

The Book of Daniel
An Expository Outline by Hamilton Smith, 1936.

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THE BOOK OF DANIEL

INTRODUCTION

The Book of the prophet Daniel treats of the period of the world's history that is called in Scripture "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21: 24).

From Deuteronomy 32: 8 and 9 we learn that, when the Most High divided the earth among the nations, He had in view the children of Israel, His chosen people. Moreover, it was through Israel, as the centre of the nations, that God governed the earth; for we are definitely told that the throne of Israel was "the throne of the LORD," as we read, "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD" (1 Chr. 29: 23).

Through the failure of the kings and people of Israel, there came a time when God ceased to govern the earth from Zion as a centre. Nevertheless, we know from the second Psalm that, in the day to come, God is again going to govern the whole earth from Zion through Christ as King. Looking on to that day, God can say, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." Then we are told the glory of the King and the extent of His dominion. He is the Son, and His kingdom will reach to the uttermost parts of the earth. (Psalm 2: 6-9).

Now the Book of Daniel treats of the period of the world's history between these two events — the breakdown and setting aside of Israel in government, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom from Zion in the midst of restored Israel. During this time the government of the world passes from Israel to the Gentiles, and the nation of Israel, ceasing to be the head of the nations, is brought into subjection to the Gentiles. For this reason this period is called "the times of the Gentiles." It is obvious that Israel, as a nation, is still scattered and in subjection to the Gentiles, and that the reign of Christ is not yet come, so that the times in which we live are still "the times of the Gentiles."

Two great questions very naturally arise. First, how will the Gentiles use the power of government that has been committed to their responsibility? Secondly, what will be the history of God's ancient people during the time that they are subjected to the power of the Gentiles, and how will the promises of God to His earthly people be affected by their subjection to the Gentiles? The answer to these important questions is the great subject of the Book of Daniel. We shall learn that, during the times of the Gentiles, God's government is no longer an open and direct government from an earthly centre, but takes a hidden form of government from heaven. For this reason, in the course of the book, we find that four times God is referred to as the God of heaven, once as the King of heaven, and once as the LORD of heaven.

While, however, God is over all, ever working behind the scenes, He commits the outward government of the world to the Gentiles under a form of government entirely new upon the earth. God establishes a system of government by "imperial unity." As another has said, "Instead of independent nations having each its own ruler, God Himself sanctions in His providence the surrender of all nations of the earth to the absorbing authority of a single individual." This is the characteristic form of government given to the nations during "the times of the Gentiles."

Daniel gives a prophetic outline of this time, showing the rise and fall of four great successive Gentile powers. He shows, moreover, how completely the Gentiles will break down in the exercise of government, using it for their own glory and aggrandisement, instead of having God and His glory in view. Furthermore, it is revealed to Daniel that the attitude of the Gentile powers towards God's ancient people will be, in the main, one of opposition and persecution.

Finally, Daniel foretells that the Gentiles, having completely broken down in government, will be judged and set aside by the introduction of the reign of Christ and the restoration of Israel.

The fact that the Book of Daniel treats of the times in which we live makes it of the greatest interest and practical importance to the Christian. Not only are there great moral lessons to be learnt from the faithful conduct of Daniel and his companions, but, by the prophecies of the Book, we are "warned of things not seen as yet," that, being warned, we may live in separation from a judgment-

doomed world be kept in calmness of spirit in the midst of its turmoil.

The main divisions of the Book are as follows: —

Daniel 1 — The introduction, showing that, in spite of the failure of Israel, God still reserves a faithful remnant of His ancient people during the time of the Gentile domination, and that He does not leave Himself without a witness; further, the spirit of prophecy and understanding in the ways of God is found in this remnant:

Daniel 2 to 6 — The prophetic history of the times of the Gentiles in its external form before men, presenting the moral characteristics of the four great monarchies, their failure in government, and their final judgment by the setting up of the Kingdom of Christ:

Daniel 7 to 11 — The prophetic history of the four great Gentile monarchies as viewed by God, and their relation to and treatment of God's ancient people:

Daniel 12 — The conclusion and prophetic announcement of the final establishment in blessing of the godly remnant of Israel.

THE FAITHFUL REMNANT

(Daniel 1)

In the opening chapter of Daniel we are permitted to see the character of the men to whom God foretells the course of the times of the Gentiles and to whom He gives understanding as to His mind for His people during the times of their distress and captivity.

(Vv. 1, 2). As an introduction to the Book, the first two verses briefly indicate the ruin of Israel and the consequent transference of the government of the earth — as represented by kingly power — from the king of Judah to the king of Babylon. This solemn act is definitely described as the Lord's doing, for we read "*The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah*" into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

Not only is the king of Judah given over to bondage, but God so completely abandons Jerusalem as the seat of His government and worship, that the very vessels used in His worship are given into the hand of this heathen king. At once we are permitted to see the character of this Gentile king, for we read, "He brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god." He has no true knowledge or fear of God, and no real sense of the sacred character of these vessels — a premonition of the godless character of the Gentile rulers during the times Of the Gentiles.

The people of Israel and the kings of Judah had been warned again and again that their evil and idolatrous ways would bring upon them the chastening hand of God. Unheeded warnings were followed by the definite pronouncement of the prophet Isaiah that judgment would fall. Thus runs the message to king Hezekiah, "Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon" (Isa. 39: 6). Despite this message, the evil increased and reached its climax in the reign of Hezekiah's son, the wicked Manasseh, who seduced the people "to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel (2 Kings 21: 9). At length, in the reign of Jehoiakim, God's words by Isaiah were fulfilled. The government passed from the Jew to the Gentile, and henceforth the Jews will be in subjection to the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are closed by the introduction of the reign of Christ.

Nevertheless, we learn from this chapter that, though the nation of Israel is brought into subjection to the Gentiles, yet God preserves to Himself a godly remnant who are faithful to God and supported by God. The gracious ways of God with this remnant clearly prove that, however much God may have to chasten His people on account of their unfaithfulness, they are still the objects of His care, even though they have ceased to be the instruments of His direct government of the world.

Moreover, the understanding of the ways of God is found with this godly remnant; and God uses them as individual witnesses for Himself, though the nation as a whole has entirely failed as a witness for God. Furthermore, we see, on the part of this remnant, that obedience to the word of God and separation from the defiling influence of Babylon are the moral conditions necessary in order to receive and understand communications from the Lord, to enjoy the support of the Lord, and to be used in any measure as a witness for the Lord .

(Vv. 3-7). This godly remnant is brought to our notice by the efforts of the King of Babylon to use the people of God for his own ends. He would seek to adorn his court with the leaders of God's people — the king's seed, the princes, and those who were well-favoured and marked by wisdom, knowledge and science. But, while the religious world would seek to use the people of God for its own glory, it cannot tolerate their God, obedience to His word, or separation from its own evils. Hence the world would fain obliterate all evidence of their link with the true God. To this end the people of God, if they are to take their place at the court, must be instructed in the world's wisdom, partake of the world's dainties, and share in the world's titles. Nor is it otherwise to-day. Those who are destined for a place as religious leaders in the Babylonish corruption of Christendom must be trained in the religious schools of this world, must, as it were, be taught — the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." They must benefit from the resources provided by the world — "a daily provision of the king's meat;" and lastly, they must accept such titles and dignities as the world can give.

In connection with the king's plan, four men of the children of Judah are specially mentioned. The names that are given to them are presumably connected with the gods of Babylon (See Dan. 4: 8). In order to conform to their world, the minds of these men are to be trained in the learning of the Chaldeans, their tongues are to speak the Chaldean language, their bodies fed with the king's dainties, and their names changed to those of heathen gods.

In exchange for their loss of nationality, to these captives is held out a most alluring prospect in a foreign land. They shall have a free course of the best education in the land, their daily needs shall be met by the finest provision at the king's cost, and in the end they shall have an exalted position in the king's palace.

(Vv. 8-17). There are, however, in the king's scheme, serious difficulties for godly men. To carry out the king's plan, in the king's way, would involve disobedience to the word of God. To partake of the king's dainties would be to eat things forbidden by law to an Israelite. Hence the alluring prospect becomes a severe trial to their faith. The test is, will they disobey God's direct instructions for the sake of worldly advancement, or will they remain true to the word of God whatever the consequences?

Many plausible arguments could have been advanced in favour of unconditionally submitting to the proposal of the king. *Expediency* would suggest that to raise an objection to the proposal would probably wreck all their prospects. It would not only end their career of usefulness to their brethren, but it might do positive harm to others and add to the difficulties of the captives. *Reason* would argue that, as they had been given into the hand of the king of Babylon by an act of the Lord, their only right course was to submit entirely to the king, otherwise they might be rebelling against what the Lord had allowed. *Compromise* would suggest that, as long as they did not give up the confession or their God,

the instructions as to not eating certain foods might under the circumstances be waived. Such instructions surely applied to a free people in their own land; but now that they were in bondage in a foreign land, would it not be a mere scruple to insist upon the strict observance of the letter of the law?

Such arguments, if used, carried no weight with these godly men. The test only makes manifest their devoted character. They refuse to be directed by mere expediency, or the dictates of human reason, and will enter into no compromise. They do not forget that, in spite of the failure of Israel, and though suffering under the chastening of God, they are still the people of the true God to whom they owe whole-hearted allegiance. They are rightly prepared to submit to the Gentile king, but they will not disobey the word of their God.

The secret of Daniel's strength was that his heart was right with God, as we read, "Daniel *purposed in his heart* that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat." He acts, however, with great discretion, for he makes request to the prince that "he *might not* defile himself," without irritating and antagonising the man by telling him that he had already purposed in his heart that "he *would not* defile himself."

The prince explains the difficulty and danger in granting Daniel's request. At once Daniel proposes a ten days' test of a diet in accordance with their law. This suggestion is a striking proof of Daniel's faith in the living God. The result proves that his faith is not in vain. Obeying the word of God, these godly men are found at the end of the test to be in better bodily condition than those who ate of the king's meat. So Daniel's request is granted.

Obedience to the word of God, *faith* in the living God, *separation* from the defilements of Babylon are the outstanding marks of these godly men. Such have the understanding of the mind of God, for we read, "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (17). It is true the Lord had given them into the hands of the king of Babylon, but this did not hinder His giving understanding of His mind and purpose to those who were faithful to Himself.

(Vv. 18-21). In result, these faithful men became witnesses for God, for we read they stood "before the king." God was true to His own word, "Them that honour Me I will honour" (1 Samuel 2: 30). So it came to pass that in all matters of wisdom and understanding the king found these faithful men ten times better than all the men of the world.

These things are surely recorded for our instruction and encouragement. However much dispensations change and circumstances may alter, the great moral principles of God for the guidance of His people remain the same. Like Israel of old, the Church has entirely failed as a witness for God during the absence of Christ. In consequence of this failure, the professing Church has become captive in religious corruption which God likens to Babylon.

But again, the word clearly indicates that, however great the failure, God will have faithful individuals — overcomers — who again and again will find their faith severely tested. If, however, they purpose in their heart to *obey* the word of God to walk *in faith* in God, and in *separation* from the defilements of the corruptions around, they will have *understanding* of the mind of God, and will be honoured of God as *witnesses* for Himself.

What greater privilege than to have the mind of God and to be in any measure a witness for God in the midst of corrupt Christendom whose sky grows black with the signs of coming judgment.

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

Daniel 2

In the first chapter we have seen the moral characteristics that are necessary to be found in the one to whom God can give wisdom and understanding as to His mind. This prepares the way for the revelations of the whole book.

In the second division of the book, commencing with chapter 2 and continuing to the end of chapter 6, there is brought before us the main purport of the prophecy of Daniel - the presentation of a prophetic outline of the times of the Gentiles.

In chapter 2 there pass before us four great successive Empires that will wield the power of government during this time. This government commences with the Babylonish Empire, continues through the Medo-Persian and Grecian Empires, and terminates with the Roman Empire. We learn, further, that these Empires, exercising their power without reference to God, will come under a judgment that prepares the way for the setting up of the everlasting kingdom of Christ.

Daniel 3 to 6 bring before us certain historical incidents which set forth the outstanding moral features of these successive world Empires.

Further, these chapters are rich with moral instruction for God's people at all times.

The main subjects that pass before us in Daniel 2 are: —

First, the exposure of the weakness and futility of the power and wisdom of this world (1-13):

Secondly, the man of God with whom is the mind of the Lord (14-23):

Thirdly, the witness to God before the world (24-30):

Fourthly, the revelation of the king's dream (31-35):

Fifthly, the interpretation of the king's dream (36-45):

Sixthly, the honour put upon the Lord's servant (46-49).

(a) The wisdom of this world comes to nought (1-13).

In the early part of the chapter we are permitted to see how God works behind the changing scenes of this world, controlling even the dreams of a heathen king, and pouring contempt upon the pride of man.

