8, *vid.* 8:16

⁵⁶⁸ Is. 65:24

⁵⁶⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, X. xi, 7

⁵⁷⁰ Dan. 9:25

⁵⁷¹ The Hebrew word for week is really a word meaning "a seven".

⁵⁷² Dan. 9:2

⁵⁷³ Dan. 9:24

these weeks are weeks of years. What are the reasons for this? The word "week" automatically brings a period of seven days before the mind of English-speaking people. The reasons are as follows:

- i. The Hebrew word for "week" is literally "a seven." It could be a seven of hours, days, years, or of marbles. Context has to determine.
- ii. As comparison of Daniel 9:2 with II Chron. 36:21 shows⁵⁷⁴ a week of years was already on the prophet's mind.
- iii. There was a well-known "seven" or week of years familiar to all Hebrews for it was in their law.⁵⁷⁵
- iv. In the very next chapter, Daniel, when he wished to make it clear that he was referring to a week of days, specified it. In Daniel 10:2, 3, where the word "seven" appears the Hebrew word for days follows, *viz.*, a seven *of days*. Evidently it was Daniel's custom to speak thus, for obviously he did not fast for twenty-one years!
- v. Likewise the facility this gives to interpretation of the many references elsewhere in the Bible to half of this week of years is an argument for it.

All interpreters must resolutely hold to the fact that the seventy "sevens" of years were determined upon Daniel's "people" and "holy city".⁵⁷⁶ To apply the prophecy to something else is surely an error. Furthermore, it seems likely (as we shall soon point out) that the seventy "sevens" of years apply only to periods when "the people" are dwelling in the "holy city."

Once it is agreed that the prophecy relates to Jerusalem and to the Jews the field of investigation is narrowed immensely and possibilities of understanding are enlarged.

There are some who feel that the prophecy really relates primarily to the first advent of Christ when his mission was to die for the sins of the world. If space allowed, their views might be examined in detail. We shall do well here, however, to present a positive view and defense of it consistent with interpretation of prophecy employed throughout the book. My views and supporting arguments are presented in expanded technical form in my book.⁵⁷⁷

Perhaps the best way for anyone to begin his studies of a difficult passage like this one is to read it slowly, think of the context as he reads, and see what the obvious meaning seems to be. Insofar as the circumstances of treatment in a book of this type allows, we shall do just that, verse by verse, following the American Standard Version (1901) inasmuch as several obscurities due to faulty translation are cleared up in that version and the Revised Standard Version being particularly unsatisfactory in this text.

1. The Special Character of the Seventy Weeks

Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy [margin, a most holy place]. (Daniel 9:24)

Besides announcing the coming period of 490 years on the Jews and Jerusalem, the angel states *what* God is going to do in that period (not *after* it, but *in* it). It is in the next three

⁵⁷⁴ cf. Jer. 25:11

⁵⁷⁵ Ex. 23:10, 11; Lev. 25:3-9

⁵⁷⁶ Dan. 9:24

⁵⁷⁷ *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954, 1964)

verses that we are told how these things shall come to pass. Six things are to take place—again, observe, concerning Daniels “people” Israel, and their “city” Jerusalem:

a. “to finish transgression”

Daniel had been confessing the rebellious breaches of the divine law. Within this period these transgressions are to come to an end. The Hebrew word has no connection with atonement, as advocates of a “church” interpretation suppose, but rather to restrain, cause to cease. (as the rain, Gen. 8:2). The disobedience of these people is to cease; an age of obedience is to be ushered in.

b. “to make an end of sins”

A literal translation is “to seal up sins.” As in the book of Job where God is said to seal up the stars so that they do not shine⁵⁷⁸ and as cold weather seals up the hand of man so that he cannot continue his accustomed daily labor,⁵⁷⁹ so in this period of seventy weeks of years, the sins of Daniel's people are to be brought under full restraint. The same seems to be the idea of sealing Satan in the pit—to bring his activities to an end.⁵⁸⁰ Sins are related to transgressions as failures are consequent upon a rebellious attitude.

c. “to make reconciliation for iniquity”

The work of reconciliation accomplished at Calvary by the Lord will be effective for Israel when again in their land, “in that day” of his second appearing, they “look on him whom they have pierced”,⁵⁸¹ and shall repent.⁵⁸² “In those days, and in that time saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve”.⁵⁸³

The previous three matters to be effected during the 490 years are negative: the settlement of their sin problem; the second group of three have to do with the establishment of positive righteousness among them, not imputed righteousness but personal righteousness and national moral integrity.

d. “to bring in everlasting righteousness”

This will be affected by an inward moral transformation within the people, writing the law of God in their hearts.⁵⁸⁴

e. “to seal up vision and prophecy [margin and Heb., prophet]”

When there is no more sin to correct, the disciplinary words of the prophets will cease to be needed. This is specifically declared at Jeremiah 31:34.

f. “to anoint the most holy [margin, a most holy place]”

There is more agreement among commentators with regard to the interpretation of this

⁵⁷⁸ Job 9:7

⁵⁷⁹ Job 37:7

⁵⁸⁰ Rev. 20:1 ff

⁵⁸¹ *vid.* Zech. 12:10 cf. Rev. 1:7

⁵⁸² Jer. 50:4, 5, 17-20 should be read at this point.

⁵⁸³ Jer. 50:20

⁵⁸⁴ Jer. 31:33-40

phrase than might be expected for most of them agree that the language specifies that with the ending of sinning among Daniel's people and the bringing in of righteousness, a new Jewish temple shall be anointed (as was the tabernacle in the wilderness), i.e., set aside for divine worship. Mount Zion will be crowned with a new temple, of which the tabernacle and the succession of temples of old were but shadows. The glory-presence of the Lord will return;⁵⁸⁵ the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of cloud by night likewise.⁵⁸⁶ The ritual, since the death of our Lord put an end to sacrifices forever, will be different, but "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace".⁵⁸⁷

2. The First 69 of the Weeks

Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times. (Daniel 9:25)

There never has been but one common Christian interpretation of "the anointed one, the prince": that he is the Lord Jesus Christ. "Anointed" is the Hebrew word "Messiah," in Greek translation, *Christos*, Latin *Christus*, hence, English, Christ. The word "prince" is a designation entirely proper to the Savior.⁵⁸⁸

Now, therefore, we see two periods, one of seven sevens (49 years) to be followed by another of 62 sevens (434 years), 483 years in all, were to expire between the giving of a decree to restore the Jewish city of Jerusalem and the appearance of Christ. The decree is one made in heaven, of course, but manifest on earth by some king's announcement. An examination of the evidence (too lengthy to report and discuss here) leads to the conclusion that only one decree reported in the Old Testament fits the specifications as a "commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." This was the one made by the Persian king Arataxerxes Longimanus (465-423 B.C.) in the year 445 (perhaps 444) B.C. and executed by Nehemiah. The story is told in the first two chapters of Nehemiah. What events were to transpire during the first period of seven weeks (49 years) is not stated, but likely it was the completion of the Restoration temple. Why it took so long is explained by several facts. The massive walls erected over the centuries on old Jebusite foundations by a succession of kings, David to Zedekiah, and many times enlarged and repaired, were really broken down. They were in wholly wrecked condition when Nehemiah and his men set out to rebuild them.⁵⁸⁹ The people were neither numerous nor especially ambitious, as the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi show. Furthermore, there were many opponents and several interruptions (Nehemiah). The prophecy of Haggai was directed mainly to stirring up the sluggish immigrants, who had come several years before, to rise up and finish the task.

There is no suggestion of any interval or gap between the seven and the 62-week periods. I am acquainted with no convincing arguments for any break in the consecutive continuity of the prophecy before the end of the sixty-ninth week, though I have read several learned works so advocating.

A bit of simple arithmetic shows how the prophecy was fulfilled. Seven times 69 is 483 years,

⁵⁸⁵ Ez. 43:1-7

⁵⁸⁶ Is. 4:1-5

⁵⁸⁷ Hag. 2:9 ASV

⁵⁸⁸ *vid.* the familiar words of Is. 9:6, 7; cf. Lu. 1:32, 33

⁵⁸⁹ Neh. 1:3; 2:3, 13, 17

the period from the decree of the Persian king to Messiah's presentation. The time from 445 to about 30 A.D., the end of Christ's career, is about 474 years.⁵⁹⁰ Knowing as we do, that our knowledge of dates in those ages is only approximately certain, and that prophecies of time were not always exactly intended, the correspondence is close enough to demonstrate that Daniel really did predict the actual time of Messiah's appearance.

It is possible, however, that we may be able to refine the matter further. The New Testament seems to indicate that Christ only once officially presented himself to the Jews as their "Messiah-Prince," and that was at the beginning of the last week of his life in what is known as the "Triumphal Entry." Fulfilling the prediction that their "king" would come to them "just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass",⁵⁹¹ Jesus on that one occasion presented himself to the nation as their promised king. Previously he had commanded his disciples not to proclaim him as the Messiah.⁵⁹² He had previously steadfastly refused either to be made king or to act as their judge.⁵⁹³ But on this day he gave the instructions for his entrance that led to his being proclaimed by the crowds as Son of David, the promised king who would come in Jehovah's name.⁵⁹⁴ As Jesus moved into sight of the city,⁵⁹⁵ some of the Pharisees complained and asked him to rebuke his followers, Whereupon Jesus said, "if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out".⁵⁹⁶ This was clearly his presentation day. He apparently knew he was acting in God's will and thereby fulfilling Old Testament prophecy. No other understanding of these words seems adequately to explain the solemn intent.

Certain scholars have interpreted the seventy weeks of prophetic years on the basis of a 360 day year. Making full account of astronomical and chronological data they have calculated that Daniel's prediction was carried out to the very day.⁵⁹⁷ The case is a strong one and is well presented.