(Vv. 1-6). Nebuchadnezzar is troubled by a dream, his sleep forsakes him, and his memory fails him. All is permitted by God to force the king into an acknowledgement of Himself through the instrumentality of His servant Daniel. Already the king had found Daniel to be ten times wiser than all the wise men of Babylon. Nevertheless, forgetting or rejecting Daniel, he turns to the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers and Chaldeans, demanding that they should not only give the interpretation of the dream, but should first recall the forgotten dream. Satisfying the king's demands, they would be highly rewarded; failing to do so they would be cut in pieces and their houses made a dunghill.

(Vv. 7-11). This request appears at first sight wholly unreasonable, and the Chaldeans tell the king, "There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter.... And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." When, however, we remember the vast pretensions of these wise men of

Babylon, the request does not appear so outrageous.

(Vv. 12, 13). Evidently, the king has no great opinion of the integrity of his wise men. He probably had good ground for considering them quite capable of preparing lying and corrupt words. They, on their part, are placed in such a dilemma that they are compelled to own their utter incompetency. However, the confession of their helplessness avails nothing before the furious king, who forthwith sends out a decree for the destruction of all the wise men of Babylon.

What a picture of the world! Authority makes unreasonable demands upon counsellors in whom there is no real confidence, and resorts to rage and violence if the demands are not immediately complied with. The wisdom of this world is found to be mere pretension when put to the test. There is might without wisdom on the one hand; and profession of wisdom without might on the other.

(b) *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him (14-23)*. The exposure of the weakness of the man that wields the greatest power on earth and the folly of those who pretend to the greatest wisdom prepare the way for introducing the power and wisdom of God. This brings to the front the remnant of God's people with whom is found wisdom and understanding, and who bear witness to the wisdom, power and sovereign rights of God in heaven, and in relation to the affairs of men on earth.

(Vv. 14, 15). Apparently, Daniel had not been summoned with the wise men who appeared before the king; but, being reckoned among the wise men of Babylon, he comes under the decree that all such should be slain. Thus Daniel and his companions are brought into touch with the great events of the day.

What follows brings out very strikingly the godly character of these men, constituting them a bright witness for God before the world. First, we see the calm *serenity of faith* in the midst of a scene of terror and confusion. Daniel, maintaining a quiet demeanour, enquires, "Why is the decree so hasty from the king?" The arbitrary will of man, driven by fear, brooks no delay; but, "he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa. 28: 16). Happy, indeed, when the faith of God's people maintains them in calm composure in the presence of the excitement of some national crisis.

(V. 16). Secondly, we see the bold *confidence of faith* that marks Daniel in the presence of the king. Asking the king for time he informs the enraged monarch with the utmost confidence that "he would show the king the interpretation." The subsequent course of Daniel shows that this is not the self-confidence of the flesh, but rather the outward expression of secret confidence in God. Apparently, Daniel has so entered into the mind of God that he realises that God has withheld the dream from the king in order to bring to nought the power and wisdom of this world, and to bear witness to His own sovereign power and wisdom. Thus Daniel can say, not only that God *could* show the interpretation, but that He *would* do so, and that without any suggestion that the king should first tell the dream.

(Vv. 17, 18). Thirdly, we see the value that Daniel sets upon *fellowship and prayer*. Having left the presence of the king, he goes to his own company, and makes the thing known to his companions. He values the fellowship of his brethren and has confidence in their prayers, for he requires that "they would desire mercies of the God of heaven." Further, he values *definite prayer*, for their prayers are to be for mercies "concerning this secret." Herein we discover that fellowship with his brethren and dependence upon God is the secret of Daniel's calm assurance and confidence before men.

(V. 19). Fourthly, we see that Daniel is marked by the *peace of God* — the peace that is the promised result of making known our requests to God. So we read the secret was "revealed unto Daniel in a night vision." This surely indicates that Daniel, having spread the matter before God, had calmly retired to sleep. In like spirit David, in an earlier day, in that terrible moment when he was driven from

Jerusalem by his son Absalom, could say, "I *cried unto the Lord* with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill. *I laid me down and slept*" (Ps. 3: 4, 5). So the Lord, in a later day, in the absolute perfection of His way, could sleep in the storm with His head on a pillow. Good for us if, committing all to the Father's care, we are kept in perfect peace amidst the storms of life.

Fifthly, Daniel not only prays, but he *gives thanks*. He does not proceed to use the answer to his prayer without first giving thanks for this mercy.

(V. 20). So greatly does God appreciate the gratitude of His people that, though He has not revealed the words of the prayer, He has left on record the exact words of the praise. As in the prayer given by the Lord to His disciples at a later day, so in the praise of Daniel, the foremost place is given to the Name of God. "Blessed be the Name of God for ever and ever," says Daniel: "Hallowed be Thy Name" are the words of the Lord.

Then Daniel ascribes to God "wisdom and might." Nebuchadnezzar had a measure of might but lacked wisdom; the Chaldeans had a measure of wisdom but no might. With the God of heaven there is absolute wisdom with absolute might.

(Vv. 21, 22). Moreover, God is sovereign. He can change the times and seasons. He removeth kings and setteth up kings. Furthermore, He can, if He so wills, impart wisdom and knowledge to others, and reveal "the deep and secret things." To His omniscience nothing is hidden; "He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him."

(V. 23). Finally, while thanking God for the revelation made known to him, Daniel owns it is in answer to *united* prayer. He can say "Thou hast made known unto *me* now what *we* desired of thee: for Thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter."

(c) *The witness for God before the world (24-30).*

Following the prayer and praise of Daniel and his companions in private, we have the faithful witness of Daniel in public.

(Vv. 24, 25). Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, having brought in Daniel before the king, seeks with worldly wisdom to use the occasion for his own advantage. He says to the king, "*I have found a man . . . that will make known unto the king the interpretation.*" He is careful not to commit himself by suggesting that Daniel will show the king his dream.

(V. 26). This, however, is the important thing in the eyes of the king. It is not enough to give an interpretation of the dream — this the wise men were prepared to do. The real question is, Can anyone recall the dream? So at once the king asks Daniel, "Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen and the interpretation thereof?"

(V. 27). Daniel can indeed do so; but in his answer he first sets aside the wisdom of this world by reminding the king that his wise men, astrologers, magicians and soothsayers cannot show the secret which the king has demanded.

(V. 28). Then, having blown upon the wisdom of Babylon, Daniel bears a faithful witness to God. What man cannot do, God can do. "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets."

(V. 29). Moreover, as to the king, Daniel makes it very clear that he has to do with God. "He that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass" in the latter days. As to Daniel himself, he is not elated by the great revelations he has received, nor does he, like Arioch, use the occasion for his own glory. He hides himself behind the glory of God and inasmuch as he does so God

is glorified.

(V. 30). He owns that any knowledge he possesses has come to him by revelation; and, even so, this revelation has not been given to him because of any wisdom that he has more than any living; nor does it come primarily for the king's sake, still less to save the lives of the wise men of Babylon. It is for "their sakes that shall make known the interpretation." He links his companions with himself and reminds the king that God is caring for His people, captives though they be, and is acting for "their sakes." In the government of this world, God ever has His people in view and oftentimes intervenes in the affairs of men for "their sakes." Speaking of this scene, one has said, "It is when we understand how to humble ourselves thoroughly that we are truly exalted. If Daniel disappears, God Himself is manifested in him. Oh that we might have wisdom and spiritual power to hide ourselves thus behind Jesus, in order that He might be put into the foreground! Every such act is a great and precious triumph."

(d) *The revealer or secrets (31-35)* .

(V. 31). Having set man in his true place, and witnessed to the sufficiency of God, Daniel proceeds to show the king his dream. He tells the king that he saw "a great image." In the interpretation that follows, we learn that this image sets forth the government of the world during the times of the Gentiles by means of four great Gentile monarchies. Here, in the vision, they are presented as forming one image, and that the image of a man — a man that appears excellent and yet terrible.

The times of the Gentiles are marked by the rule of man, in which there is much that calls forth the admiration of men by outward magnificence, and yet strikes terror by oppression. It is a vision of the man of earth in contrast to the God of heaven.

(Vv. 32, 33). Another characteristic of the image is the progressive deterioration of its composition from head to feet. The head is of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet part of iron and part of clay. This deterioration is not in the strength of the metals, but in their value. The material strength of the metals sets forth the extent of the dominions of each empire. The value of the metals signifies rather the sovereign power of each empire. The extent of the dominions of the three last world empires would greatly exceed that of the first empire; but in none was the imperial power, representing the power of God, so manifest as in the first empire — the head of gold.

(Vv. 34, 35). Lastly, in the vision, Nebuchadnezzar saw a stone cut out without hands. He saw the introduction of a Kingdom which was not established as the result of man's agency; it was "without hands." This we know is the Kingdom of Christ. The stone falls upon the feet of the image; but, in result, the whole image is involved in ruin. The Kingdom of Christ will deal in judgment with the final form of the last empire, but, in so doing, it will set aside the whole system of government by the man of the earth, and set up a stable and world-wide government, likened to a great mountain that "filled the whole earth."

(e) *Things that shall come to pass hereafter (Vv. 36-45)*. Having recalled the dream, Daniel proceeds to give the interpretation, revealing "what should come to pass hereafter."

(Vv. 36-38). Nebuchadnezzar is told that, as the representative of the Babylonish empire, he is the head of gold. Hitherto there had existed on the earth distinct nations, each under its own king. Now, for the first time there is established a new form of government — *government by imperial unity*. Under this form of government, nations, with their kings, are united under an empire with an imperial head who is a king of kings.

Nebuchadnezzar, the first head of the first empire, is told that his kingdom, and power, and strength, and glory were God-given. "Wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand." In the successive empires we shall see the extent of the empires increasing, but this sovereign power of the head declining.

(V. 39). The second and third empires, represented by the breast and arms of silver, and the belly and thighs of brass, are here alluded to in the briefest way. From later visions we shall learn that the second empire is the Medo-Persian (See Dan. 5: 28 and Dan. 8: 20) and the third empire the Grecian (See Dan. 8: 21). Here we are simply told that the kingdoms that will arise will be inferior to the empire of Babylon.

(V. 40). Coming to the fourth kingdom, we have its character presented in much greater detail, not only because it is the final kingdom of the times of the Gentiles, but it is the one kingdom with which Christ will deal directly in judgment. This plainly defines the fourth kingdom as the Roman Empire. The world was under the dominion of the Roman Empire when Christ came to earth. It came into conflict with Christ when He left the world. It is the revived Roman Empire that will be dealt with in judgment by Christ at His coming again (Luke 2: 1, 2; John 19: 10, 11; Rev. 17: 7-14).

It is important to notice that of the last three kingdoms none *is directly* set up by God. Only the first kingdom and the kingdom of Christ are said to be established by the God of heaven (37, 44). The other three kingdoms arise by providential means, sovereign power declining with each kingdom until it is re-established in absolute perfection in the kingdom of Christ.

The outstanding characteristic of the fourth kingdom is that it "shall be strong as iron." Iron is stronger than gold or silver or brass, but not so precious. As Scriptural figures, gold ever speaks of what is divine, iron of what is human. In the fourth Empire there is a vast increase of all that is human, and a great loss of all that is divine. In the government of the fourth Empire, there will be an increasing development of human wisdom, human ingenuity and human resources, and less and less recognition of God, involving an increasing loss of the sovereign and absolute power of God in government. As the times of the Gentiles draw to their close, man will increasingly seek to govern the world without reference to God, until the world is ripe for judgment.

A second mark of the fourth kingdom is its *ruthlessness*. With ruthless power it breaks in pieces and crushes all its opposers.

(Vv. 41. 42). A third feature is that the fourth empire in the course of its history, will become *divided and weakened*. We are told by Daniel that "the feet and toes" were "part of potters' clay, and part of iron," setting forth the fact that "the kingdom shall be divided," and weakened, or, as Daniel says, "partly strong and partly fragile" (N. Tn.).

(V. 43). The loss of what is of God and the introduction of the human element lead as ever to division and weakness. The weakened governing power can no longer hold the empire together. The iron mixed with the miry clay indicates the mingling of democracy with sovereignty. The clay, or democratic element, brings about the break up of the empire.

Two facts, however, become clear. First, though the fourth empire will be divided and weakened by the admixture of clay, yet it will always be true "there shall be in it of the strength of the iron." There will never come a time when it will be likened wholly to clay. The government of the fourth empire will never be wholly democratic. Secondly, we are told that the iron and the clay may mingle, yet they will never cleave together. Democracy and sovereignty will ever be antagonistic.

(Vv. 44, 45). Then we are told that, altogether apart from the kingdoms represented by the image,

another kingdom will be set up by the God of heaven. This Kingdom stands in direct contrast to the four great kingdoms of the times of the Gentiles. The four kingdoms are destroyed or left to others, but this Kingdom will never be destroyed, nor will it be passed on to others. It will not only break up the kingdom that immediately preceded it, but it will break in pieces all these kingdoms, and as long as the world lasts it will remain — "it shall stand for ever."

Beyond all question this Kingdom is the millennial Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. The prophecy does not refer to the first coming of Christ into the world in grace, and the establishment of the kingdom of grace by the triumph of the gospel over heathen systems, as some have thought. It is the Kingdom established in power by the second coming of Christ, a kingdom that is introduced not by grace but by judgment.