3. The Hiatus between 69th and 70th Week

And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined. (Daniel 9:26)

It is crucial to understanding this portion of prophecy to note carefully that two events clearly indicated and separated by 38 years of time, are introduced *after* the sixty-ninth week but *before* the seventieth. The text says "after" and the order of happenings requires "before." These two events are the cutting off of messiah by death (about 30 A.D.) and the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple about forty years later (70 A.D.) by the people (Roman) of the "coming" wicked prince Antichrist. There are competent interpreters of nearly every school of believing interpretation who insist that this coming prince is Antichrist, said to be "coming" because his coming has previously been clearly predicted in Daniel.⁵⁹⁸ The mighty pen of F.C. Kreit defends this view.

⁵⁹⁰ 1 B. C. to A. D. 1 is one year.

⁵⁹¹ Zech. 9:9 cf. Mt. 21:5-6

⁵⁹² Mt. 16:20, *et. al.*

⁵⁹³ Jn. 6:15; Lu. 12:13, 14, *et. al.*

⁵⁹⁴ Lu. 19:28-38

⁵⁹⁵ Lu. 19:42-44

⁵⁹⁶ Lu. 19:40

⁵⁹⁷ Anderson, *The Coming Prince*, ably summarized for the lay reader by McClain, *Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy weeks*, Zondervan.

⁵⁹⁸ Dan. 7

Thus, a gap is introduced between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks—not arbitrarily by theologians, as is sometimes claimed, but exegetically by the very language of the text itself. This verse suggests, however, that continuing wars, invasions (flood) and desolations shall plague the city of Jerusalem until "the end".⁵⁹⁹

4. The Seventieth Week

And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate. (Daniel 9:27)

This coming prince, the anti-Messiah, shall affect a seven-year league covenant with Daniel's people in their city,⁶⁰⁰ people known in chapter seven and chapter eight as "the holy people." In the middle of it Antichrist shall break the league, and begin to persecute them, as his ancient prototype, Antiochus, did in the second century B.C.

It is beyond the scope of this study fully to treat the later Biblical references to the two halves of this seventieth week. Jesus made reference to the "abomination" that marks its mid-point in his last great address, an eschatological discourse relating to the future of Jerusalem.⁶⁰¹ Paul's discussion of the "Son of Perdition" or "Man of Sin"⁶⁰² relates in part to the same event, in the opinion of many interpreters, the present writer included. The second half of this week is referred to in others of the oracles of Daniel—the three and one-half times wherein the little horn persecutes the holy people⁶⁰³ and at least three times in the twelfth chapter.⁶⁰⁴ Most importantly the seven years halved into two periods and indicated in Revelation by such literary devices as three and one-half times, 1260 days, 42 months becomes important to the interpretation of that book, supplying the indispensable key to the futuristic interpretation. This halved period is referred to no less than five times therein.⁶⁰⁵

These chronological data are bewildering to the beginning student of prophetic matters. One should beware of accepting uncritically everything that is said about them, but contrariwise, one should certainly approach their study with a hopeful sanctified curiosity to understand the oracles of God.

So ends the story of an immediate answer to a godly prophet's prayer. Before the prayer had scarcely begun the answer was on the way. It was not what the prophet expected. How could he have expected it? He no doubt hoped that God would tell him that the exile would end and restoration, complete, final, and forever would come at the end of the 70 years of Jeremiah's prediction. God answered with more light. With the light came not an end to effort and study—rather with new tasks, new problems, new duties—and above all with new strength. So it will be with all godly prayers.

⁵⁹⁹ Overwhelming catastrophe or distress of any kind is frequently designated as a "flood" in Scripture. See for example Ps. 32:6f.

⁶⁰⁰ Dan. 9:24

⁶⁰¹ *vid.* Matt. 24:15 ff

⁶⁰² II Thess. 2

⁶⁰³ Dan. 7:25

⁶⁰⁴ Dan. 12:7, 11, 12

⁶⁰⁵ *vid.* Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5

X. Chapter 10: A Vision of God

A. Introduction

The careful student should read the last three chapters of the book as one before attempting to study the portion before us. These three chapters are really one section, comparable to one of the previous chapters, each of which is truly a unit. The previous chapters reporting Daniels visions⁶⁰⁶ each first relates an introductory vision of God, then a description of its effects on the prophet, next additional revelations and, finally, an interpretation of their meaning. Approximately the same takes place in this final section of three chapters. Chapter ten records the initial vision; chapters eleven and twelve contain the main revelations and interpretations. Several distinct prophecies, or oracles, of Daniel begin with the date when the author received them.⁶⁰⁷ The appearance of a date in the first verse of chapter 11 gives the impression that here also is the beginning of a new oracle, but it is a false impression, for it falls in the midst of a speech by the revealing angel begun in the preceding chapter. This is a capital example of the casual and careless manner in which some of the chapter divisions of our Bible were made. They are, after all, only the inventions of more men, not always well conceived or executed.

The section for this present study includes the initial vision, then further revelations imparted by the angel concerning the future of Israel in intercourse with certain nations of antiquity. These matters culminate in the oppressions of Antiochus Epiphanes⁶⁰⁸ in the last half of the second century B.C. These events are now all a part of ancient history. Throughout these last three chapters of the book God is, so to speak, "filling in the picture" sketched out in the prophecies of the earlier parts of the book. Chapter two gave the grand outline; chapter seven renewed the outline from a different point of view, enlarging upon the fourth Gentile kingdom in the end-time, and providing further information about the kingdom of Messiah; chapter eight enlarged details concerning the second and third kingdoms with special emphasis on conflicts of the third (Grecian) with the Jews. Chapter nine related wholly to the future of the Jews. Now, chapters ten through twelve fill in the details, adding very important new revelation concerning "last things" such as the resurrection of the dead, the judgments, final rewards, Antichrist, and the Great Tribulation. Most of these "eschatological" matters will come up for treatment in the final chapter of this book.

There is nothing more natural than for men to desire literally to see God. This is true even of ungodly men who little realize what they desire.⁶⁰⁹ Philip's "Lord show us the Father, and it sufficeth us",⁶¹⁰ is an example of the persistence of this desire and in our Lord's answer is an explanation of the ignorance of the manner in which it is usually expressed. The Psalmist's prayer, "As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" is an example of the beauty with which man can express the desire, and of the possible ennobling influence of it.

The chapter before us describes the appearance of God to a godly man, for the great angel or the preincarnate Son of God, the being whom Daniel saw, has all the marks of divine presence. Every occurrence of idolatry is an example of the possible misdirection of this desire with consequent corruption of all that might be good in mankind.

⁶⁰⁶ Dan. 7, 8, 9

⁶⁰⁷ Dan. 2:1; 7:1; 8:1; 9:1

⁶⁰⁸ Compare treatment of chapter eight

⁶⁰⁹ cf. Deut. 18:16

⁶¹⁰ Jn. 14:8

The tenth chapter relates a true culmination in the growing spiritual experience of the prophet. In chapter two he is represented as having a dream by which he interpreted another's dream. In chapters four and five he likewise interprets the experiences of others. But in chapter seven he receives subjective internal visions of his own, in which he sees great sights, interpreted by an angel from out of the vision. In chapter eight, evidently in a state of spiritual ecstasy wherein he was transported many miles to a different time and place, where he received a vision of the future. In chapter nine he saw the angel, Gabriel, with his own natural eyes in his own room at Babylon. In chapter ten he seems to have experienced actual sight of the Son of God in his own room. Thus the revelatory experiences of this man of God are a growing thing, climaxing in an immediate sight of the Son of God.

B. The Circumstances of the Revelation (10:1-4)

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Beltshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. (Daniel 10:1)

The date, the third year of Cyrus, is very important. It explains why Daniel was in mourning. The rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple of the Lord had been interrupted. According to Ezra 1:1 ff. king Cyrus decreed that the Jews might return to their homeland in the first year of his reign. Less than two years later the foundation of the restoration temple was laid.⁶¹¹ But immediately oppositions from renegade Jews in the vicinity stopped the work and discouraged the workmen.⁶¹² Commentators as early as Calvin, bringing secular history to the interpreter's task, have pointed out the Cyrus' son Cambyses was regent during certain campaigns of his father at this time, and being of a less benign character than his father, decreed the cessation of the building activity. Besides this, not many Jews had responded to the invitation to go home to Palestine, a matter of great concern to Daniel.

Daniel reminds his readers that his name "Beltshazzar", conferred by Nebuchadnezzar "after the name of" his "god" was not his real name.⁶¹³ Probably known by all as Beltshazzar, now, the old saint wished to let his continuing loyalty to his God, Jehovah, be proclaimed. Renewal of his name, Daniel—God's judge—did just that. No longer in public office,⁶¹⁴ the old man now could devote more time than ever to the concerns of his people, spiritual and otherwise.

This reminds us that old people, no longer able to be active in the affairs of *men* may be more active than ever in the affairs of *God* by prayer. Of the very aged Anna, Luke reports that she "was of great age...which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day".⁶¹⁵ No aged Christian is ever "superannuated" with God. The prayers of Daniel's later years made those years the most effectual for God of his whole life, and during those very same years came his greatest spiritual experiences.

There is probably no place in the entire Bible where there is more emphasis placed upon the absolute reliability of the reports and upon the absolute truth of the matters reported. "The thing was revealed," says the prophet. This means that the "word" or "message", both more appropriate than "thing," as translation, was revealed from heaven. Not only so, the "thing"⁶¹⁶ was true." The accompanying miraculous signs were such as to render disbelief in the divine

⁶¹¹ Ezra 3

⁶¹² Ezra 4:4, 5

⁶¹³ Dan. 4:8

⁶¹⁴ cf. Daniel 1:21 where continuance *in office* to the first year of Cyrus only is related.

⁶¹⁵ Lu. 2:36, 37

⁶¹⁶ Heb. *matter*

origin of the experiences and messages impossible. "The time appointed was long" is an obvious error of translation, for it should be that "the warfare was great" or even "the suffering was great." This means that these things came to Daniel in the midst of extreme physical and mental suffering. So far from looking back upon his vision of the Godhead as a pleasant experience, he honestly could say that it almost killed him, and except for special strengthening, would the experience have killed him. But these very sufferings were part of the experience of divine presence which rendered the "matter" so unquestionably true. Daniel's words about understanding the "matter" or "vision" showed that Daniel had no great problem in understanding most of what he was told by the angel. Daniel 12:8, which says he "understood not", seems to relate only to the cryptic words immediately preceding.