We have, then, in the dream and its interpretation, a complete forecast of the government of this world during the times of the Gentiles, leading to the setting up of the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Christ. It is an immense mercy that the Christian has a God-given outline of the course and end of the great world Empires during the times of the Gentiles. He can thus keep apart from the political movements of the day, content to go on in obscurity, awaiting the coming of the King of kings. He knows that all the political movements will end in a great confederation of the nations under the revived Roman Empire, in opposition to God and the Lamb, and he knows that all these efforts of man will be dealt with in judgment when Christ comes forth as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He sees that the leagues, treaties and pacts amongst the nations are preparing the way for the final confederation against God and Christ, and he keeps apart from that which will end in open apostacy to God and overwhelming judgment at the appearing of Christ.

(f) *"Them that honour Me I will honour"* (Vv. 46-49)

(Vv. 46, 47). The chapter closes with an account of the effect produced upon Nebuchadnezzar by these revelations, and the honour put upon the Lord's servants. The fact that the king fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that an oblation be offered to him, sufficiently indicates that neither his heart nor his conscience had been reached. Heart and conscience working would have enlightened the monarch as to what was suitable to God. But if the conscience is not reached, the mind of the king is at least convinced that God is supreme and omniscient.

(Vv. 48, 49). Finally, Daniel is promoted to great honour. This faithful man has borne a witness for God before the king, and becomes a means of blessing both to the world and to his own companions. Though he had neither sought nor asked anything for himself, he is free to use the advantage of his exalted position to make request for his companions.

IDOLATRY

Daniel 3

In the second chapter we have seen that the power of government in an imperial form has been committed by God to the responsibility of the Gentiles. Further, we have had a prophetic outline of the four great Empires that will exercise this power during the times of the Gentiles.

In the chapters that follow, 3 to 6, we have the record of a series of historical incidents which are doubtless intended to set forth the character and conduct of these successive Gentile Empires. We shall learn that, the responsibility for government having been placed in their hands, they fail to exercise this

government in dependence upon God, and thus utterly fail in their responsibility, and this from the outset.

These incidents clearly show that the outstanding features of this failure in government will be idolatry, or setting aside the rights of God 3; the exaltation of man 4, impiety 5; and finally, apostasy 6. We are thus warned that the times in which we live will end in the utmost limit of wickedness, man exalting himself against God and seeking to supplant God on the earth.

(a) *The image of gold.*

(V. 1). Nebuchadnezzar, the king to whom God had committed the government of the world, sets up in the plain of Dura an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits and the breadth six cubits. Possibly the image of his dream had suggested to the king this idolatrous image. If so, it only shows that if what God gives is not held with God, it will be debased to our own ends.

Here we discover the root of man's failure in responsibility to govern the world. The mighty power committed to man is at once prostituted for an exhibition of the most gigantic outburst of idolatry. Man uses the power conferred *to set aside the rights* of God — the One who has given the power. This, then, is the first characteristic of the times of the Gentiles, and the root of all subsequent failure.

Nebuchadnezzar, instead of exercising his power in dependence upon God, sets aside the rights of God, and seeks to consolidate his empire by a device of his own. As dominion had been given to him over the whole habitable world, of necessity his empire would be composed of many nations, speaking diverse tongues, and having different aims and interests. It follows that the king was faced with the problem of maintaining unity in this heterogeneous empire.

History and experience show that nothing so sharply divides and breaks up nations and families as a difference in religion. On the other hand, nothing will so powerfully cement nations together as unity of religion, be it false or true. Religious unity will go far to establish a political unity. Nebuchadnezzar, apparently recognising these facts, attempts to secure a political unity by setting up a religious unity. To this end he uses his great power to force upon all nations a state religion under penalty of death for those who will not conform.

A state religion must be, above all else, one that suits the natural man. To attain this end it must be of extreme simplicity, appealing to the senses, making no great demand upon the intellect, and leaving the conscience untouched. It must take up little time and require no particular sacrifice of money or goods. All these conditions were admirably met by the state religion devised by Nebuchadnezzar.

(b) *The rights of God outraged (Vv. 2-7)*

(Vv. 2, 3). Having set up his image, the king gathers together the political leaders of his kingdom, the princes of the royal house, the military leaders, the judges of his courts, the financiers, the counsellors; all must be present at the dedication of the image.

(Vv. 4-7). Then the command is proclaimed by a herald, that at a given moment, with the accompaniment of music, appealing to the senses, everyone is to fall down and worship the image. Failure to comply with the command will be visited with an immediate and terrible death. The one refusing to obey will "the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

From man's point of view, this was a very simple religion. All it demanded was a simple act of prostration before an image, and then the matter was at an end. Such a religion was admirably suited to

man's fallen nature — a magnificent image to appeal to the sight, beautiful music to charm the ear, one single act of prostration that was over in a moment, that made no demand upon the purse, and raised no question of sins to make the conscience uncomfortable. The drastic penalties attached to non-compliance would hardly trouble the natural man, who would be quite ready to obey an edict which made such small demands. Hence, at the appointed time, "all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image."

Viewed in the light of the true God, the command of the king was an outburst of gross and furious idolatry. Never before had man set up such an imposing idol; never before had all the nations of the earth been commanded to bow down to one idol under pain of a terrible death. It was the utter denial and setting aside of the rights of God. Alas, such is man; put into the place of universal power over the world by God, he immediately uses this power to deny God.

(c) The conscience of man ignored (8-12).

The image and its dedication not only set aside the rights of God, but also trampled underfoot the consciences of men. In thus acting, the king had gone outside the circle of his own lawful authority and intruded into God's domain. This brings to the front certain God-fearing men who, at all costs, will obey God rather than men. There are found certain Jews who, while ready to obey the king within his own sphere, absolutely refuse to obey if he usurps the rights of God.

The enemies of these godly men, delighted to find an occasion of discrediting them before the king, approach Nebuchadnezzar with flattering phrases, and remind the king of the decree he has made, and the penalty he has imposed for disobedience. They then inform the king that three leading men have disregarded the king and his gods, and have refused to worship the image. They remind the king that he, himself, had appointed these men to the high position they held, and this was the way they requited the king. They press the fact that they are not of the ordinary rank and file, but men set over the affairs of the main provinces — facts which would magnify their offence in the eyes of the king.

(d) Persecution for non-compliance (Vv. 13-23).

(Vv. 13-15). The jealousy and hatred of the Chaldeans do their evil work. The king, finding his royal will thwarted by men whom he had set in positions of great authority, forthwith commands that these men be brought into his presence. Assuming the report to be true, he gives them a further opportunity to obey, in which case all will be well. If they refuse, they will immediately be consigned to the burning fiery Furnace, "and," he concludes, "who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"

Now the king has gone a step further in wickedness. In setting up the image, he had already set aside the rights of God to whom worship alone is due; but now he openly defies God. This is claiming omnipotence. When man does this, his defeat is not far off for the contest is now no longer between these Jewish captives and the earthly king of kings but between Nebuchadnezzar and the God of gods. The king evidently had unbounded confidence in himself, and judged of God according to his thoughts of his own gods, whom he treated with scant respect, or surely his language would have been more moderate.

(V. 16). The three Jews, realising that the battle is the Lord's, are perfectly calm in the presence of the infuriated king. Faith in God enables them to say to the king, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter." To them the issues are clear and admit of no compromise. The natural man might say, "It is only a small thing the king requires; you only have to bow down once to this image, and the whole thing is over in a moment, and then you are free; you need not bow down in heart. It is quite a

formal affair, and simply a question of obedience to the king." But faith does not reason thus; faith obeys God, and sees clearly that it is a question of God or the king. That settles the matter; and so without any conference between themselves, they give their answer. In ordinary matters of state, touching the business of the king, they would doubtless be very careful. But this is the business of God, and, therefore, mere human care is as useless as it is unnecessary (Luke 12: 11).

(Vv. 17, 18). The opening words of their answer — "Our God whom we serve" — give the secret of their confidence. They knew God, and can say "*our* God." A true knowledge of God is the secret of power before men. Moreover, however great the position they hold before men, it is God they *serve*. The king had defied God in saying "*Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?*" With great calmness these faithful men take up this challenge, and with the confidence of faith they say, "Our God . . . is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace," and further, "He *will* deliver us out of thine hand, O king."

If, however, God allows them to suffer a martyr's death they are prepared to accept the fiery ordeal as God's way of deliverance from the king, rather than disobey God. For them it is simply a question of obeying God or man. This is still the real question between the Christian and the rulers of the world. Obedience to the powers that be is the plain direction of the word of God for His people (Rom. 13: 1; Titus 3: 1; 1 Peter 2: 13-17). It is not for us to raise questions as to how the authority is constituted, or as to the character of the one wielding the authority; our part is to obey. But when the will of man clashes with the word of God, and seeks to impose that will upon our consciences, we must obey God rather than man. (Acts 4: 19).

(Vv. 19-23). The confidence of these men in God is exceedingly beautiful, but it does not lead, as we might expect, to their escape from the threatened penalty. Their faith is put to the proof without any apparent intervention by God. The king is allowed to carry out his wicked will. When it is a question of conscience, they resolutely withstand the king; now that it is a question of their bodies, they make no resistance. They act in the spirit of the Lord's words to His disciples, when He said, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do" Luke 12: 4).

To have his will opposed by three captive Jews fills the king with fury. He forthwith commands his servants to heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated. The strongest men of his army are deputed to bind the three captives and cast them into the furnace. In result, the fury of the king only adds to his defeat. The king has to learn that his furnace can consume his own mighty men, but cannot hurt the servants of God, if God acts on their behalf, even though the furnace be seven times heated.

(e) *Deliverance for the faithful* (Vv. 24-30).

(Vv. 24, 25). The only effect of the furnace for the three captives is to put them into the company of the Son of God and to free them from their bonds. This, in different degrees and by other means, is ever the result of persecution for those who have faith in God. The man of the ninth of John endured in his day the persecution of the Jewish leaders, only to find himself set free from Jewish bondage in the company of the Son of God.

The effect upon the king is immediate. He rises up in haste, declaring that he sees four men "walking in the midst of the Fire . . . and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." This was the true secret of the three captives walking unscathed in the midst of the fire — they were in the company of the Son of God. What can the saints not do in His company? In His company they can walk on the water (Matt. 14), and in His company they can walk in the midst of the fire, thus fulfilling the promise made to the prophet, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee . . . when thou walkest

through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. 43: 2).

(Vv. 26, 27). The humbled king now admits that these three captives are the servants of the Most High God, and calls them to come forth. The princes, governors, captains and counsellors are compelled to bear witness to the discomfiture of the great king who had defied the living God, and the frustration of his plan to establish a religious unity.

(Vv. 28-30). In the presence of this great miracle the King has to recognise the intervention of God on behalf of those "that trusted in Him." Moreover, he owns that their action had "changed the king's word." He bears witness that their confidence in God was such that they had "yielded their bodies" rather than serve or worship any God except their own God.

The king thereupon makes a decree that no people, nation or language shall speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meschach and Abed-nego under penalty of being cut to pieces and having their houses made a dunghill, for he admits that "there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." Apparently, all nations can serve their own gods, but they must not speak anything amiss of the God of these faithful men. Not only is the king's purpose to establish a religious unity entirely frustrated, but the jealous schemes of the enemies of these captives are brought to nought, for in result these captives each receive promotion in the province of Babylon.

Such is the historical commencement of the times of the Gentiles. In it we have a foreshadowing of scenes that will be enacted at the close of this period. History will repeat itself, and this effort to establish an idolatrous religious unity will be made in a still more terrible form at the end. Man is a religious being, and if he throws off allegiance to the true God, he will make a false god. If he has a false god, he will have no objection to a representation of his god, for the natural man must have something to see and touch — something for sight and sense. Thus it will come to pass that an image will be made of the head of the last Gentile power, and it will be decreed that all who will not worship the image will be killed. The times of the Gentiles opened with idolatry and will close with the worst form of idolatry — the worship of a man as God (Rev. 13: 11-18).

THE EXALTATION OF MAN

Daniel 4

We learn from Daniel 3 that, directly the power of government is committed to the Gentiles, it is used to set aside the rights of God. This solemn feature of man's rule has marked each of the four great powers and will have its most extreme expression in the closing days of the last Empire.

From Daniel 4 we learn that *the exaltation of man* is another leading characteristic of the times of the Gentiles. The power and authority conferred by God is used by man for the exaltation of himself and the gratification of his own pride. Leaving God out of his thoughts, man becomes like a beast that has no understanding of the mind of God, and lives without reference to God.

These solemn truths are presented in the form of a letter addressed by Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations and languages, relating his own experiences.

Already God had spoken to the king by visions and interventions of divine power, but, apparently, the king had not been brought into personal relations with God. After the interpretation of the vision of the great image, Nebuchadnezzar had put great honour upon Daniel, and acknowledged that Daniel's God was the God of gods and a Lord of kings; but, however much impressed, he himself

did not bow down to God. No personal link was formed between his soul and God. Again, in the matter of God's intervention on behalf of His servants in the fiery furnace, it is evident that the king was greatly moved, and in consequence issued autocratic commands as to the attitude others were to take in relation to God. But, while the king acknowledged the power of "the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," he did not recognise and submit to God as the One who alone is God.