In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. (Daniel 10:2, 3)

There is not a hint that Daniel observed this period of special religious exercise in anticipation of the revelatory experience that came. For one thing, it was the regular Passover season and all true Jews would be concerned with special fastings and other religious exercises. But the affairs of his people being in such a low state Daniel gave himself especially to prayer.

We learn a good deal here about the right kinds of fasting and abstinence. Note that asceticism was not his usual practice. It is clear that ordinarily Daniel drank the usual wines, ate the fine breads, and took proper care of his body. He was no monk. The Bible generally disapproves of asceticism as a way of life.⁶¹⁷ And it is ridiculous to prescribe invalid and unscriptural distinctions between "fish" and "flesh." The plain facts are that Daniel reduced his diet and, eating only the simplest of nourishing foods, made eating and drinking only a means of keeping alive rather than a pleasure. Omitting the usual anointing left his skin in the dehydrated condition so uncomfortable to natives of the rear East and Mediterranean area. He made his *external* condition agree with his *internal condition* as an aid to importunity and continuity of his prayer. He was doing everything possible to let God know that he really meant business. It is amazing, in view of the nearly total lapse of the custom today, how much the Bible has to say in recommendation of temporary limitation of food and drink and elimination of all delicacies as an accompaniment of true repentance and of importunate prayer. One thing is sure: Jesus expected his disciples to fast and pray⁶¹⁸ going as far as giving specific instructions for it.⁶¹⁹ The Bible furnishes many examples of the most holy of men proclaiming and participating in prayer accompanied by fasting.⁶²⁰ Perhaps one of the greatest recommendations for fasting is the example of our Lord.⁶²¹

Fasting and similar rigorous religious exercise can, however, be wrongly interpreted and overdone. Calvin's warning is most helpful. After pointing out that the special reason for Daniel's fasting was the depressed condition of his people he adds:

"We must diligently notice this; for many celebrate fasting as if it were a principle part of the worship of God. They think it an act of obedience peculiarly pleasing to God. But this is a gross error, since fasting by itself ought to be treated as a matter unimportant and indifferent. It deserves no praise unless with reference to its object. Now the objects of fasting are various; the principal one is this, to enable the faithful suppliantly to deprecate

⁶¹⁷ *vid.* also Mark 7:18-23, Acts 10:9-18, I Tim. 4:1-3

⁶¹⁸ Mark 2:19, 20

⁶¹⁹ Mt. 6:16-18

⁶²⁰ Joel 1:14-16; II Chron. 20:3; Ezra 8:21-23, 10:6; Neh. 1:4; Deut. 9:9, 18; I Ki. 19:6-8

⁶²¹ Mt. 4:2

God's wrath with the solemn testimony of their repentance, and to stimulate each other to more fervor in their prayers. Ordinarily daily prayers do not require fasting; but when any great necessity presses upon us, that exercise is added by way of help, to increase the alertness and fervor of our minds in the pouring forth of prayer.⁶²²

I was by the side of the great river, which is Hidaka. (Daniel 10:4)

The "Great River" in the Old Testament is ordinarily the Euphrates.⁶²³ The *Hiddekel* (Tigris) may with equal right be called "the great river," for although it is only about 1150 miles long as compared with 1670 miles for the length of the Euphrates it falls more rapidly and carries much more water than the Euphrates. Hiddekel, the Hebrew name following the Assyrian, means River of the Date Palm. According to A. H. Sayce, Tigris is a Persian name formed by a play on a word in their language meaning "an arrow"—a reference to the swiftness of the stream.

The language of verse four indicates that Daniel was "by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel" in the flesh, rather than in spirit. In chapter eight ⁶²⁴ where it is clear that he was in Shushan by the River Ulai in vision, or spirit, the language is significantly different. There is not a word, as near as I can discern, to indicate the any of Daniel's experiences of this chapter were "in the spirit." Rather, he is represented as being very much "in the flesh" and as being brought to the very border of physical death because of those experiences. The things he saw, then, might therefore better be called "sights" than "visions," since visions in this book are mainly subjective experiences.

C. The Description of the Revelation and of its effect (10:5-9)

Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. (Daniel 10:5, 6)

There is a serious problem of interpretation here. Is the "man clothed in linen" the same as the angel who later talks with him? In any case, whom did Daniel see?

There are many who think the angel who does the talking later is Gabriel, the angel of revelation in the preceding portions and that the One seen in the magnificent vision is none other than the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, in his preincarnate state. Others think they are the same, and these usually also think the person to be Gabriel.

In favor of the identifying of only one person, an angel, is that both references speak of the one seen as "a man" or "one like the similitude of the sons of men."⁶²⁵ Further, in a situation where it is a natural assumption there is no clear indication that the two are not the same.

In favor of identifying the first with our Lord are several matters.

- i. Firstly in Daniel 7:13, a clear prophecy of Christ, the Lord is described as a son of "man"—very similarly to the description here in chapter ten.
- ii. Secondly, in a parallel type of vision seen by Ezekiel, the prophet sees one who is by

⁶²² Calvin, *loc. cit.*

⁶²³ *vid.* Genesis 15:18

⁶²⁴ Dan. 10:2

⁶²⁵ Dan. 10:5, 16

- almost all interpreters identified with Deity, the description being again of one with "the appearance of a man".⁶²⁶ Other features of Ezekiel's description are similar to many of Daniels.
- iii. Thirdly, the similarity of the description to that which John gives of the Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:12-20 is so great as to be almost identical. These similarities will be noted as we proceed.
 - iv. Fourthly, he stands above the waters, set apart, whereas the angels on the banks do not dare to stand there.⁶²⁷
 - v. Finally the angels in the vision appeal to this "man" as having superior knowledge, knowledge of the future which belongs only to God.⁶²⁸

So impressive is this evidence that another has most beautifully said, "We are compelled to recognize in this veiled Personality the Christ of the New Testament, and are led to place this closing vision of the Book side by side with that scene witnessed on the Sea of Galilee, when through the darkness a Figure was seen walking on the angry waters, whilst through the roaring of the tempest was heard a well-known Voice, saying to His terrified followers, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid."

As to the details of the sight—the linen appears to signify purity, being regularly worn by the priests as undergarments.⁶²⁹ Perhaps here it merely indicates fine clothing to indicate excellence of the person. The girdle (or belt) was a regular item of attire, and still is wherever people wear robes or gowns. Its purpose was to hold the garments in place and under which to "tuck up" the clothing to get it out of the way when any active work or play was begun. The common Biblical reference to girding oneself was to indicate preparation for immediate action. A girdle of gold would have been a cloth belt with heavy gold embroidery and ornamentation. This was a mark, in ancient times, of high station.⁶³⁰ The word "beryl," to which his body is compared, is a word of unknown meaning. It is the word *tarshish*, a name elsewhere in Scripture for some place far to the West and of ships. It was probably some rare and beautiful gem. The lightning refers to unusual brilliance, as do also the lamps of fire and the polished brass. The white of the linen, the brilliance of the gold, the flash of the Tarshish, the glare of the lightning and of the fire and brass all combine to present a picture of overwhelming brilliance, such as no human eye could look upon steadily. The descriptions of our Lord's transfiguration on the mountain top, before the startled eyes of Peter, James and John are very similar, while John's picture of the Lord as he saw him on Patmos corresponds in almost every detail, adding as a kind of summary, "and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength".⁶³¹ His words sounded "like the voice of a multitude," that is, of a crowd of people. All of these details combine to show that this was no earthly mortal, and probably no created being either. They appear to set Him apart as the Son of God, Himself.⁶³²

⁶²⁶ Ez. 1:26

⁶²⁷ Dan. 12:6

⁶²⁸ Dan. 12:6

⁶²⁹ Ex. 28:42

⁶³⁰ I Macc. 14:43

⁶³¹ Rev. 1:16

⁶³² Note: "girded with fine gold of Uphaz" (Dan. 10:5). Uphaz evidently was a gold-bearing area. The location is unknown. It is mentioned only here and in Jer. 10:9, whereas here it is said to be a source gold. It has been suggested that perhaps it is the same as Ophir, which is spelled the same in Hebrew except for the last letter. Post Biblical Jewish literature more to say about it. Ophir, though frequently mentioned in the Old Testament is quite unknown as to location. The Far East, Africa, and Arabia have been advocated.

And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hid themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. (Daniel 10:7)

The fact that Daniel only saw the vision, and that the men with him, though conscious that something unusual was taking place, saw nothing, is another feature in common with other appearances of the exalted Christ. Exactly the same sort of thing took place when the Lord appeared to Paul at the time of his conversion experience on the way to Damascus. "Suddenly," says the book of Acts, "there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth." When he heard a voice and asked who was speaking the answer was, "I am Jesus." As for the men with them, the narrative adds, "the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no man".⁶³³

This part of the story is proof also that all the events of Daniel's experiences here were in the natural waking state, not a vision in the usual sense of the word. That the sight given was supernatural is certain, of course. But the other men present were also aware of the presence of something unusual; they participated in a very reduced way in the experience. If it be objected that Daniel calls the experience a "vision," it may be answered that the word is used for almost any kind of sight or experience in Scripture. Context must determine the meaning. The context here makes it clear that Daniel saw with the organs of natural sight, his physical eyes. This was no "vision of the head upon the bed" as was the case of his experiences of chapter seven.⁶³⁴

There is an important practical truth to learn here also. Daniel did not experience any indescribable joy when, as a man in the flesh, he was brought into the glory-presence of God. Rather, says he, "there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength."⁶³⁵ He later makes it plain that except for the strengthening of the Lord he would have died. "We ought to learn to transfer this instruction to ourselves, not by the vanishing of our vigor or the changing of our appearance whenever God addresses us, but by all our resistance giving way, and all our pride and loftiness becoming prostrate before God. Finally, our carnal disposition ought to be completely reduced to nothing, as true docility will never be found in us until all our senses are completely mortified; "for we must always remember how hostile all our natural thoughts are to the will of God".⁶³⁶

When Calvin was pastor he conducted a frequent Bible study for his people at Geneva, always closing with a prayer. May we reverently join in the prayer he prayed after instructing them on the text before us. It is as follows.

"Grant, Almighty God, as thou didst formerly appear to Daniel thy holy servant, and to the other prophets, and by their doctrine did render thy glory conspicuous to us at this day, that we may reverently approach and behold it. When we have become entirely devoted to thee, may those mysteries which it has pleased thee to offer by means of their hand and labors, receive from us their due estimation. May we be cast down in ourselves and raised by hope

⁶³³ Acts 9:3-7

⁶³⁴ *vid.* Dan. 7:1

⁶³⁵ Note: *my comeliness was turned in me to corruption* (Dan. 10:8). The comeliness of Daniel was his natural beauty as a living being with "appropriate strength and grace." "Corruption" might better be "disfigurement"—a related Hebrew word being used at Isaiah 53:14 of the effect of the pains of crucifixion upon our Lord.

⁶³⁶ John Calvin

and faith toward heaven; when prostrate before thy face, may we so conduct ourselves in the world, as in the interval to become free from all the depraved desires and passions of our flesh, and dwell mentally in heaven..."

D. The Strengthening of the Prophet to Receive a Message (10:10-12, 15-19)

And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. (Daniel 10:10-12)

After the initial blinding flash of the presence of the Lord and the sound of his thunderous voice Daniel lay prostrate on his face. Then shortly a hand touched him. I am inclined to believe, as asserted earlier, that the hand was the hand of another than the "man clothed in linen"⁶³⁷ whom we have identified with the Lord. Rather, this is one "sent" by the Lord,⁶³⁸ and who appears to have been associated with Michael as another angel,⁶³⁹ and with still "other" angels,⁶⁴⁰ who are in turn distinct from the "man clothed in linen".⁶⁴¹

Several suggestions for the believer's private devotional life come to us from this incident.

- i. One is that *fear* is not always and in every way a detriment to us. Fear in the sense of respect is always necessary. An important item missing among the ungodly is that "there is no fear of God before their eyes".⁶⁴² But being afraid of God also has its chastening work. True, God as Father and as tender Shepherd gives us comfort. But a degree of fear of his awful majesty encourages submission, humility, and effort. God did not immediately remove all fear from His servant, for Daniel soon confesses that there was neither strength nor breath in him⁶⁴³ and required additional strengthening⁶⁴⁴ and further assurance.⁶⁴⁵ "As God knows fear to be useful to us, he does not wish us to be entirely free from it, as too great self-confidence would immediately produce slothfulness and pride. God, therefore, wishes our fears to restrain us like a bridle, but meanwhile he moderates this dread in his servants, lest their minds become stricken and disturbed, and thus disabled from approaching him with calmness".⁶⁴⁶
- ii. Another is that prayer can have a *fervor* pleasing to God when it is known that it is prayer according to God's will. Daniel knew, and the angel confirmed it, that he was praying according to the will of God. He might therefore warmly petition God. For it the angel commended him.⁶⁴⁷ (
- iii. Further, in that the angel approved of Daniel for setting his heart to understand "and to chasten thyself before God" and then adding that "thy words were heard" etc., we know

⁶³⁷ Dan. 10:5

⁶³⁸ Dan. 10:11

⁶³⁹ Cf. Dan. 10:21

⁶⁴⁰ Dan. 12:5

⁶⁴¹ Dan. 12:6

⁶⁴² Rom. 3:18

⁶⁴³ Dan. 10:17

⁶⁴⁴ Dan. 10:18

⁶⁴⁵ Dan. 10:19

⁶⁴⁶ Calvin

⁶⁴⁷ See I Jn. 5:14

that penitence and deep humility are proper accompaniments of prayer. Let us never forget that God is sovereign. We have no right to command him. He is no genie from out of an Aladdin's lamp who will do as bidden by proud and selfish men.

- iv. These elements of fear, fervor and penitence, are matched by another—confidence in approach to deity inasmuch as it is approach to one's own God. This is true, of course, only if one is truly a child of God by new birth. The angel told him how he had approached to "thy God".⁶⁴⁸ Believing that "he is" and that he becomes the "rewarder of them that diligently seek him"⁶⁴⁹ we should pray without "wavering" or vacillation ⁶⁵⁰ and with a strong heart "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need".⁶⁵¹
- v. Finally, we are taught that the prayer which "changes things" is the prayer of true *faith*, faith that is from a truly trusting pious heart: "Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me".⁶⁵² "The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them".⁶⁵³

Reserving for later treatment verses 13 and 14 we note the further stages in the strengthening of the prophet.⁶⁵⁴

And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I sake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my Lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of my lord talk with this my lord? For as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me. (Daniel 10:15-19)

The observing reader will have already noticed two stages in Daniels recovery from his initial shock and fright. The touch of the angel had caused him first to rise from a completely recumbent position, face downward, to his hands and knees.⁶⁵⁵ After further words of comfort he gained strength to stand "trembling"⁶⁵⁶ But as the angel continued to speak, his face drooped downward and he "became dumb".⁶⁵⁷ But a prophet, whose very function is to speak the word of the

⁶⁴⁸ Dan. 10:12

⁶⁴⁹ Heb. 11:6

⁶⁵⁰ Jas. 1:6, 7

⁶⁵¹ Heb. 4:16

⁶⁵² Dan. 10:19

⁶⁵³ Ps. 145:18, 19

⁶⁵⁴ Note: "Michael, one of the chief princes" (Dan. 10:13), "Michael your prince" (Dan. 10:21). Michael, in addition to being the name of the angel, is the name of ten different men of the Old Testament. The name means "Who is like God?" He is called "the archangel" (Jude 9). Elsewhere he is mentioned by name only in this chapter and in Dan. 12:1. Perhaps he is the unnamed angel of I Thessalonians 4:16, though many suppose that to be Gabriel. He is always presented in Scripture as the watchful guardian of God's people, Israel. The idea of seven archangels is not Scriptural, being derived from Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal books.

⁶⁵⁵ Dan. 10:10

⁶⁵⁶ Dan. 10:11

⁶⁵⁷ Dan. 10:15

Lord,⁶⁵⁸ must not be dumb. So, the angel touched his mouth and restored his powers of speech.⁶⁵⁹ But even with the power of speech restored the overwhelmed and aged prophet had neither strength⁶⁶⁰ nor breath⁶⁶¹ to carry on. Therefore, again the angel spoke consoling words imparting strength for the prophet to "carry on".⁶⁶²

Aside from the immediate result in the receiving and recording of the prophecy, there is an important lesson in this progressive restoration of the servant of God's abilities. Many students have noticed it. God does not always restore us from a fallen condition, whether physical illness or the disgrace and shame of backsliding, by an immediate and complete restoration. As with Daniel, it may be by degrees and over a long period of time as well. It is no reflection on the power of mercy of God that he works in this way. And sometimes the "scars" of our fall remain. As another has said, "God Leaves in his servants some signs of fear, to remind them of their infirmity; they venture to raise themselves by hope above the world, but they do not forget they are but dust...and to remain themselves within the bounds of humility and modesty."

Viz., "what shall befall thy people." Daniels's people were the Jews. All interpreters acknowledge this. We feel it unfortunate that having acknowledged this to be true many seek methods whereby to transfer the prophecy from the Jews to the church or to the people of God in general. This is not possible on any strict method of adherence to the language Scripture. Our views of the future of the church should be derived from passages which discuss the church. Some of these are the Olivet discourse of the Lord, the Epistles of Paul, of Peter, and of John, including the book of Revelation. This portion of Daniel should be interpreted, in harmony with the angel's instructions, in relation to God's people Israel.

E. The Conflicts of the Angelic Messenger (10:13, 20, 21)

But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. (Daniel 10:13)

Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and how will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince. (Daniel 10:20, 21)

The Scripture declares that we must beware of the "wiles of the devil." Then more specifically it is said, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood ⁶⁶³ but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness ⁶⁶⁴ in high places".⁶⁶⁵ The Bible never really opens the door widely on this subject—just a gleam of light here and there. These three verses are among the clearest, though there is difficulty of interpretation.

"*That which is noted in the scripture of truth*" (10:21). Though some suppose this to be the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, it seems more likely that this is a figurative expression for the decrees of

⁶⁵⁸ Deut. 18:15-22; Jer. 1:6-9

⁶⁵⁹ Dan. 10:15

⁶⁶⁰ Dan. 10:16

⁶⁶¹ Dan. 10:17

⁶⁶² Dan. 10:18, 19

⁶⁶³ i.e., merely human opponents

⁶⁶⁴ ASV spiritual hosts of wickedness

⁶⁶⁵ Eph. 6:11, 12

God. Books appear in a number of Old Testament figures of speech and prophetic symbols.⁶⁶⁶

Although there are interpreters who think that the princes referred to herein are the human kings of the countries named, it is the consensus of opinion that they are evil angelic spirits. Daniel had already referred to good angels as "watchers" and "holy ones" in previous chapters.

Calvin, followed by a few interpreters, thought "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" to be the king of Persia. But, when the king is referred to herein he is called "king" not "prince".⁶⁶⁷ If Michael was "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people"⁶⁶⁸ then this prince would also surely be an angel. That he was an evil angel is indicated by the fact that he withstood Michael. The fact that Michael is called a "chief prince" and elsewhere denominated an "archangel" suggests that there are degrees of authority among angels, implying some sort of organization.