At length, however, in His mercy God deals with the king in a personal way, leading him to turn to God and bless Him as the Most High, and acknowledge His authority in the affairs of

men. For the first time Nebuchadnezzar has personally to do with God. In result, he sends out this personal confession of his sin, and acknowledges the way in which he, himself, had been brought to submit to God.

(Vv. 1-3). The king's letter is addressed to all that dwell in all the earth. He tells the people all that "God hath wrought toward" him, and, as he thinks of the wonders of God's ways with him, he breaks forth into praise.

(V. 4). In recounting these ways of the Lord, he first describes the circumstances in which God commenced to deal with him. "I was at rest," he says, "in mine house, and flourishing in my palace." As a thorough man of the world, he found rest and prosperity in the enjoyment of his own things without any thought of God.

(V. 5). In the midst of the king's prosperity, God spoke to him by a dream. Though he did not understand the full import of the dream, it was sufficiently plain to fill him with dire forebodings of coming evil.

(Vv. 6, 7). In his fear, the king again turns to his wise men, only to find that they cannot interpret the dream. The reason is simple. The dream was a message from God, and, being such, can only be interpreted by God. The natural man can understand the things of a man, but, "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." God's things are only spiritually discerned.

(V. 8). "But at the last Daniel came in." It might be thought that after the way Daniel had been used to interpret the king's former dreams, he would be the first to whom the king would turn. Apparently, Daniel is the last resource of the king. But the man that is "last" in man's estimate is first in God's.

(Vv. 9-18). The king commences his interview with Daniel by assuring him that he is perfectly aware of the wisdom and power that is with Daniel, though ascribed by the king to false gods.

Then he tells Daniel the dream, giving first the vision of the tree (10-12); then the cutting down of the tree (13-16); and lastly the great object of the tree being cut down (17). He concludes his address to Daniel by owning that all the wise men or his kingdom are unable to give the interpretation; but, says the king, "Thou art able."

(V. 19). Before hearing the interpretation of the dream we learn the effect it produced upon Daniel. He was a captive in a strange land under the yoke of a foreign king; but it was no pleasure to Daniel to know that judgment and disaster were coming upon the king. So, for one hour, he was silent and his thoughts troubled him. Reassured by the king, Daniel at length gives the interpretation of the dream.

(Vv. 20-22). The tree, which was so imposing in the sight of the earth and which provided shelter for all living creatures was a figure of the king himself.

(Vv. 23-26). The interpretation of the cutting down of the tree follows. The king is plainly told that the dream indicates that he is going to be driven from men to take his place with the beasts for a period of seven years, until the king acknowledges the rule of the Most High in the kingdoms of men. Nevertheless, though he will lose his kingly dignity and position, the kingdom will be retained. The stump of the tree roots will be left, though the tree will disappear for a time from the sight of men.

(V. 27). Finally, Daniel closes the interview with a bold appeal to the king to break off his sins by doing righteousness, and ceasing his oppression of the poor. This is indeed a bold witness for a Jewish captive to bear before the world's greatest potentate. It surely signifies that during the times of these Gentile powers God will have a faithful witness for Himself on the earth. There will be a godly remnant marked by dependence upon God and wisdom before men, as we have seen in Daniel 2; by devotedness to God and power before men, as seen in Daniel 3; and by a faithful witness to God, as seen in this chapter.

(Vv. 28-30). There follows the account of the fulfilment of the dream. The threatened blow is held off for twelve months. Between the announcement of the judgment and its execution, space is given for repentance. Will the king avail himself of this mercy and humble himself before God? Alas! at the end of twelve months the king's pride is as great as ever. Walking in his palace he says, "Is not this great Babylon that I *have built* for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" In all this proud talk there is no recognition of God. As the king looks over the great city of Babylon, he claims that he has built it for the establishment of the imperial line. He claims that all has been wrought by his power and for his glory.

(Vv. 31-33). This boastful pride of the king, in spite of solemn warnings, proves that the time is ripe for judgment. While the word is in the king's mouth, the voice comes from heaven telling him that the predicted judgment is to be fulfilled. So we read that, "the same hour was the thing fulfilled." Nebuchadnezzar is driven from men and becomes like a beast of the field.

It may be that this judgment took the form of madness; but, even so, we are permitted to see in the case of the king its direct connection with the hand of God. God had given to the king "a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory" (Dan. 2: 37). In spite of God's gifts and the striking way in which God had borne witness to Himself, God had been forgotten. The king, at rest in his palace and at the height of his prosperity, ascribes all his power and glory to himself, and uses his high position for his own self-exaltation. Never was such great prosperity linked with such pride. Even so, God had given warning and space for repentance, but all in vain. Judgment must take its course, and the king becomes as a beast. As one has said, "He makes himself the centre instead of God. He becomes a beast and loses his reason entirely. A beast may be powerful, large, stronger than man, show much sagacity in his way, but its look is downward; there is no exercise of conscience, and, as a consequence, no real relationship to God."

In all these incidents we have set forth the evil course of these Gentile powers. They will exalt themselves against God, ignore God, impute their prosperity to their own efforts, and thus become brutish, and finally bring down judgment upon themselves.

Seven times pass, and then God is confessed. Seven times signifies a complete period of time, and prophetically would cover the whole period of Gentile domination. We have a similar use of "seven" in connection with the addresses to the seven Churches in Revelation 2 and 3, where *seven* Churches are chosen to cover the complete period of the history of the professing Church on earth. During the period of Gentile power, the government of the world is carried on without reference to God and therefore without any understanding of His mind. At the end of this period, after judgment has

done its work, God will be confessed by the nations.

(Vv. 34, 35). Looking at himself, his might and his glory had led the king to become like a beast that looks down; but at the end of days he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and at once his understanding returned. His reason being restored, he blesses and praises the Most High. Then he thinks of men and, in comparison with God, he owns that all the inhabitants of the earth — the greatest kings as well as the meanest subjects — are as nothing. The man that thought he was everything discovers that he is nothing — a wholesome lesson for us all to learn. Moreover, he owns the sovereignty of God; and that God is not only sovereign in the armies of heaven, but also among the inhabitants of the earth. None can stay His hand or question His ways.

Vv. 36, 37). Upon his submission to God, the king's reason returns and he is once again established in his kingdom. So, in the days yet to come, after the judgment of the living nations the Gentiles will be established in blessing under the rule of Christ.

Nebuchadnezzar is brought personally to extol and honour the King of heaven. Before, he had owned that Daniel's God was a God of gods and the Lord of kings: later, he had passed a decree that none should speak a word against God, but at last he himself turns to God, and praises Him. Now he says "Those that walk in pride He is able to abase." He no longer talks about cutting people in pieces and making their houses a dunghill if they do not praise and bless the God of heaven. He will not intrude into God's domain, for God Himself knows how to humble the proud. He no longer tells others what they are to do, but he acknowledges what he himself does. He says 'Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.'

IMPIETY

Daniel 5

We have seen that idolatry is an outstanding mark of the great world empires, to whom government has been committed during the times of the Gentiles. Further, we have seen that this idolatry sets aside the rights of God, and tramples underfoot the consciences of men (chapter 3).

A second characteristic is self-exaltation. or the pride by which these world-wide empires use power for their own glory, rather than the glory of God (Dan. 4).

From Daniel 5 we learn that a third characteristic is impiety, which not only infringes on the rights of God but publicly defies God.

(Vv. 1-4). The occasion that brings forward this solemn feature of the times of the Gentiles is a great feast given by Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, to his lords. This feast was marked by an outburst of impiety, apparently let loose by the effect of drink upon the king. It was "while he tasted the wine" that he commanded the golden vessels of the temple of God to be brought into the feast. To a certain extent man can control the evil passions of his heart; but, when through some evil influence he loses control of himself, then all the wickedness of his heart is displayed. God had allowed His people to be taken captive, His temple to be destroyed, and the holy vessels brought to Babylon and placed in the house of the Chaldean idol (Dan. 1: 2). The Babylonian kings, not seeing the chastening hand of God upon His people, looked upon this victory over Israel as the triumph of their gods over the God of Israel (Hab. 1: 11-17). Accordingly, Belshazzar seizes the opportunity of this great feast to give public

expression to what he imagined was the triumph of his false gods. The king and his lords not only profane the holy vessels set apart for Jehovah by using them in their drunken feast, but they praise their heathen gods of every degree. This was bold and open defiance of God.

(Vv. 5, 6). Such impiety must call down the judgment of God. At once God takes up the challenge. Quietly, without voice or vision, God makes His presence unmistakably felt. The fingers of a man's hand silently write the sentence of judgment on the wall of the king's palace. In spite of the king's drunken condition, he is at once smitten in conscience. His countenance betrays his terror; his thoughts trouble him, and he trembles from head to foot.

(Vv. 7, 8). In his terror he turns to the wise men of Babylon. He offers great rewards for the interpretation of the words, but all in vain.

(Vv. 9-12). His wise men failing him, the wretched king is plunged into deeper terror. The Queen, hearing of the king's terror, comes into the feast. Apparently, she had no part in this impious scene. It is suggested that she was not the wife of the king, as his wives were present at the feast (2, 3). Probably she was the Queen dowager. Evidently she was well acquainted with Daniel and the great events that had taken place in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. She is able to inform the king of the presence of Daniel in the kingdom.

(Vv. 13-16). Thereupon Daniel is brought into the presence of the king. The king had heard of the wisdom of Daniel in interpreting dreams in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, but apparently he did not care to have any personal acquaintance with this captive Jew. However, in the ways of God, He humbles the wise men of his world and exalts the despised captive. Wisdom is found with God's people, even though in captivity.

(V. 17). With calm dignity Daniel tells the king to give his gifts and rewards to another. Apart from any rewards he will read the writing.

(Vv. 18-22). Before doing so, he rebukes the king by reminding him of God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar. The Most High God had given to Nebuchadnezzar a universal kingdom with absolute power. But the king had used it for his own glory and God had humbled him for his pride. All this Belshazzar well knew, and yet, in spite of this warning, he had not humbled his heart.

(Vv. 23, 24). Then Daniel charges home the guilt of the king. Nebuchadnezzar had persecuted God's people, but Belshazzar had "lifted up" himself "against the Lord of heaven." This impiety overwhelmed him in ruin and brought the first world empire to its close. In connection with this act of impiety the writing had been written. Thus Daniel charges home the guilt of the king before he reads the writing that pronounces his doom.

(V. 25). There was no difficulty as to the meaning of the words. Literally translated they mean, "numbered," "weighed," "divided." The difficulty was that, as mere isolated words, they conveyed no meaning without a divinely-given interpretation. What, then, was the message from God that they were intended to convey?

(V. 26). Daniel, the prophet of God, gives the significance of the words. "This," says he, "is the interpretation of the thing." The king is then told that "Mene," or "numbered" signifies that God has numbered his kingdom and finished it. Many years before, Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar that God had given him "a kingdom, power, strength, and glory." But he also warned him that after his kingdom another would arise. For sixty-eight years the kings of Babylon had exercised sovereign power over the whole habitable world. Now the termination of the Babylonish Empire had come. Its days were numbered and its universal rule was finished.

(V. 27). The next word "Tekel," meaning "weighed," tells this impious king why his empire had reached its end. The ruler of the empire is weighed in the balances and found wanting. Nebuchadnezzar and his successors had entirely failed in their responsibility to govern the world in the fear of God. Under the chastening hand of God, Nebuchadnezzar had indeed repented. Belshazzar, the last ruler, though fully aware of all God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar, had sinned more grievously than his predecessors. Openly and impiously he had defied God. His actions had been weighed in the unerring balances of God and found wanting.

(V. 28). The third word, "Peres," (another form of the word Upharsin — both words being merely different parts of the same verb) means "divided." The result of the king's impiety was to bring immediate judgment upon the king. Daniel plainly tells the king, "Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

(Vv. 29, 31). The king makes much of the messenger, but apparently pays little heed to the message. Nevertheless, on that night the judgment fell. Belshazzar is slain, and Darius the Mede takes the kingdom. Thus the Babylonish Empire comes to its end, and the second great world power — the Medo-Persian — commences to run its course.

APOSTACY

Daniel 6

We have seen that the moral characteristics of the governing powers during the times of the Gentiles are set forth in the historical incidents recorded in Daniel 3 to 6. The worst and final evil is apostacy, or man usurping the place of God upon the earth. The setting aside the rights of God, the exaltation of man, the open defiance of God, that have already passed before us, end in the awful attempt to stamp out all recognition of God on the earth by dethroning God and enthroning man in His place.

This climax of all evil is forecast in the decree signed by King Darius whereby no petition is to be addressed to any God or man, save to the king, for thirty days.