The Old Testament world was one in which men believed that each nation had its special God. The king of Nineveh called Nisroch "*his* god";⁶⁶⁹ Nebuchadnezzar named Daniel Belteshazzar "according to the name of *my* god".⁶⁷⁰ So strong was this belief that even an apostate Jewish king transferred his worship to that of his conqueror in hope of obtaining his aid.⁶⁷¹ And, though the idols which represented them are everywhere in Scripture declared to be vain, no breath in them, etc., there is also occasional information to the effect that evil spirits, not identical with the gods of the idols, were behind the whole delusion and gaining pleasure from them. Paul declares that "an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God" etc.⁶⁷² Yet, having declared the nothingness of the idol and the god it represented, Paul adds most significantly in the same Epistle, "What say I then? that the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [ASV demons], and not to God".⁶⁷³ It is, therefore, in complete harmony with the rest of Scripture to suppose that the princes of Persia and of Greece who opposed Gabriel were the devil's own angels.⁶⁷⁴

It is important to observe that Michael is mentioned as a defender, with Gabriel, of Daniel's people. In Daniel 12:1 it is said that Michael is "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." In the book of Revelation a great war between Michael and his angel and the dragon and his angels is described.

May this not explain some of the mysteries of the affairs of men? The world is Satan's. He claims it, even declaring his claim in the presence of our Lord.⁶⁷⁵ He is the world's god⁶⁷⁶ and a prince now working in the hearts of all the unsaved.⁶⁷⁷ The world lies in his control and reflects his character.⁶⁷⁸ A nation of many millions of the most intelligent and highly educated men on the face of the whole earth were changed from a peaceful republic to a blood-thirsty collective

⁶⁶⁶ Mal. 3:16; Ps. 139:16; Ez. 3:1 ff.

⁶⁶⁷ Cf. Dan. 11:2

⁶⁶⁸ i.e., for Israel

⁶⁶⁹ Is. 37:38

⁶⁷⁰ Dan. 4:8

⁶⁷¹ II Chron. 28:23

⁶⁷² I Cor. 8:4, 5

⁶⁷³ I Cor. 10:19, 20

⁶⁷⁴ cf. Jude 9; Rev. 12:7; Matt. 25:41

⁶⁷⁵ Lu. 4:5-7

⁶⁷⁶ II Cor. 4:4

⁶⁷⁷ Eph. 2:2

⁶⁷⁸ I Jn. 5:19, Jn. 8:44

Juggernaut in less than ten years within the memory of millions of people now living. Twenty-one years ago an otherwise keen and useful English diplomat named Chamberlain made foolish decisions at Munich that no loyal Englishman in his right mind could have made. If God would let a lying spirit lead astray the advisors of Ahab ⁶⁷⁹ He could and would let another lead a British diplomat astray.

Since Christians wrestle against this demonical array we understand why our weapons are not of flesh. Again Paul is our teacher: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds...)" ⁶⁸⁰

We also understand why the leaders of our nation need our prayers, and why our chief national defenses are not in military array. May these truths lead us all to heed more heartily the Scripture which says: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God and our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth". ⁶⁸¹

F. Prophecy of the Immediate Future of Israel in Relation to the Nations (11:1-35)

The thirty-five verses which lie before us relate to matters which are now long past. Two verses are devoted to the fortunes of ancient Medo-Persia its kings. Two verses are devoted to the rise and fall of the great Grecian King, Alexander. The rest is all about the history of the two divisions of Alexander's empire which lay nearest Palestine, one to its south and the other to its north. The one to the south is known throughout the prophecy as "the king of the south"; the one to the north is known throughout as "the king of the north." A whole succession of kings in each of these is indicated by these two expressions. Approximately 150 years of history is covered. "The king of the south" is the land of Egypt, and its kings of the dynasty of Ptolemy, one of Alexander's generals who inherited that part of the empire. "The king of the north" is the land of Syria and its kings of the dynasty of Seleucus, another of Alexander's generals. The Syrian kingdom came to an end when the Roman general Pompeii conquered it for Rome, 63 B. C. It is of more than usual interest that the last of the so-called "kings of the south" was a queen. Her name? Cleopatra, the woman of easy morals whose amorous relations with the Roman generals Anthony and Julius Caesar are sufficiently celebrated.

This section has much in common with chapter eight. As there, the narrative moves swiftly until it reaches the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. And, as in chapter eight, the climax is a prophecy of the infamous act of that wicked and oppressive king in desecrating the Jewish temple.

1. Prophecy of the Medes and Persians (11:1, 2)

Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up against the realm of Grecia. (Daniel 11: 1, 2)

We may only surmise the purpose of the angelic strengthening of Darius in his first year. His first year as vassal-king of Babylon apparently coincides with Cyrus' first year. Perhaps it had

⁶⁷⁹ I Kings 22

⁶⁸⁰ II Cor. 10:3, 4

⁶⁸¹ I Tim. 2:1-4

something to do with the kind of treatment both of these kings (except for the unfortunate incident of chapter six) accorded the Jews. It was Cyrus who at this time allowed the Jews permission to return home to Palestine and furnished resources for the return.

The rest is familiar to all students of ancient history. Cyrus, the first king of the Empire of the Persians, being on the throne at the time of Daniel's experience, the first of the three was his son Cambyses who began to reign in 529 B.C. The second was an imposter—called Pseudo-Smerdis by the historians. This man took over the throne at the death of Cambyses. Though A. T. Olmstead, an authority on Near Eastern history thinks Smerdis not an imposter, the consensus of opinion is otherwise. Next came a truly great king, Darius Hystaspis, the man who began serious planning for the conquest of Europe. He was successful in the use of the fabulous riches of his realm for diplomatic conquests. The many Greeks living in Ionia, or Asia Minor, to the east of the Aegean Sea, were largely bought over by his silver and gold. The fourth, Darius' son Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther, is the fourth and greatest, referred to here, whose riches would arouse many against Greece. The failure of his expeditions against the Greeks is not mentioned here. It was largely this Xerxes who aroused the burning wrath of the Greeks.

2. Prophecy of the Greeks and of Alexander (11:3, 4)

It is not necessary to repeat here what has already been said about these things in connection with chapters seven and eight.

3. Prophecy concerning Syria and Egypt (11:5-35)

This is an interesting reference to one called "a contemptible person" in this section.⁶⁸² When Isaiah 53:3 says of our Lord "He is despised," predicting the attitude the Jews would take toward the lovely Son of God, he uses the same Hebrew word. The vile man who desecrated the temple and slaughtered innocent Jews was the most hated man in Jewish history—save one, our Lord Jesus Christ. They had the same word for both Jesus and Antiochus! How perverted can humanity become? "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter".⁶⁸³

It is neither feasible nor profitable in the present exposition to trace the correspondence between Daniel's prophecy of these two kingdoms and the history of the period. The prophecy does not cover every section of the period, that is to say, there are gaps in the coverage. Neither is present knowledge of the period sufficiently complete to give a full picture. The so-called historical portions of the Old Testament were not given specifically to teach history, only to trace the working of God in the succession of events. We may not, therefore, expect to find strict history, with dates, sequences, etc. always clearly before us in predictive portions.

A helpful confirmation of the Danielic authorship and early date of the book is to be found herein. Egypt is mentioned by name, in such a way as to indicate that it is the king of the south,⁶⁸⁴ but the kingdom of the Seleucids, called the king of the north is un-named. We refer to it as Syria, but really that is inaccurate inasmuch it included much more than the geographical area known as Syria, and was unrelated to the Old Testament kingdom of that name. This appears to be because though Egypt was known in the time of Daniel in the sixth century, being a very ancient nation, the kingdom of the Seleucids was not yet in existence, and mention of its name would have been meaningless.

⁶⁸² Dan. 11:21 ASV

⁶⁸³ Is. 5:20

⁶⁸⁴ Dan. 118, cf. v. 9

It is at verse 21 that the prophecy becomes most significant, for here Antiochus Epiphanes,⁶⁸⁵ the wicked persecutor of the Jews in the second century B. C. is introduced as "a vile person." This is the man who introduced vile pagan worship in the temple, known to the prophet at Daniel 8:13 as "the transgression of desolation" and here at verse 31 as "the abomination that maketh desolate." There is similar language used at Daniel 9:27, "for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate" in prediction of a future desecration of a restored Jewish temple in the times of the coming Antichrist. Jesus referred to this as yet future in his time, predicting that it would occur in times just before his second coming, and warning his disciples against it.⁶⁸⁶ The prophecies of the sufferings of Israel under Antiochus, then, are likewise a warning of what is yet ahead.

In the days of Antiochus only those who knew "their God" ⁶⁸⁷ were able to hold up their heads without shame. It was they who were helped by God, being enabled to "do exploits".⁶⁸⁸ The Apocryphal books of Maccabees tell the details and Hebrews 11:34-39 memorializes them as heroes of faith. Many of them were to die for their faith,⁶⁸⁹ but their lives were to teach others ⁶⁹⁰ and their suffering was to make them pure, by the help of God.⁶⁹¹

These godly heroes of the 160's and 150's B.C. were the separatists of their day. They believed in being separate from the pagan vices of the Greeks and from the beautiful lies of the pagan religion and its attractive ritual. They are the main link between Old and New Testaments, for the spiritual descendants of these people who appear in prediction in the Old Testament appear on the pages of our Gospels as the Pharisees—the name means separated ones. It is sad to know that many of them feel far from their original principles.

⁶⁸⁵ *vid.* notes concerning him in comments on chapter eight

⁶⁸⁶ Mt. 24:15-21

⁶⁸⁷ Dan. 11:32

⁶⁸⁸ Dan. 11:32

⁶⁸⁹ Dan. 11:34, 35

⁶⁹⁰ Dan. 11:33

⁶⁹¹ Dan. 11:34, 35

XI. Chapter 11: A Summary of Old Testament Eschatology

A. Introduction

Though effort has been made to avoid using the technical term, "eschatology," and its relative, "eschatological," it has appeared a few times in these studies, and there it now stands in the title of this last study in Daniel. So, it must be defined. Almost all of the technical terms of theology come from the ancient Greek language. This is because the early Christian theologians spoke and wrote in Greek—before Latin became the official language of the Western branch of Christendom. "Theology," itself, is one of those terms. Now, the common Greek word for "last" or "last thing" is *eschatos* (pronounced es-ka-tos). The Greek word for a treatise, word, or discussion is *logos*. Put the two words together, and, with a bit of abbreviation and the addition of an English word-ending the result is "eschatology," the study or treatment of last things. These topics are firstly those relating to the ultimate future of men personally, such as death, the intermediate state between death and resurrection, resurrection, judgment, heaven, hell, etc; matters relating to the future of the human race, such as the second coming of Christ, the great tribulation, the Antichrist, etc.