This apostacy is clearly presented in the New Testament as characterising the end of the times of the Gentiles. In the second chapter of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the coming apostacy is foretold in connection with the revelation of the man of sin who opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he himself sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. From Revelation 13 we further learn that this man of sin is the second beast. The acts of this wicked man are shadowed forth by the decree of Darius, not, be it noted, by what Darius was as a man, but by what he did. Personally, Darius appears to have been a very different character to the vile Belshazzar. He would seem to have been an amiable man, and, in this respect, he may set forth the character of the man of sin who will probably appear in the sight of men as an exceedingly attractive man.

(Vv. 1-3). The opening verses give the occasion which called forth this wicked decree. Daniel had been appointed by Darius as chief of the three presidents to whom the one hundred and twenty princes, who ruled the kingdom, had to render account. That a child of the captivity should be exalted to this high position aroused the jealousy of the Chaldean presidents and princes. Moved by jealousy, they sought in malice to find some fault wherewith to prefer a charge against him before the king.

(Vv. 4, 5). First, they sought occasion against him in connection with his administration of the kingdom. But, though all these presidents and princes sought to find some Fault in Daniel's management of the affairs of state, forasmuch as he was faithful they could find neither "error" nor "fault" in him. They concluded that it would only be possible to find a complaint through the law of his God — a wholesome lesson or the Christian, whose relations with the world should be so faithfully carried out, that the world would only find it possible to condemn us by intruding themselves into the things of God and passing decrees, the observance of which would involve disobedience to God.

(Vv. 6-9). This is the situation that these presidents and princes, with satanic subtlety, conspire to bring about. Apparently, it was customary for the administration to make the decrees and for the king to give them authority by his signature. Accordingly, these men present themselves before the king with a decree, that no petition should be made to any God or man, save the king only, for thirty days on pain of being thrown into the den of lions. Three things mark this decree. First, the decree is in itself the very height of wickedness, for it is the awful attempt to dethrone God and set up man in His place. It seeks to install the king in a place of absolute supremacy over heaven and earth, above God and man, for, during the thirty days no petition should be asked of *"any God or man."* Great as was the sin of Nebuchadnezzar this is far greater. Nebuchadnezzar had set up an idol in the place of God; but now Darius sets himself up in the place of God. It is the deification of man. Secondly, the motive of the decree is evil in the extreme. Trading upon the uprightness of Daniel's character, and his known fidelity to the law of his God, these men purposely devise a decree which they know Daniel will not obey. Thirdly, the decree that they frame appears highly flattering to the king. The decree is so presented that the true motive is carefully concealed, and the king foolishly falls into the trap and signs the decree.

(V. 10). Daniel Is evidently aware of all that is taking place and yet apparently he makes no charge against these wicked men, nor does he seek to defend himself. His faith is in God (verse 23), not in himself or his own efforts. His part is simply to obey God and leave the results with Him. Consequently, he goes to his house and, as usual, he prays towards Jerusalem three times a day, the windows of his house being open. In all this there is no ostentation; he simply acts *"as he did aforesaid."* Having been in the habit of praying in this open way, suddenly to close the windows and pray in secret would have been interpreted by all Babylon as cowardice, or acquiescence in the decree. In the midst of that idolatrous city Daniel had borne a public witness to the true God. He was not a secret disciple. To obey the decree would involve the transgression of the first commandment. Moreover, the word of God gave Daniel plain directions for the circumstances in which he found himself. Solomon's prayer, at the dedication of the Temple, anticipated his difficulties. "If," said King Solomon, "they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives . . . and pray unto Thee toward their land, which Thou gavest unto their fathers, *the city which Thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for Thy name:* then hear Thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven Thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause" (1 Kings 8: 46-49). Such was Solomon's prayer, and God accepted his prayer, for the Lord said, "I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before Me" (1 Kings 9: 3). In faith in God, Daniel acted according to the word of God. He refused to make any compromise. The carnal mind might suggest, Why not close the window and pray in secret? Refusing any such compromise, he prayed, "his window being open." But if he must pray with his window open, why select a front room facing towards the street? Without hesitation he prayed "in his chamber toward Jerusalem." But if he must pray with an open window toward Jerusalem, why need he go down on his knees; could he not assume some other attitude that would not call attention to the fact that he was praying? No, Daniel will not give up the right attitude toward God; "he kneeled upon his knees." If, then, he is so very strict that he must pray with his windows open, looking toward Jerusalem and kneeling upon his knees, what need is there for doing it "three times a day"? Surely he

could pray early in the morning before anyone is abroad, or late in the evening after everyone has retired? Indeed, could he not for these thirty days give up praying by day and pray by night instead? God can see and hear in the dark. No such suggestions influence Daniel: he prays three times, and in the day. And though he is in captivity, and surrounded by those who are plotting for his life, he finds occasion to "give thanks," as well as to pray. Moreover, he prays and gives thanks "before his God." Men may see him praying, but it is before God, not men, that he prays. This was no new thing with Daniel. It was not something that he suddenly commenced in a fit of religious zeal for his God, or in defiant opposition to the king's decree; it was the continuance of his usual ways — "as he did aforetime."

(V. 11). For the success of their plot, the enemies of Daniel had counted upon his known habit of prayer, and his unswerving faithfulness to his God, and they did not count in vain. Assembling before Daniel's house they find, as anticipated, that Daniel is praying and making his supplications before his God, undeterred by the decree of the king, the plot of his enemies and the den of lions.

(Vv. 12, 13). Having gathered their evidence, these men draw near to the king and remind him of the terms of the decree, the truth of which he has to admit. Then they prefer their charge, pressing the fact that Daniel is a captive of Judah and he regards not the king and ignores his decree. They refrain from saying that he makes his petition to his God and regards His law.

(Vv. 14-17). For the success of their plot these men had counted upon the vanity of the king and the faithfulness of Daniel. Had the king been proof against their flattery, or Daniel unfaithful to God, their scheme would have miscarried. But Daniel remained faithful, and the king accepted their flattery, and so far their plot prospered. Accepting their flattery the king became their slave. Betrayed into the hands of these wicked men by his own vanity, he perceived when it was too late the real object of the decree that he had signed, with the result that he "was sore displeased with himself." Appreciating the integrity of Daniel, the king set his heart to deliver him, labouring throughout the day to this end. The problem that Darius sought to solve was, how to carry out the desire of his heart and yet maintain the law to which he had put his hand. David, in his day, had to face this problem in the matter of his son Absalom. David could not reconcile love with law, so he ignored the law and acted in love, with the result that he was driven from his throne by the man to whom he had shown grace. Darius ignored the dictates of his heart and maintained the law, with the result that he retained his throne, but Daniel was cast into the den of lions, every precaution being taken that the king's decree be carried out to the letter.

God, alone, in His dealings with the sinner can reconcile the claims of righteousness with the sovereignty of grace. On the ground of the death of Christ grace reigns through righteousness.

Though carrying out his law to the letter, the king has the conviction that Daniel's God, "Whom," says he, "thou servest continually," will intervene for the deliverance of His faithful servant. The king commends Daniel for doing that which was in direct disobedience to his own decree, and he is confident that the man who puts the fear of God above the fear of the greatest man on earth, will not be abandoned by God. His conviction was right, and it is ever so, though, in this dispensation of faith, the intervention of God does not always take the direct and miraculous form that it did in past dispensations.

(V. 18). In spite of his conviction that God will intervene on behalf of His servant, the king is filled with remorse for his own action and spends a sleepless night in fasting.

(Vv. 19-24). Early in the morning the king hurries to the den of lions, and, to his relief, finds that God has indeed intervened. In calling to Daniel he addresses him as "the servant of the living God," and again he recognises that Daniel has served God continually. In their charge the wicked men had

made everything of the king and nothing of God; the king makes everything of God and nothing of himself.

Daniel informs the king that God has intervened on his behalf through angelic power, and stopped the mouths of the lions, for he had a good conscience toward God and toward the king.

The men who drew up the decree left God out of their calculations. They had not counted upon any power being able to restrain the ferocity of the lions. They had made no provision in their decree that anyone thrown to the lions must be killed by the lions. Thus the law was fulfilled and Daniel was saved, and these malicious men, having been thoroughly exposed, were themselves with their families cast into the den of lions, and thus caught in the snare they had laid for the man of God.

(Vv. 25-27). Darius now sends forth a second decree to all that dwell upon the earth, that all men are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. This surpasses the decree of Nebuchadnezzar, recorded in Daniel 3, which merely commanded that no one was to speak anything amiss against God. This decree commands that due respect and fear be paid to God as a recognition of His sovereignty as the living God. Thus, through the faithfulness of one man, the effort to set up man in the place of God becomes the occasion of a world-wide testimony to the living God.

The whole incident strikingly illustrates the truth of Psalm 57. There the Psalmist finds himself in the presence of those who would swallow him up. He cries to the Most High God that performeth all things. Having cried to God, he has the confidence that God will "send from heaven" and save him. In this confidence he is kept in calmness, though, as to his circumstances, he "is among lions," and surrounded by enemies whose tongue is as "a sharp sword." In result, the Psalmist says, "they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves." Moreover, God is exalted; His praise goes out "among the nations," and He is exalted "above the heavens" and "above all the earth." The final end of the apostacy of men will be that the wicked will be punished with everlasting destruction, the godly will be recompensed for all their suffering, and God will be glorified throughout the earth through the glory of Christ.

THE FOUR BEASTS

Daniel 7

The seventh chapter forms the introduction to the second division of the book of Daniel. In this division we have no longer the interpretations of dreams and messages given to heathen kings, but revelations and interpretations of visions given to Daniel himself.

The whole book treats, as we have seen, of the times of the Gentiles. In regard to this period two great subjects are brought before us: first, in Daniel 1 to 6, the failure of the Gentiles in their responsibility to govern in the fear of God, ending in apostacy and judgment; secondly, in chapters 7 to 12, the circumstances of the Jews during this time. Thus, there will again pass before us the four great Gentile empires, but now in their relationship with the Jewish people, and their treatment, not only of that nation as a whole, but of the godly remnant of the nation. We shall learn that, though God chastens His people, He always reserves a remnant as a witness to Himself, and never gives up His purpose to re-establish the nation in blessing under the reign of Christ.

The seventh chapter again brings before us the four great Gentile empires, not as they appear before men as an imposing image, but as viewed by God, and therefore presented under the form of

beasts.

The chapter contains three distinct visions and their interpretations: —

First, verses 1-6, the vision of the four beasts with details of the first three:

Secondly, verses 7-12, the vision giving a detailed account of the fourth beast:

Thirdly, verses 13-14 the vision of the dominion of the Son of Man:

Fourthly, verses 15-28, the interpretation of these visions.

(a) The first vision (Vv. 1-5).

(V. 1). It has been noticed that the prophecies of Daniel are unlike any other prophecies in the Old Testament, inasmuch as they are not directly addressed to God's people. During the time of the captivity, the Jews are no longer publicly recognised as the people of God; therefore, any communications that God makes are not addressed to them, but to Daniel personally. Nevertheless, we read that Daniel "wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters." Thus, these visions, which unfold the future of the world, are recorded for the guidance of God's people in all ages.

(V. 2). In his vision Daniel sees the great sea agitated by the four winds of heaven. The sea is used in prophetic scriptures to set forth "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (Rev. 17: 15). The four winds of heaven would seem to indicate that from every quarter of the globe there was a providential dealing of God allowing the world to fall into a condition of anarchy and revolution.

(V. 3). Out of this agitated sea there arise four successive beasts diverse from one another. From the interpretation that follows, it seems conclusive that these four beasts present another aspect of the four great world empires, already depicted in the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In the vision of the image these empires were presented as imposing but deteriorating powers in the sight of men. Here these same empires are presented in a form that expresses their successive moral deterioration in the sight of God. Cruelty, selfishness, rapacity, with no recognition or knowledge of God, marks the beast; and such are the solemn features of the world empires during the times of the Gentiles until the dominion of Christ is established.

(V. 4). The first beast was "like a lion, and had eagle's wings." Other Scriptures lead to the conclusion that this first beast sets forth Babylon, the first world empire. In the fourth chapter of Jeremiah, verse 7, the prophet refers to Babylon under the figure of a lion. In Ezekiel 18 Babylon is likened to an eagle. Again, in Jeremiah 49: 19 and 22, both figures are used to represent Babylon in its power and majesty, as well as the swiftness of its conquests.

Further, the prophet sees a remarkable change in the beast. The wings were plucked and the beast stood upon its feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. The plucked wings would seem to indicate that the rapid conquests of the empire would cease. A lion standing on its feet as a man, and with the heart of a man, has neither dignity nor strength, and this apparently points to what actually happened when Babylon was shorn of its dignity as a world power, and became a mere province in subjection to the Persian Empire.

(V. 5). The second beast was "like to a bear, and it raised itself up on one side," and had three ribs in its mouth. This surely pre-figures the Medo-Persian Empire, which succeeded the Babylonian Empire. It was composed of two nationalities, the Persian nation being exalted over the Medes. We know it was Darius, the Mede, who captured Babylon, though shortly after Cyrus, the Persian, became the great power in the empire. The three ribs in the mouth probably indicate the rapacious character of

the empire, devouring other nations without mercy.