Inasmuch as the whole Bible is related to man's ultimate destiny, designed by God to lead men into eternal life, it is all eschatological in a general way. Yet, inasmuch as these last portions of the book of Daniel relate specifically to technically eschatological questions, it is eschatology in a narrow sense. Light on a number of questions and topics only slightly treated in earlier portions of the Bible is here brightened. Information on some others is here for the first time clearly introduced.

We are again living in a time when matters of eschatology are considered to be respectable subjects for the consideration of sober men. For a good while after the opening years of World War II even prophetically inclined pastors and churches avoided eschatological themes—for reasons to be discussed just a bit later. Perhaps the meeting of the World Council of Churches at Evanston in the summer of 1954, when the theme was the second coming of Christ and related matters, has done as much as anything to "rehabilitate" the subject in the popular mind. But even greater is the divinely implanted interest of men, whose "passion" is "for eternity" and in whose breasts "hope springs eternal"! Men want to know about the future. In the face of death we are forced to think about it. When the course of history appears to be moving rapidly on toward some consummation, as it is today, men cannot help but be interested in eschatology.

B. Prophecy Concerning the Future "Willful King" (11:36-45)

Somewhere in this prophecy between the end of verse four of chapter eleven and the opening of chapter 12 the prediction shifts from the historic kingdoms of antiquity to "last things." Interpreters are generally agreed in this, but they greatly disagree as to just where the break comes. Dr. S. P. Tregelles, a learned and devout scholar of a century ago who is still highly regarded today though rarely read, felt that the break between "that which is long past and that which is future" came at the end of verse four. Beginning with verse five, and on to the end of the book, all would then be "eschatology." Dr. Keil thought that beginning with the mention of the "vile person" at verse 21 the last prophecy becomes typical of the eschatological Antichrist, and that end-time events occupy the interest for the rest of the book.

B. W. Newton and G. H. Pember felt that change comes in verse 34 and 36, and from thence the topics are eschatological. There are others who think the shift is at the end of chapter 11. The shift comes somewhere in the chapter, for while chapter eleven begins with ancient predictions

about ancient Persia and Greece, at its end ⁶⁹² transition has been made to the resurrection of the dead, final judgments and rewards, and other clearly final events. Where is the break?

- i. As indicated by my expository divisions it is my opinion that the break comes between verses 35 and 36. If the student has carefully read chapters 11 and 12, the following summary of arguments should be sufficient to demonstrate that this division is at least feasible. A fact strongly in favor of this view is that a majority of reverent scholars have favored it. Jerome states that this portion was applied to Antichrist by "our writers" in his day, and he, himself, favored the interpretation.
- ii. The scope of the prophecy, as indicated by the words of Gabriel ⁶⁹³ demands eschatological prophecy somewhere in this part of Daniel, for he said that it was for "the latter days." This alone makes our view a possibility.
- iii. All of chapter 11, down to verse 35, can be shown to relate to rather well-known events of the ancient history of Syria and Egypt. It is, as most scholars admit, quite impossible to find such correspondence between any known events of antiquity and 11:36-45. It is logical then to suppose it to refer to some other period.
- iv. The mention in verse 36 of a king who shall prosper till the "indignation be accomplished" suggests end times. "The indignation" is a technical term out of the predictive literature of the Old Testament usually naming an end-time settling.⁶⁹⁴
- v. Of much greater weight is the fact that this section contains predictions which correspond quite precisely with many other unquestionable predictions of the coming Antichrist. See especially the second chapter of II Thessalonians and the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters of Revelation. This outlook has the support of most recent evangelical writers.
- vi. For those sufficiently interested to give the passage thorough study, it will be important to note that there is a natural break in thought at verse 36, a break observed by the paragraphing of both the American Standard Version and the Revised Standard Version, as well as other translations.
- vii. Though not of decisive force, the phrase, "at the time of the end"⁶⁹⁵ supports our view; i.e., that the transition to eschatology has been passed.
- viii. Of decisive force, in my opinion, is the connection indicated between chapters 11 and 12. Chapter 12 begins, "And at that time." There follow the Great Tribulation, the resurrection of the dead and the final reward of the righteous—certainly eschatological if anything is. So the last part of chapter 11, at least, is eschatological—for it is "at the same time." This is of decisive importance. The best place to make the break before the beginning of chapter 12 is between verses 33 and 36, for here is introduced a new king who does "according to his will" and who seems to be neither the king of the north nor the king of the south who are being discussed in the preceding section.

And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be

⁶⁹² *vid.* 12:1 ff

⁶⁹³ Dan. 10:14

⁶⁹⁴ See Isaiah 26:20 for an illustrative passage.

⁶⁹⁵ Dan. 11:40

accomplished: for that is determined shall be done. (Daniel 11:36)

This is the same as the "son of perdition" referred to in II Thessalonians, where it is said that as "man of sin" he "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God".⁶⁹⁶ Paul places his appearing just before our Savior's own second coming.⁶⁹⁷ His actions are the same as those ascribed to him under the figure of the "little horn" in chapter seven; "He shall speak great words against the most High."⁶⁹⁸ Antiochus, as his type, was to portray some of these characteristics, for "He magnified himself even to the Prince of the host;⁶⁹⁹ "He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes".⁷⁰⁰

But his career shall be short—only till the "indignation be accomplished"—till the brief time of three and one-half years⁷⁰¹ during which God shall use him to judge wicked men shall expire.

Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. (Daniel 11:37)

An interesting touch is added here. If he is to be an anti-Christ, he will be a Jew, for the word "anti" in Greek means "instead of" rather than "opposed to." If he is to pose for a while as the Jewish Christ (Messiah) it would appear necessary for him to be a Jew. The "God of his fathers" is, then, the Jehovah God of Israel. Some modern translations render the passage "gods of his fathers" but the oft-recurring Scriptural reference to the "God of your fathers" or the "God of their fathers" or "Lord God" etc. makes it close to a certainty that the common expression for the Jewish God, Jehovah, is meant here. Besides, no true Jew will ever accept a known pagan as his Christ. At first, he will appear to be a pious Jew—afterward his true character will come to light.

"Nor desire of women" has been variously interpreted to mean anything from certain womanly idols to sexual interest. The exact meaning is still unknown. Certain expositors think this may be a reference to Jesus Christ. Pious Jewish women, it is said, in times before the birth of Jesus, hoped to give birth to the promised seed. Since in the next verse the wicked king is represented as honoring another, this is evidence that it is a reference to the Antichrist.⁷⁰² Jerome observes that in his day some thought the phrase meant that Antichrist would make a show of chastity, that he had no lust for women.⁷⁰³ Yet Jerome's own translation of the passage indicates that he felt it should read "he shall be engrossed in lust for women"—i.e., Antiochus would be so engrossed. Certain Lutheran interpreters have said it refers to the prohibition of marriage among the Roman Catholic clergy! Others have thought it a reference to ancient worship of Astarte, whose worship by females was accompanied by lasciviousness and prostitution. By this interpretation Antiochus would disregard Astarte worship. One has even suggested that it is a prediction of the Roman Catholic worship of Mary.

But in his estate shall he honor the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase

⁶⁹⁶ II Thess. 2:3, 4

⁶⁹⁷ II Thess. 2:8, 9

⁶⁹⁸ Dan. 7:25 cf. 7:11

⁶⁹⁹ Dan. 8:11

⁷⁰⁰ Dan. 8:25

⁷⁰¹ Dan. 7:25; 9:27; Rev. 17:10, 17; 13:5

⁷⁰² Ironside and Gaebelein.

⁷⁰³ Reminds us of Hitler's reputation.

*with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.
(Daniel 11:38, 39)*

A better rendering of "but in his estate he shall honor the God of forces" might be; "But in its place he shall honor the god of force." Keil suggests an interpretation that seems adequate, *viz.*, having rejected the worship of any god at all, Antichrist shall make the winning of wars his god—"Might makes right."

Not very long ago the people of Germany got a new ruler, known about the world as Adolph Hitler. He rejected the Christian God of the official churches of the land. Openly he claimed to honor the state of Germany itself as his god, suggesting that he himself, as its head, was a sort of god. He resurrected, for propaganda purposes, the pre-Christian deities of the German tribes. But secretly he practiced astrology and consulted fortune-tellers and other practitioners of the occult arts. This is the kind of man the willful king of this chapter will be. While proclaiming himself as a god, and honoring "forces" (military power, perhaps) above everything else, he will be inwardly a spiritual quack, practicing the most foolish things. This has not been at all unusual in the history of the world. And, when we see what might men may now pack in a military punch loaded with hydrogen and atomic bombs, it will be no wonder if he should lead men to fall down and worship that very force as god. Mars, the god of war, has always been a popular deity!

The climax of his career in the momentous events leading to his end at the very appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ to judge and rule the nations, and to deliver his ancient people Israel, is described in the next five verses. It is "at the time of the end".⁷⁰⁴ Paul tells us "that wicked...the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming".⁷⁰⁵ Isaiah 11:4 describes the same events as does also Revelation 19:11 ff. The twelfth and fourteenth chapters of Zechariah give the locale and time of these events. Israel returned to their land in unbelief shall be attacked by this man's forces and, hopelessly outnumbered and overpowered, shall be delivered by the appearing of the very Son of God, their Messiah, Himself. This will be followed by the millennium. The six verses before us portray the growing complex of affairs in the career of the willful king, the man of sin, leading up to that consummation.