(V. 6). The third beast was "like a leopard," but with four wings of a fowl and four heads. These figures vividly set forth the character and history of the Grecian Empire. The four wings may aptly set forth the impetuosity and rapidity of the conquests of Alexander the Great by which the Grecian Empire came into pre-eminent dominion. The four heads would seem to point to the four kingdoms into which the empire was finally divided after the death of Alexander.

(b) The second vision (Vv. 7-10).

(V. 7). The fourth beast, largely prophetic of events yet to be fulfilled, is of such deep importance that details are given to Daniel in a second vision. There is nothing in nature to which this beast can be compared. It is purposely presented as an unnatural monster, awakening dread and terror in the beholder. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and brake in pieces, and what it did not devour, it stamped upon with its feet. It was different to all the other beasts and had ten horns.

Probably all would agree that this beast is a figure of the Roman Empire, marked by its overcoming strength, and the terror it inspired in the nations of the world. In its irresistible power of conquest and aggrandisement it brought other nations under its despotism, while those who refused to submit were crushed.

(V. 8). The importance of this empire, as distinguished from the first three empires, lies in the fact that it is the empire that will exist in the closing days of the times of the Gentiles, the one that comes into contact with Christ and His people, and therefore the power that will be directly judged and set aside by the kingdom of Christ. This empire, then, will yet play a great part in the near future of the world. This future aspect of the Roman Empire comes before us in the part of the vision that speaks of the ten horns and the little horn. This little horn had the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

The interpretation will give us further details of these ten horns, and the little horn. Here it is sufficient to note that the ten horns clearly take us on to the future when the Roman Empire will be revived in a ten kingdom form under one head (See Rev. 13: 1; Rev. 17: 12).

(Vv. 9, 10). The second vision that describes the fourth beast also foretells the judgment of the beast. Daniel sees a vision of the eternal God, the Ancient of Days, seated upon the throne of judgment. We know that Christ is also the Ancient of Days — a divine Person, as well as the Son of Man. In the first chapter of Revelation He is presented as the Judge with all the characteristics that mark the Ancient of Days in the Book of Daniel. Moreover, Daniel not only sees the throne of the Ancient of Days, but he sees other thrones which were "set up" (not "cast down" as in our version). These thrones evidently refer to the thrones of the saints that will be associated with Christ in this judgment of the living nations. They are again referred to in the Revelation, when the Apostle John says, "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them" (Rev. 20: 4, 22: 1 Cor. 6: 2).

Surrounding the throne are thousands of angelic beings. The execution of judgment is one of the functions of the angels. The passage describing the judgment of the living nations in Matthew 25 opens by presenting the Son of Man coming to His throne of glory, "and all the holy angels with him" (Matt. 25: 31).

(V. 11). Here the judgment is specially concerned with dealing with the little horn and the beast over which he ruled. The immediate occasion of the judgment is "the voice of the great words which the horn spake." The blasphemous defiance of God which will mark the last head of the revived Roman Empire will bring swift and overwhelming judgment upon himself and his dominion. It is well to notice

that the judgment of which Daniel speaks is not the final judgment of the Great White Throne, when the dead will be raised and judged. Daniel speaks of the judgment of the living nations which will precede the reign of Christ, but viewed more especially in connection with the Roman Empire and its head.

(V. 12). The fourth beast comes under the direct judgment of God. The first three beasts had their dominion taken away. They lost their world-wide power, not by direct judgment, but in a providential way. Nevertheless, their lives were prolonged for a season and time. Though losing their predominant position, they still exist as nations, however feeble they may have become.

(c) *The third vision* (Vv. 13, 14). The judgment of the beast clears the way for the setting up of the Kingdom of Christ. This glorious event is foretold by a third vision, in which Daniel sees one like the Son of Man come with the clouds of heaven. He receives His kingdom as Man from God, the Ancient of Days. His dominion is world-wide, embracing "all people, nations, and languages." His dominion will be everlasting. It will not, like other kingdoms, pass away. It will never be destroyed.

(d) *The interpretation of the visions* (Vv. 15-28).

(V. 15). The immediate effect of these visions was to grieve the spirit of Daniel and trouble his mind. There must have been much in the three visions that Daniel could not understand, but at least he realised that they foretold a time of trial and sorrow for his beloved people.

(V. 16). Apart from divine instruction, Daniel is no more able to interpret his own dreams than those of heathen kings. So he drew near to "one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this." We are not definitely told who they were that "stood by." Probably it is a reference to the angels that, in the vision, "stood before" the Ancient of Days. The one to whom Daniel appeals is evidently intelligent in the mind of God, and deputed, like the angelic messengers in the Revelation, to give "the interpretation of the things" seen in visions.

In the interpretation that follows, it is well to note that, as another has said, "We always find, whether in prophecy or parable, that the explanation goes beyond that which the original statement contains." So is it in this passage: the visions bring before us the character and history of the four world powers; the interpretation shows the connection of these world powers with the people of God. Thus in the course of the explanation the saints are mentioned five times (verses 18, 21, 22, 25, 27).

(V. 17). First, Daniel is told that these four great beasts are four kings which shall arise out of the earth, and a little later we learn that "the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth" (23). Evidently, then, "kings" are used to represent kingdoms. We cannot then be mistaken in viewing these four beasts as representing four great monarchies. In the vision they arise out of the sea; here they arise from the earth. The vision describes their providential or political origin, the interpretation their moral origin. Providentially they arise in a time of political upheaval; morally they are earthly, in contrast to the kingdom of the Son of Man, who comes from heaven.

(V. 18). Then Daniel is informed, for his comfort and ours, as to the ultimate end of the times of the Gentiles, as regards the people of God. These monarchies may oppose the people of God and blaspheme God, "but" the end will be the triumph of God's people, for, "the saints of the Most High God shall taken the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."

We may enquire, Who are the saints of the Most High? The better translation is "the saints of the most high places." There are those who, like the beasts and their subjects, are morally of earth, and there are the people of God who own the God of heaven, and are thus in connection with heavenly, or high, places. In the third vision it is the Son of Man that comes with the clouds of heaven, and to Him

is given the kingdom that will never pass away. Here we learn the further truth, that the people of God of all ages, all those who through the history of the world have been in touch with heaven, will share with the Son of Man in His glorious reign. To this great event Enoch looked when he prophesied, saying, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 14).

(Vv. 19-22). Then Daniel enquires more particularly concerning the fourth beast. He repeats the vision, but with added details, for now he refers to the saints, and tells us that he beheld that the one represented by the little horn persecuted the saints, and for a limited time was allowed to prevail against them, for this triumph over the saints was "*until* the Ancient of Days came," and then the saints exercised judgment over those who had prevailed against them.

(V. 23). In answer to Daniel's enquiries, the angel expounds the vision of the fourth beast. We are definitely told that it represents "the fourth kingdom upon earth." This we know was the Roman Empire. It was "diverse from all kingdoms" in that it assumed a form of government which combined autocracy with democracy, already prefigured in the iron and clay of the image. In its almost universal dominion it could well be said to "devour the whole earth." By treading down and breaking in pieces, it subdued the nations, and crushed those who refused to submit. Thus we have a picture of the Roman Empire in the day of its pristine power.

(V. 24). The details of verse 23 look on to events which, in Daniel's day, were still future. In our day we know they have been fulfilled to the letter. In the details that follow we are carried on to events which are still future. The angel says, "The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise." It is impossible to resist the conclusion that this looks on to the last phase of the Roman Empire when, as plainly stated in Revelation 17, it will be revived in the form of ten kingdoms confederated under one imperial head.

Then we learn the meaning of the little horn of verses 8, 20 and 21. Another king shall arise after the ten kings, diverse from them, and he shall subdue three kings. He is diverse from the ten kings inasmuch as they represent different kingdoms, but this king represents a special power that arises in the midst of the ten kingdoms and gains his territory by subduing three of the kingdoms. It is "his dominion" that is finally dealt with in judgment (26), and therefore it seems conclusive that the little horn, while subduing three of the kings, acquires power over the whole empire.

The picture that is presented of the last phase of the Roman Empire is clearly that of seven kingdoms, united with the three subdued kingdoms, under one imperial head — the little horn. Reading this Scripture in conjunction with details given to us in Revelation 13: 1 to 8 and Revelation 17: 1, we can only conclude that the little horn of this chapter is the revived head of the Roman Empire that comes so prominently before us in the book of Revelation.

(V. 25). Four things are definitely foretold of this terrible man. First, "he shall speak great words against the Most High." Not only, like any natural man, will he be at enmity with God, but with daring impiety he will openly defy God (See Rev. 13: 6). Secondly, he will persecute the saints of the Most High, those who own God in the high, or heavenly, places (See Rev. 13: 7). Thirdly, he will "change times and laws." Not only will he destroy the saints, but he will think to change the times and laws of God's earthly people, the Jews, who at that time will have returned to the land. Fourthly, we are told that he will be allowed to prevail for a time and times and the dividing of time, that is for a period of three and a half years (See Rev. 13: 5).

(V. 26). his blasphemy against God and persecution of the saints will not be allowed to continue. At the end of the allotted time judgment overtakes him. His dominion is taken away, and utterly consumed and destroyed unto the end. Unto the end of time it will never be revived.

(V. 27). Following upon the judgment of the beast and his kingdom, all the kingdoms of the earth will pass under the sway of the people of the saints of the Most High — God's earthly people, the Jews. Then, through the people of God, all the peoples of the earth will be brought to serve and worship Him, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

(V. 28). Daniel had been privileged to look far into the future and see the people of God established in a world-wide and everlasting kingdom under the sway of the Most High God. Nevertheless, as he thought of the seas of sorrow and trial through which they will pass ere they reach the kingdom, his thoughts troubled him and his countenance was changed. However, he cherished these things in his heart. Good, too, for God's people at all times to look beyond the long dark night, and, in their hearts, to hail the coming day.

For the King of kings is coming,
And the dawn is in the sky,
And the watchers on the mountains
Proclaim the day is nigh.

THE RAM AND THE HE-GOAT

Daniel 8

The first seven chapters of the Book of Daniel have been mainly occupied with the Gentile powers, whether as they appear in the sight of man, or as viewed by God. From chapter eight to the end of the Book, the visions and interpretations in a very special way concern the Jews; many details are given that would have little interest or even meaning for the Gentile powers.

This may account for the fact that, from Daniel 2: 4 to the end of Daniel 7, the Spirit of God has used the Aramaic dialect, this portion of the book being more directly concerned with the Gentiles. In Daniel 8 the Spirit of God again reverts to the Hebrew language, which is used to the end of the Book, this part of the prophecy being specially concerned with the Jews.

In Daniel 8 we have the record of Daniel's vision of the ram and the he-goat (verses 1-14); and the interpretation of the vision (verses 15-27).

We have seen that the second and third world empires have been pre-figured in the image by the breast and arms of silver, and the belly and thighs of brass, setting forth their imposing character in the sight of men. Again, in the visions of Daniel 7, they come before us under the figure of beasts — the bear and the leopard — to set forth their moral character in the sight of God. Now, again, in Daniel 8, the second and third empires pass before us under the figure of two animals — the ram and the he-goat — to set forth their history in relation to men. That these figures respectively set forth the Empires of Persia and Greece is not a matter of conjecture but revelation, according to the interpretation given by Gabriel in verses 20 and 21.

As these empires have passed away, the question might arise, What use can these details serve? Two things have to be borne in mind in answering this question. First, these empires, in the day of their power, had to do with God's people, and whatever concerns His people touches His glory, and is of deep and lasting importance. Secondly, we have to remember that though these empires have "had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time" (Dan. 7: 12). Thus, to the

end of the times of the Gentiles, there will still exist nations that represent these once powerful empires, and, at the time of the end, these nations will be found in opposition to the people of God — the Jews. This it is that gives such importance to the details of Daniel 8. It prophetically gives the history of these two empires in the day of their power, and their connection with the people of God — prophecies which have already been fulfilled. At the same time their past history foreshadows their opposition to the people of God in the time of the end.

In reading these Scriptures, let us, as one has said, hold these two thoughts, "that Christ is the aim and end of all the counsels of God, and that the Jews are the objects of His counsels here below." It is true that God's earthly people have broken down, and, under the chastening of God, have been scattered and no longer publicly owned as His people. Nevertheless, they are still the people beloved for the fathers' sake, and, when the time of their judicial blindness is past they will be restored to their land and re-established in blessing. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11: 29). Moreover, if the everlasting love of God is still toward Israel, His eyes are still upon the Land and the Temple. The land may be desolate and trodden under foot of the Gentiles, but it is still the "land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deut. 11: 12). Again, the word came to Solomon, "I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put My name there for ever; and Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually." (1 Kings 9: 3).

Keeping these thoughts before us, we can understand that everything that concerns God's earthly people, whether in the past or future, is of the deepest importance to God, for in and through this people the glory of Christ on earth will at last be maintained, and all the counsels of God for the blessing of the nations be fulfilled.

Through their sin and failure the earthly people of God have come under the indignation and chastening of God, whereby they have fallen into the bondage of the nations. Nevertheless, God is not indifferent to the ill-treatment of His people by those who have taken occasion by God's chastening to exalt themselves and persecute God's people.