And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. (Daniel 11:40)

The willful king will be successful at war. Having appeared on the scene of world affairs as a little horn, he shall begin his conquests by rudely toppling the crowns from off the heads of three neighboring kings.⁷⁰⁶ Toward the end he shall grow in power rapidly till all the "horns" with "one mind" shall give their power and strength unto the beast".⁷⁰⁷ But others will remain opposed him. Among them appear to be the king of the south (Egypt) and the king of north (Syria). Incidentally the willful king of these verses cannot be Antiochus Epiphanes for he was a king of the north. Despite the fierceness of their attack with all kinds of advanced weapons and forces⁷⁰⁸ he shall win.

He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries [countries is not in the Hebrew] shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom and Moab, and the

⁷⁰⁴ Dan. 11:40

⁷⁰⁵ II Thess. 2:8, 9

⁷⁰⁶ Dan. 7:8, 20

⁷⁰⁷ Rev. 17:13

⁷⁰⁸ ...for that must be the meaning of "whirlwind ...chariots...horsemen...ships"

chief of the children of Ammon. (Daniel 11:41)

Although much of this must await the fulfillments for exposition, one thing is clear, this king will invade the Holy Land ⁷⁰⁹ but without complete success. Many people, presumably of that "glorious land" shall be overthrown, but not all. "It is interesting to observe how these three districts, of which at this time he does not take possession, are specified in Isa. xi. as falling into the hands of restored Israel;—'they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them'.⁷¹⁰

He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not-escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to take away many. (Daniel 11:42-44)

Thirty to thirty-five years ago, when World War II was a-making, this was a very popular section of the Bible for sermons on prophecy, especially these three verses. The Russians were beginning to look big on the international horizon; Hitler was just becoming well-known. The British were still the leading European power. But the really startling customer was Benito Mussolini, Premier of Italy. He had galvanized his own Italy into something of a first-class country again, had built up what looked like a pretty fair army, had talked boastfully and loudly of a revival of the traditions of the Caesars in Italy, and had boldly set out to restore the Roman Empire of old. Was he the "little horn"?

If so, then we might look for him soon to pluck up three other kingdoms and begin his march to power.

With the passage of the years in those fateful thirties the correspondence of certain events of international history with these verses became so startlingly close that not a few declared that the final lineup of nations for Armageddon was taking place before our very eyes. The willful king of verse 36 who exalted himself above every god (which Mussolini really did), and boasted and bragged of his own greatness,⁷¹¹ and who worshipped Mars, the god of war ⁷¹² was convincingly declared by many to be Mussolini. The king of the south,⁷¹³ on what seemed to be pretty good grounds, was identified with the British Empire.⁷¹⁴ The king of the north was thought to, be an alliance of the two northern countries, Germany and Russia.⁷¹⁵ When the non-aggression agreement between Hitler and Stalin was effected in 1939 this interpretation was in its heyday. In the mid-thirties Mussolini took over large sections of Africa, including Libya and Ethiopia. Didn't Daniel write ⁷¹⁶ that the "the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps"? The accumulation of evidence was simply astounding.

At this time, the winter of 1935-1936, the writer as a college freshman at Ashland College in Ohio heard a well-known prophetic preacher at the college church. With breathless expectancy we heard him preach on "Mussolini's Legions on the March—to Ethiopia or Armageddon?". If I had been preaching at the time and had known my Bible as well as this man of God I think maybe I

⁷⁰⁹ for such is the obvious meaning of "the glorious land" to the expatriated old patriarch who wrote the words

⁷¹⁰ S. P. Tregelles

⁷¹¹ Dan. 11:37

⁷¹² Dan. 11:38

⁷¹³ Dan. 11:40

⁷¹⁴ ...at that time ruling Egypt, the old-time king of the south

⁷¹⁵ Ezekiel 38 was usually read at this point

⁷¹⁶ Dan. 11:43

would have preached on that topic too.

But, alas, in less than ten years poor Mussolini was strung by his heels, naked and dead, from the front shed of a gasoline station: Hitler and Stalin had broken their pact and had fought one another in a deadly war; the British Empire had well-nigh passed away, and the prophetic preachers had simply changed the subject. Prophecy preaching of this type simply died out. But, sad to say, along with it much of the old-time emphasis on and interest in the coming of our Lord and the light which the Bible sheds on related things have partly died out too. Having learned only too well that "prophecy was not given in order that we should prophesy" we ought to revive our interest in the things that lead us to watch more earnestly and hopefully for the coming again of the Son of Man.

I shall not repeat the mistakes of yesterday and attempt definitely to identify the nations on the scene today who might fulfill the requirements of these verses: the king of the north, the king of the south, "tidings out of the east" etc. I cannot, however, restrain my curiosity and interest.

These things of the history of the past generation are too vivid, too personal, and too important to report to the reader in anything but a personal manner. Let us return to more stately manners.

There is quite a list here of countries among the ancient neighbors of the Jews. Daniel 11:41—"but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon." Daniel 11:42—"The Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps." In addition Palestine itself is mentioned in the context as "the glorious land".⁷¹⁷ Other lands of the "east and...the north" appear.⁷¹⁸ These become very difficult of interpretation for those who do not expect Israel ever to return to their land, and who expect no literal reign of Christ and his saints over the earth in a future millennium. Yet some of these Bible-honoring interpreters feel that the Antichrist is a real person of the last days. They find it hard to make sense of a passage with a real Antichrist but only figurative enemies for him.

I think this method of interpretation lacks Biblical authority. Incidentally, prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel predict restoration for several of these lands "in the latter days."

And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him. (Daniel 11:45)

Having moved to Palestine with his troops to put an end to the hated Jewish people, the Antichrist will plant the "tabernacles of his palace," that is, his royal pavilions, between the seas, likely the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea in the neighborhood of the holy mount on which sits the ancient Holy City of Jerusalem. There he will feel the blast of God which will spell his end. For, "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter, his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel".⁷¹⁹

This moment of the eternal ruin of Satan's man of sin is of great interest to the writers of the Bible. The Holy Spirit of prophecy has imparted a good deal about it. The enterprising student will find some of these in the twelfth and fourteenth chapters of Zechariah, the third chapter of Joel, Revelation 14:17-20 and chapter 19. Some ⁷²⁰ apply Ezekiel 38 and 39. These passages,

⁷¹⁷ Dan. 11:41

⁷¹⁸ Dan. 11:44

⁷¹⁹ Joel 3:16

⁷²⁰ e.g., G. H. Lang

however, are of doubtful application.

In his final end, being destroyed by the direct action of god Almighty, without ordinary human hands, Antiochus' death of grief in Babylon was a type.

C. Prophecy Concerning the Great Tribulation of Israel (12:1)

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. (Daniel 12:1)

Michael is the great angelic defender of Israel, according to these words. When we are told in Revelation 12:7 that there is celestial warfare in which Michael and his angels fight we are not to dismiss this as mere poetic language. Angels appear often in Biblical story as defenders of Israel. A great angelic being appeared to Joshua as "captain of the Lord's host" to give assurance to that embattled leader just before the conquest of Jericho.⁷²¹ When the frightened servant of Elisha saw the host of Syria arrayed about Dothan, he cried to his master, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" The answer came, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."⁷²² Then Elisha prayed the Lord to smite the enemy people with blindness, and God did so, presumably using the angelic host of defenders to do so. It was "the angel of the Lord" that destroyed 180,000 Assyrians in a single night when they were encamped against Jerusalem.⁷²³ And, when the fearful disciples of our Savior were attempting puny efforts at his defense he said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"⁷²⁴

The "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" is the short period of time near the end of this age commonly known as The Great Tribulation. But, whatever may be said about the period elsewhere, the interest of Daniel in it is that his people, Israel, shall suffer during it. Jeremiah also speaks at length of this period. He speaks of it as a day when men shall be in pain like that of women in childbirth.⁷²⁵ Jeremiah makes clear the purpose of it as a kind of final chastening of Israel by the Lord before he permanently and finally resumes his special relationship with them. It would take us far afield to develop this theme, but the student may pursue the subject for himself in Jeremiah 30 and 31. These passages make it clear that the restoration to follow tribulation is permanent and final.

Several passages speak of this time as a period of "indignation" during which all men living on the earth shall suffer greatly. Both Isaiah 25:20 and Daniel 11:36 speak it in this way. Many passages speak of the suffering of men in general. Wars, pestilences, great fires, plagues of various sorts, until it is said that "they gnawed their tongues for pain"⁷²⁶ shall prevail.

Israel, however, will emerge triumphant and glorious out of it. "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."⁷²⁷

⁷²¹ Josh. 5:13-15

⁷²² II Ki. 6:15-17

⁷²³ Is. 37:35, 36

⁷²⁴ Mt. 26:53

⁷²⁵ Jer. 30:4-6

⁷²⁶ Rev. 16:10

⁷²⁷ Jer. 30:7

A question which many today find important is: Will there be Christian believers on earth during those days, or will the Lord remove them by "rapture" beforehand? It is a question which all might wish had been given a more direct answer by the Lord, for there is the utmost diversity of opinion about it. This diversity did not, so far as we can determine, prevail in the early Christian centuries. The Church's teachers recognized in the Roman emperor the lineaments of Antichrist and the sufferings of the great persecutions as the tribulation. Who can doubt that there is a sense in which this was true? It was a kind of incipient fulfillment of the prophecies, as is not uncommon in many areas of Bible truth. Those today who insist that there will be a "rapture" of the church before the Tribulation cite passages such as Revelation 3:10 and John 5:24—"shall not come into judgment" ASV, and similar passages. Those who expect the church to remain on earth till the very end, anticipating no "rapture" before the Tribulation point out that II Thess. 2:1 ff. appears to place the revelation of the man of sin before the second coming of Christ in any sense, especially inasmuch as "our gathering together unto him," and the "coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"⁷²⁸ and "the day of Christ"⁷²⁹ appear to be used as synonyms for the second coming event. If the revelation of the man of sin is to precede the gathering of the saints together to Christ, then they will be here through the Tribulation. They also point out that the church's commission is to preach until "the consummation of the age"⁷³⁰ and that our Lord elsewhere specified that the wheat (true believers) and the tares (unbelievers) are to grow together in this world until the harvest at "the consummation of the age".⁷³¹ They also point out that Jesus, without any suggestion that the "elect" are to be Jewish, as such, predicted when the judgment of the wicked dead shall take place—"after the thousand years are finished."

In support of the general premillennial view advocated here is the translation suggested by S. P. Tregelles, of a German author named Gerhard Kerkherdere, and by the Jewish scholars Saadiah Haggai (tenth century) and Aben Ezra (twelfth century). It reads: "And many from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake; these shall be unto everlasting life; but those [the rest of the sleepers, those who do not awake at this time] shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt." This translation may be sustained by the Hebrew text and is presented here as being, in this writer's opinion; the correct one.

D. Prophecy Concerning the Final Reward of the Righteous (12:3)

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever. (Daniel 12:3)

This is one of the most precious promises of the Bible. But, who are these "wise"?⁷³² The same word appears in the Hebrew Bible at 11:33 where it is translated "they that understand," and at 11:35 where it is translated "them of understanding." It appears again in chapter 12, verse 10, where it is translated "the wise." In chapter 11 the two references are to the loyal people of Israel who, understanding and believing God's Word, stood up under the trials and persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, whose heroism, as we have noted previously in these studies, is described in the books of Maccabees and is celebrated in Hebrews 11:36 ff. The wise of Daniel 12:3, the verse before us; as well as in verse 10, are saints of the end-time. But the principles involved apply to people of all ages.

⁷²⁸ II Thess. 2:1

⁷²⁹ II Thess. 2:2

⁷³⁰ ASV Marg. Matt. 28:19, 20

⁷³¹ Mt. 13:30, 40-43 ASV

⁷³² Heb. wise ones

Most of us have opportunity to become "spiritually wise"—to be among "them of understanding" in times of trial. Peter admonished that "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called." He cites the wise example of our Savior in his patient suffering at Calvary.⁷³³ Later he adds more, to the effect that the suffering of unjust persecution should be thought normal to the Christian life, and further advocates submissive behavior.⁷³⁴ The outlook which prompts this kind of behavior, then, is the wisdom Daniel is talking about.

What does it mean to "shine as the brightness of the firmament...as the start forever and ever"? Let another answer: "The imagery would come home to one so familiar both with Scriptural and Babylonian parallels as Daniel. That clear unruffled sky, beneath which his life had been spent, had taught his Chaldean predecessors and preceptors the astronomical and astrological lore which made them famous, and inspired a polytheistic creed which had made them infamous. The very firmament or 'heaven' was a deity of the highest rank; his 'brightness' the splendor of the chief gods. The 'stars' and planets were the true exterior manifestations of that divine being, acquiring luster from him and merging it once again in him. But Daniel's Jewish training had taught him how to purge and elevate these conceptions; that 'firmament' was God's creation;⁷³⁵ its 'brightness' a testimony to his greatness⁷³⁶...the 'stars' were of God's ordinance, their number 'told' by Him, their names 'called' by Him; 'in their courses they fought' against His enemies and 'made obeisance to' his servants.⁷³⁷ The words of Daniel were afterwards applied by our Lord himself to the 'righteous',⁷³⁸ and the imagery became sanctified to Christian use."⁷³⁹

Proverbs 11:30 states, "The fruit of righteousness is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." To see this thought, the wisdom of soul-winning, developed further refer also I Corinthians 9:19 and especially James 5:20.

The subject of rewards for the righteous works of Christians is given extensive treatment in the New Testament. Some of the passages are I Corinthians 3:19-23; II Corinthians 5:8-10; II Tim. 2:5; I Cor. 9:25; Phil. 4:1; I Thess. 2:19; II Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; I Pet. 5:4.

E. Final Prophecies and Instructions (12:4-13)

1. The disposition of the book

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. (Daniel 12:4)

These words have to do with the preservation and the understanding of the prophecies of Daniel.

The Old Testament has quite a lot to say about the sealing of books—all relating to their authentication as being genuinely written by the parties whose names and signatures they bear and to their preservation until the proper parties might open and read them. As far as we can see, nothing about obscuration of the meaning (as some assert) until any certain time is involved in sealing. The fact that we still have Daniel's book, in the original languages and

⁷³³ I Pet. 2:19-25

⁷³⁴ I Pet. 4:12-16

⁷³⁵ Gen. 1:6; Ps. 19:1

⁷³⁶ Ex. 24:10

⁷³⁷ Ps. 8:3; Gen. 1:16; Ps. 147:4; Judg. 5:20; Gen. 37:9

⁷³⁸ Mt. 13:43

⁷³⁹ I Cor. 15:40; Rev. 2:28; J. M. Fuller in *The Bible Commentary*

in the many translations, is the fulfillment of the purpose of sealing.

The latter half of the verse has no reverence at all to increased facility of travel in modern times (steamships, railroads, automobiles, airplanes, etc.). Neither does it refer to the advances in scientific knowledge. Leopold's rendering gives the right meaning: "Many shall diligently peruse it, and knowledge shall be increased." The running to and fro is of the eyes of the diligent readers on the page of the book of prophecy as down through the years God's people have read this book, and other books of Scripture. As the centuries roll on our understanding of all the Bible does grow. We stand on the shoulders of students who have gone before us. When finally all of these predictions, granting that we have spiritual eyes to see, have been brought to pass before us and faith has changed to sight, then we shall understand them perfectly.

In the meantime it behooves all of us, of us, of every reverent faithful eschatological persuasion, to be more than a little humble in the expression of our opinions. Above all we should not make interpretation of some of the obscure particulars of prophecy a test of faith and fellowship. "They that be wise...shall understand"—and be humble. The "wise in their own conceits" will keep on casting their detractors out of the synagogue of their own teachings.

2. Lord: How long?

Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. 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? And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth forever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. (Daniel 12:5-7)

The Hebraic manner of oath-taking seen here is most impressive. "...he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by his that liveth forever that it should be."⁷⁴⁰ With regard to this oath "Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God".⁷⁴¹ In Deuteronomy 32:40 God himself is represented as lifting up His hand to heaven in making an oath. So the lifting of the right hand along with making an affirmation were features of oath-taking. The raising of both hands, as here, presumably was to render the statement even more affirmative.

One day after the risen Christ had been speaking of his kingdom with his apostles intermittently for a period of nearly forty days ⁷⁴² and they were all together for the very last time "they asked him, saying, Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel." His answer was simply that it was not for them to know the "times or the seasons."⁷⁴³ There was not a word of correction about their persistent expectation of a future special kingdom for the Jews. There was, however, expectation concerning what to do in the meantime.

Daniel was in a position similar to that of the Apostles. The days of special revelation were at an end. Even the angels present with Daniel did not know just when the momentous events

⁷⁴⁰ Dan. 2:7

⁷⁴¹ Gen. 14:22

⁷⁴² Acts 1:6

⁷⁴³ Acts 1:6

predicted would take place. One of them asked the man clothed with linen (the Son of God) who was "above the waters of the river",⁷⁴⁴ "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" The angel addressed the right party, for only an omnipotent God knows the future.

The answer in effect was first to give a solemn oath that what revelation had already been imparted in this and previous revelations was absolutely true, and then to say no more, merely calling upon the interested parties to study further the "time, times, and an half" already mentioned several times in previous prophecies. Both the oath and the instruction are useful for us today. If life is to go on with joy and with courage we have to know that things are coming out right, at the end, according to God's oath. God is the "end of the lime" in our human search for certainty. "For God...because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself."⁷⁴⁵

The word and promise which God has given,
Are more enduring than mighty mountains,
When earth is shaken and rent the heaven
This one foundation remains!
God's word and promise shall fail us never,
But will forever, hold and prevail, When stars are fallen,
And mountains broken,
What God hath spoken shall not fail.

The direction to study what has already been written, seeking no further special revelations but to study and wait applies directly to men today. In our day of a "silent heaven," when "there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long"⁷⁴⁶ we must be satisfied that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope".⁷⁴⁷

3. What shall the end be like?

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end, Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand. And -from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. (Daniel 12:8-14)

Though these words have a certain cryptic flavor, they should not be regarded as essentially impossible to interpret. The times or "things" in which Daniel, following the lead of the angel,⁷⁴⁸ showed his interest, was the period of great tribulation lasting three times (years) and a half. The book of Revelation informs us that this period is to be concluded with the coming of Christ a second time, to save his people Israel, to raise the righteous dead, and to set up the kingdom promised.⁷⁴⁹ With all the problems some raise against such a program, it still is the succession of future events announced by the Scriptures. If this is true then the 1260 days will finish their course at the very end of the Great Tribulation, beginning at the

⁷⁴⁴ Dan. 12:6 ASV

⁷⁴⁵ Heb. 6:13

⁷⁴⁶ Ps. 749

⁷⁴⁷ Rom. 15:4

⁷⁴⁸ Dan. 12:8, cf. v.6

⁷⁴⁹ Rev. 19, 20

mid-point of the seventieth week.⁷⁵⁰ The 1290 days would therefore extend 30 days into the Millennium for there is no hint in Scripture of any lapse of time between the close of the seventieth week and the inauguration of Christ's millennial reign. I think we may tentatively suppose it to be a period, shall we say, of "mopping up" exercises. As to the 1335 days, the best suggestion I know of is that passed along by Harry Ironside: "A longer period yet is given in verse twelve: 'Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred five and thirty days.' Some have suggested that this would carry on the time to the celebration of the first millennial feast of tabernacles, as in the 14th chapter of Zechariah. At any rate it clearly points us on to the full establishment of the kingdom in power and glory."⁷⁵¹

⁷⁵⁰ Dan. 9:27, cf. Rev. 11:2, 3; Dan. 7:25; Mt. 24: 21, 22

⁷⁵¹ H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*