The prophecies of Daniel, as other Scriptures, clearly show that in the time of the end the opposition to and persecution of God's people will take a threefold form.

First, there will be the persecution arising from the revived head of the Roman Empire, brought before us under the figure of the little horn of chapter 7. (See verses 21, 25, and Revelation 13: 1-10). Secondly, there will be the persecution arising against the Jews, when back in their land, from their northern enemy, as set forth in the little horn of chapter 8. Thirdly, there will be persecution from the Antichrist in their midst, brought before us in Daniel 11: 36 to 39. (See also Rev. 13: 11-18).

It is the second form of the persecution of God's earthly people that passes before us in Daniel 8, that is to say, the persecution that comes from the Assyrian, or king of the north, referred to by so many of the prophets.

(a) *The vision of the ram and the he-goat* (1-14).

(Vv. 1, 2). This fresh vision appeared to Daniel in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar. The period of the first world empire was within three years of its close. In the palace of Shushan, in the province of Elam, Daniel in vision stood by the river Ulai.

(Vv. 3, 4). He sees a ram with two horns, one being higher than the other, and this higher horn appearing after the other. This, we know from verse 20, is a figure of the Medo-Persian Empire, the two horns setting forth the dual character of the empire. One horn being higher than the other prophetically

sets forth that one part of the empire would gain ascendancy over the other, and this dominating power would rise last. This we know is exactly what came to pass. Darius the Mede who crushed the power of Babylon, gave place to Cyrus the Persian, who rapidly gained the ascendancy in the Persian Empire. The victorious career of Cyrus, and the directions of his conquest, are foretold by the ram pushing toward the west, and north, and south. No power could stand against him or thwart his will.

(Vv. 5-7). As Daniel was considering this ram, he saw an he-goat come from the west, moving with such swiftness that he did not appear to touch the ground. Between the eyes of the goat was a notable horn. This rough goat, we know from verse 21, is a figure of the Grecian kingdom, and the great horn a figure of the first king. In few and striking words the passage sets forth the career of Alexander the Great.

The he-goat attacks the ram with such overwhelming force that there was no power in the ram to withstand the onslaught. The ram was cast down, ruthlessly crushed with none to deliver. The figure vividly sets forth the rapidity and ferocity of the conquests of Alexander by which the Persian Empire was crushed and came to its end as a world power, the Grecian Empire being established in its place.

(V. 8). Further, in the vision Daniel saw that the he-goat became very great, but at the summit of its power the great horn was broken, and in its place four notable horns came up towards the four winds of heaven. Again it is impossible not to see in this picture exactly what came to pass in history. Alexander's brief but victorious career was cut short in the midst of his triumphs, and eventually the empire was divided into four kingdoms, Syria, Egypt, Greece and Thrace.

(Vv. 9, 10). Out of one of these four horns there came forth a little horn. Evidently this little horn sets forth a king that arises in the north, for he pursues his conquests towards the south, the east, and the pleasant land.

This "little horn" is not to be confounded with the "little horn" of Daniel 7. The expression "little horn" may indicate that the person thus figured arises from the mass, and, apart from his own genius, would be a person of no consequence. The little horn of Daniel 7 is evidently the head of the revived Roman Empire, while the little horn of Daniel 8 is a figure of the king of the north, who is the subject of many prophecies and who will play such a leading part in connection with God's earthly people in the time of the end. For this reason, doubtless, the vision and interpretation are mainly occupied with this little horn.

It will help to notice that the portion of the vision to the end of verse 8 has already been fulfilled. At verse 9 we pass to that part of the vision the fulfilment of which is yet future. In the time of the end (verse 17), there will exist a nation north of Palestine that will attack the Jewish nation then gathered back in their land. The "host of heaven" would seem to be figurative of the people of God — those who own the rule of heaven. The "stars," as in other Scriptures, set forth those who hold a place of subordinate authority under God amongst His people (See Rev. 1: 20; Rev. 2: 1; Rev. 3: 1). This northern power will be allowed, for a time, to overrun the "pleasant land," and cast down those in authority among God's people.

(Vv. 11, 12). Here the prophet speaks more particularly of the head of this northern power, for he no longer says "it" — the power — but "he" — a person. This person will exalt himself against Christ, the Prince of the host, and "from him" (not "by him" as in our translation) "the daily sacrifice was taken away." The sacrifice will be taken from Jehovah and His sanctuary destroyed. The opening clause of verse 12 should read, "A time of trial was appointed to the continual sacrifice by reason of transgression" (N. Tn.). The meaning appears to be that the little horn will be allowed to take away the sacrifice because of the transgression of God's people. Then the vision indicates that "it," the northern

power, will cast down the truth and, for a time, be allowed to prosper and accomplish great things.

(Vv. 13, 14). At this point in the vision Daniel heard one saint speaking to another, and asking how long will the state of things of which the vision speaks be allowed to continue. Speaking to Daniel, one says that the sanctuary and the host will be trodden underfoot for two thousand three hundred days, or nearly six and one half years.

(b) *The interpretation* (Vv. 15-27).

(Vv. 15-18). In the verses that follow, the meaning of these visions is made known to Daniel by the Angel Gabriel. As ever, the interpretation adds further details to the vision. First, Daniel is definitely told that the vision looks on to the time of the end. Daniel, who is overcome by the vision of that which will happen to his people in the latter times, is strengthened to face the truth.

(V. 19). He is told that the vision speaks of the events that will terminate the "indignation," and that whatever sorrows intervene they will have a definite end — "at the time appointed the end shall be." The term "indignation" is a well known expression in prophecy setting forth the time during which God's indignation is aroused against His people on account of their idolatry (See Isa. 5: 25; Isa. 9: 19; Isa. 10: 5, 25).

(Vv. 20-22). Then follows the definite application of the vision to the second and third world empires — Persia and Greece, and the division of the Grecian Empire into four kingdoms.

(Vv. 23-24). Further details are then given as to the little horn. He will be a person characterised by boldness and knowledge of occult mysteries. His activities will be great and yet not by his own power. Apparently, he will have the support of some other power, being himself the instrument of foreign policy. He will attack and destroy the godly of those days, the saints of God — "the mighty and the holy people."

(V. 25). Apparently, his triumph over the people of God will not be by force of arms, but by craft, and his policy will seem to secure peace by corrupting many of the professing people of God. In his daring he will stand up against the Prince of princes. This defiance of Christ will be his ruin. Christ will destroy this wicked man "without hand," or apart from human means.

(Vv. 26, 27). Daniel is told that the vision is true, but that its fulfilment will not be for many days to come. It is possible that the future actions of this king of the north have been foreshadowed in the history of the vile Antiochus Epiphanes who, in his day, attacked the people of God by craft and corruption, desecrated the temple, and set aside the law. Nevertheless, for the fulfilment of the prophecy we must, according to the word of Gabriel, wait for the time of the end.

The effect of these visions upon Daniel was such that he fainted and was sick certain days. In spite of the interpretation, none but Daniel appeared to understand the vision.

PRAYER AND CONFESSION

Daniel 9

In common with the other prophecies of Daniel, the ninth chapter takes us on to the future, bringing before us the destiny of Jerusalem. But, it does more, for it shows the connection between the revival of God's people in Daniel's day and the judgment coming upon Jerusalem in a latter day that will end the time of her desolations.

Daniel is instructed that, though a remnant of God's people may be restored to the Land, and the Temple and City rebuilt in his day, as recorded in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, yet this revival by no means ends the captivity of Israel, nor delivers Jerusalem from Gentile oppression. There are yet sorrows for God's earthly people, and desolations for His city, before the end is reached.

As the prophet, Daniel has seen visions and received revelations of the future, now we are to see him as the intercessor on behalf of God's people, and, in answer to his prayer and supplication, receiving instruction as to the mind of God.

Verses 1 and 2 give the occasion that called forth the prayer.

Verses 3 to 6 record Daniel's confession of the sin and failure of God's people.

Verses 7 to 15 set forth his vindication of God in all the governmental chastening that had come upon the people.

Verses 16 to 19 present his supplication to God for mercy on behalf of the people of God.

Verses 20 to 27 bring before us God's gracious answer to Daniel's prayer, whereby he is made to understand the mind of God in word and vision.

(a) *The occasion of the prayer* (Vv. 1, 2).

(V. 1). Sixty-eight years had passed since Daniel had been taken captive at the fall of Jerusalem. Daniel had seen the rise and fall of Babylon, the first great world empire. Persia, the second world empire, had come to the front. In this kingdom Daniel held a high position of authority over the princes of the empire. But, neither the exalted office that he held, nor the engrossing affairs of state, could for one moment dim his ardent love for God's people, or his faith in God's word concerning His people.

(V. 2). We have seen that Daniel was a man of prayer; now we learn that he was also a student of Scripture. Though himself a prophet, he is ready to listen to other inspired prophets of God and learn the mind of God from books of Scripture. Thus, as he reads the prophet Jeremiah, he discovers that, after the fall of Jerusalem in the days of Jehoiakim, the land of Israel would be desolate for seventy years, and at the end of the seventy years the king of Babylon would come under judgment and the land of Chaldea become desolate (Jer. 25: 1, 11, 12). Moreover, Daniel learns that, not only would Babylon come under judgment, but that the LORD had said to Jeremiah, "that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place" (Jer. 29: 10-14).

Daniel makes this important discovery in the first year of Darius. The actual return, we know, took place two years later in the first year of Cyrus (Ezra 1: 1). At the moment there could have been nothing in passing events to warrant the hope of a return. That God would visit His people in captivity, and open a way for them to return to their land, he discovers "by books," not by circumstances. He has just seen the destruction of the king of Babylon and the fall of his empire, but he does not speculate upon the stirring events taking place around him and seek to draw from them conclusions favourable to God's people. He is guided in his understanding "by books" — God's word — whether the circumstances appear to favour the predictions of God or otherwise.

The word of God is the true key to prophecy. We are not left to explain prophecies by passing circumstances, nor to await the fulfilment of prophecies in order to interpret them.

(b) *Daniel's confession of the sin of God's people.* (Vv. 3-6).

(V. 3). The immediate effect of learning from the word that God is about to visit His people is to

turn Daniel to God. He does not go to his fellow-captives with the good news, but he draws near to God, as he says, "I set my face unto the Lord God." As another has said, "He has communion with God about that which he receives from God." The result is that he sees the true character of the moment, and the moral condition of the people, and acts in a way that is suited for the moment.

God is about to stay His chastening hand and grant a little reviving to His people. Nevertheless, Daniel is not elated, nor does he turn to the people with shouting and praise. On the contrary, seeing the true significance of the moment, he turns to God "by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes," and he makes confession to the LORD his God.

Well acquainted with the Scriptures, Daniel looks back over one thousand years since God delivered His people from the bondage of Egypt (verse 15). He sees that this period has been one long history of failure and rebellion. Already he has been permitted to look into the future and see that failure and suffering still await the people of God (Dan. 7, 8). He has learned, too, that there will be no complete deliverance for God's people until the Son of Man comes and sets up His kingdom.

To sum up, he sees the past marked by failure, the future dark with the prediction of deeper sorrows and greater failure, and no hope of deliverance for the people of God as a whole until the King comes. In the presence of these truths Daniel was deeply affected, his thoughts troubled him, his countenance was changed, and he fainted and was sick certain days (Dan. 7: 28; Dan. 8: 27).

But Daniel made another discovery. He learned from Scripture, that, in spite of all past failure and all future disaster, God had foretold that there would be a little reviving in the midst of the years.

In all this we cannot but see a correspondence between our own day and that in which Daniel lived. We can look back over centuries of the failure of the Church in responsibility. We know from Scripture that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse," and very soon that which professes the Name of Christ upon the earth will be spued out of His mouth. We know, too, that nothing but the coming of Christ will bring the people of God together again, and end all the sorrowful history of failure. But we also know that in the midst of all the failure, the Lord has definitely said there will be a Philadelphian revival of a few who, in the midst of the corruption of Christendom, will be found in great weakness, seeking to keep His word and not deny His Name.

Daniel, in his prayer and confession, shows the spirit which should mark those who, in his day or in our own, desire to answer to the open door of deliverance that God sets before His people.

(V. 4). Turning to God in confession, Daniel gets a deep sense of the greatness, holiness and faithfulness of God. Moreover, he realises that God is true to His word and, if His people will only cherish His Name and keep His word, they will find mercy.

(Vv. 5, 6). With a true sense of the greatness of God before his soul, Daniel at once discerns the low condition of the people. God has been faithful to His covenant, but the people have departed from the precepts and judgments of God. He recognises that this low moral condition lies at the root of all the division and scattering that have come in among the people of God. He does not seek to place the blame for the division and scattering upon certain individuals, who may indeed have acted in a high-handed manner and perverted the truth and led many into error. This, we know, was the case with the kings, priests and false prophets. But, looking beyond the failure of individuals, he sees, and owns, the failure of God's people as a whole. He says, "We have sinned . . . our kings, our princes, our fathers, and . . . *all the people of the land.*" Personally Daniel had no direct part in bringing about the scattering that had taken place nearly seventy years before. He could only have been a child at the time of the break-up of Jerusalem, and during his captivity probably no one was more devoted to the Lord than

himself.

Nevertheless, the absence of personal responsibility and the lapse of time do not lead him to ignore the division and scattering, nor seek to place the blame upon individuals long since passed away; on the contrary, he identifies himself with the people of God, and owns before God that "we have sinned."

So, in our day, occupation with the instruments used in breaking up the people of God may blind us to the true cause of the break-up, namely *the low condition that accompanied our high profession*. We may not have had any definite part in the folly and high-handed action of the few who brought about the immediate scattering of the people of God, but we have all had our part in the low condition that necessitated the break-up.

Daniel does not seek to extenuate their sin: on the contrary, he owns that they had aggravated their sin by their refusal to hearken unto the prophets that God had sent from time to time to recall them to Himself. Nothing is more striking than to see how persistently the people of God, in that day as well as in this, have persecuted the prophets. We do not like to have our conscience disturbed by hearing of our failures. To admit that we are wrong, or have done wrong, (except in the most vague and general terms) is too humbling to religious flesh. Therefore, the prophet who seeks to exercise the conscience — who reminds God's people of their sins — is never popular. The mere "teacher" will be received with acclaim, for the acquisition of knowledge at the feet of a teacher is rather gratifying to the flesh. To have a great teacher in the midst of a company tends to exalt; but who wants a prophet to arouse the conscience by telling us of our failures and sins? Thus it was that Israel refused to hearken unto the prophets.

(c) *Daniel's justification of God in His governmental dealings (7-15).*

(V. 7). Having confessed the sin of "all the people of the land," Daniel justifies God in having chastened the people. He lays hold of this deeply important principle that, when division and scattering have occurred, these evils must be accepted as from God, acting in His holy discipline, and not simply as brought about by particular acts of folly or wickedness on the part of individual men. This is clearly seen in the great division that took place in Israel. Instrumentally, it was brought about by the folly of Rehoboam, but, says God, "This thing is done of Me" (2 Chron. 11: 4). Four hundred and fifty years later, when the people of God were not only divided but scattered among the nations, Daniel very clearly recognises this great principle. He says "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 unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither *Thou has driven them*". Then again he speaks of "the Lord our God . . . *bringing upon us a great evil*"; and yet again, "the Lord watched upon the evil, and *brought it upon us*" (Dan. 9: 7, 12, 14). Thus Daniel loses sight of the folly and wickedness of individual men. He mentions no names. He does not speak of Jehoiachim or "his abominations which he did," nor of Zedekiah and his folly; nor does he refer to the ruthless violence of Nebuchadnezzar; but, looking beyond these men, he sees in the scattering the hand of a righteous God.

Thus, too, a little later Zechariah hears the word of the Lord to the priests, and all the people of the land, saying, "I *scattered* them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not" (Zech. 7: 5, 14).

So, too, later still Nehemiah in his prayer recalls the words of the Lord by Moses saying, "If ye transgress, I *will scatter* you abroad" (Neh. 1: 7).

There is no attempt with these men of God to modify their strong statements of God's dealings in

discipline. They do not even say that God has "allowed" His people to be scattered, or "permitted" them to be driven away; but they plainly say that God Himself has driven the people away and brought the evil.

(Vv. 8, 9). But further, if on the one hand confusion of face belongs to every class and each generation of Israel from the fathers onwards, on the other hand "mercies and forgivenesses" belong to the Lord our God. Not only is God righteous, but He is merciful and full of forgiveness. In spite of this the nation had rebelled and again aggravated their guilt.

(V. 10). Thus Daniel sums up the sin of Israel. The nation had not obeyed the voice of the LORD; they had broken His laws and disregarded the prophets.

(Vv. 11, 12). Therefore the curse proclaimed in the law had fallen upon them, and God had confirmed His words which He had spoken against the nation by bringing this great evil upon them.

(V. 13). Furthermore, when the evil came, they did not turn to God in prayer. Apparently, there was no desire to turn from their iniquities and understand the truth.

Has this solemn verse no voice for the people of God in this our day? The people of God are scattered and divided because of their sins, and yet how calmly, even complacently, is this state of division viewed by the people of God. Moreover, not only is the truth of God for the moment little understood, but there is little desire to understand the truth. Oh that we might be so exercised as to the condition of God's people that we are compelled to make our prayer before the Lord our God, turn from our iniquities, and set our faces to understand the truth of God!

(V. 14). "Therefore," says Daniel, "hath the LORD *watched* upon the evil, and brought it upon us." The Lord had said to Jeremiah "I will watch over them for evil, and not for good;" and again, the same prophet tells us that the Lord had "watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict" (Jer. 44: 27; Jer. 31: 28). How solemn! We can better understand the Lord watching over His people to protect, but here we find He watches over them for evil, and Daniel justifies the Lord in so doing. "The LORD our God is righteous in all His works which He doeth: for we obeyed not His voice."

(V. 15). There was yet a further aggravation of their guilt which Daniel confesses. The people who had sinned and done so wickedly were the redeemed of the Lord — the people that He had brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Thus the very people through whom God had gotten Him renown were the very people who, through their sin, had now dishonoured Him. By God's redeeming power on behalf of Israel, His fame had been spread abroad among the nations; by Israel's sin His Name had been blasphemed among the Gentiles. Therefore God had vindicated His glory by driving Israel again into bondage.

(d) *Daniel's supplication to God for mercy* (Vv. 16-19).

(Vv. 16-19). Having confessed the sin and failure of God's people and having, moreover, justified God in all His ways, Daniel now prays in the form of supplication. Remarkably enough, as we might think, his first plea is the righteousness of God, and later the "great mercies" of God. He realises that mercy must be based on righteousness. Already he had owned the "righteousness" of God in bringing all this sorrow upon this people (verse 14); now he pleads that in righteousness God would let His anger and fury be turned from Jerusalem.

The subjects of his supplication are the city, the holy mountain, the sanctuary and the people of God. He is not pleading for himself, his own personal interests, or the particular needs of his

companions in captivity. His whole heart is concerned in the interests of God upon earth. Would that we knew more of the spirit of Daniel; that our hearts were so filled with that which is nearest and dearest to the heart of Christ that, rising above all personal and local needs, we could cry to God for His Church, His Name, His house and His people, confessing the common failure and feeling the common need.

It is significant that in pleading for the city, the mountain, the sanctuary and the people, he views them not in relation to himself or the nation, but as belonging to God. He does not say our city, or our sanctuary, or our people, but "*Thy city,*" "*Thy holy mountain,*" "*Thy sanctuary,*" and "*Thy people.*" Rising above all the failure, he turns to God and pleads, "We are Thine."

First, he pleads the righteousness of God (verse 16). Then he pleads "the Lord's sake" (verse 17). Following this, he pleads the "great mercies" of God (verse 18). Finally, he pleads the "Name" of the Lord (verse 19). Basing his prayer on such pleas, he can definitely ask the Lord to "hear," to "forgive," to "do," and "defer not" to act on behalf of His people.

It is of the deepest importance to see that the basis of Daniel's supplication is the fact, again and again emphasised in his confession, that it is God Himself who had broken up the people (verses 7, 12, 14). Until this fact is faced and owned, without any reserve, there can be no recovery. Once it is faced we have good ground on which to turn to God and plead for recovering mercy; and for this reason, God is One who can not only break up. but also can heal; God can scatter, but God can also gather together (Psalm 147: 2). Refusing to acknowledge that God has broken us up, and seeing only the folly that men have wrought, we shut out all hope of recovery for those who desire to be faithful to God. With men before us we are thinking of those who can break up but have *no power to recover*; whereas God can break up, and *God can recover*.

Seeing only men as causing divisions has led many sincere people to the false conclusion that, if men caused divisions, men have the power to remedy them. Hence the efforts that are made to bring the people of God together again are foredoomed to failure, and worse than failure, for they only add to the confusion among the people of God. To bring together is beyond the wit of man; it is God's work. We can destroy, we can scatter, we can break hearts; but "*The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds*" (Ps. 147: 2, 3).

Here, then, in Daniel's prayer we have the course that should ever guide God's people in a day of ruin:-

First, to get, in turning to God, a fresh and deepened sense of His greatness, holiness and mercy to those who are prepared to keep His word:

Secondly, to confess our failure and sin, and that the root of all scattering lies in a low moral condition:

Thirdly, to own the righteous government of God in all His dealings in chastening His people:

Fourthly, to fall back on the righteousness of God that can act in mercy towards His failing people, for His Name's sake.

(e) *Understanding in the word and vision* (Vv. 20-27).

(Vv. 20-23). Turning to God in prayer and confession, Daniel receives light and understanding in the mind of God. It is significant that he receives the answer to his prayer at the time of the evening oblation, indicating that his prayer is answered on the ground of the efficacy of the burnt offering

which speaks to God of the value of the sacrifice of Christ.

At the beginning of Daniel's supplication, God had given commandment to Gabriel concerning Daniel. God did not wait for a lengthy prayer to hear all that Daniel would say. God knew the desires of his heart, and at the very commencement God heard and began to act. Gabriel's commission was to open Daniel's understanding to receive the communications of God, as he says, "to make thee skilful of understanding" (N. Tn.). It was not enough for Daniel to receive revelations; he needed to have his understanding opened to profit by them. At a later date the Lord opened the Scriptures to the disciples and also opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. We, too, need the opened understanding, as well as the opened Scriptures, even as the Apostle can say to Timothy, as he opens up the truth to him, "Consider what I say; and *the Lord give thee understanding*" (2 Tim. 2: 7).

Moreover, having associated himself with the failure of God's people, and confessed that "We have sinned," Daniel is now assured that, in spite of all failure, he is "greatly beloved."

(V. 24). Daniel had discovered by reading the prophet Jeremiah that at the end of seventy years God was going to judge Babylon and deliver his people from captivity. Because of this prophecy Daniel had turned to God and besought Him to act according to His word. In answer to Daniel's prayer God makes a further revelation to him. He is told that at the end of "seventy weeks" there would come a much greater deliverance for the Jews — one that would be final and complete.

We must remember that this prophecy wholly concerns the deliverance of the Jewish people and their city. The angel says, "Seventy weeks are determined upon *thy* people and *thy* city." Daniel's people are the Jews, and his city Jerusalem. The Christian has no continuing city in this world; he seeks one to come.

All that is necessary for the fulfilment of these prophecies has been carried out at the Cross. To secure these blessings Christ has died for the nation (John 11: 52). The blood has been shed and propitiation has been made. The reception by faith of the work of Christ, so that the nation may enter into the blessings that the work secures, is yet future. When Israel turns to the Lord, the transgression for which the nation has been scattered will be finished, their sins will be forgiven, their iniquities pardoned (Isa. 40: 2), and God's righteousness established (Isa. 51: 4-6). Visions and prophecies will be fulfilled, and, in this sense, sealed up or closed. The holy of holies will be set apart for the dwelling place of God.

What, then, are we to understand by the "seventy weeks"? Do they mean literally seventy weeks of seven days, or four hundred and ninety days? Verses 25 and 26 forbid such a thought. The commencement of the seventy weeks is clearly stated, and we are told that at the end of sixty-nine of the weeks certain events would take place that evidently did not take place at the end of four hundred and eighty three days. All difficulty is removed when we see that the word "weeks" merely means "periods of seven." The Jew reckoned by periods of seven years, or septenates, as we reckon by periods of ten years, or decades. The seventy weeks, then, are seventy periods of seven years, or four hundred and ninety years.

(V. 25). This period of four hundred and ninety years commences from the going forth of the command to build and restore Jerusalem. From Nehemiah 2 we know that this command to rebuild Jerusalem went forth in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes. In the history of the world the twentieth year of Artaxerxes has been calculated to be about 454 or 455 B.C. Four hundred and ninety years after this event we are told that the time of Israel's sorrow would be over and the blessings of the Kingdom established.

Now it is evident that the foretold blessing did not come at the end of four hundred and ninety years if the years are calculated without a break. But, in these verses, we see that this period is divided into three parts. The first period is one of seven weeks, or forty-nine years, during which Jerusalem is rebuilt in troublous times. How troublous they were we know from the account given in the Book of Nehemiah. The second period of sixty two weeks, or four hundred and thirty four years, is from the completion of the wall of Jerusalem unto the Messiah. The word does not say exactly the birth of the Messiah, or His presentation to the people, or His death. It is left quite general; only it is definitely stated that "after the sixty-two weeks shall Messiah be cut off and shall have nothing" (N. Tn.).

(V. 26). Following upon the prophecy as to the cutting off of the Messiah, we have a statement about the people of the prince that shall come; this, in turn, is followed by statements as to the prince himself. It is stated that the people will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The reference is, doubtless, to the Roman people — the fourth great Gentile power — that ruled the earth when the Messiah came and was cut off. Daniel learns that the Jewish nation, having rejected their Messiah will come under judgment, and their city and sanctuary will be destroyed by the Roman people who, like a flood, will overflow the land, bringing the Jewish occupation to an end. The nation will pass into captivity and the land be left desolate. The Jews will find that every man's hand is against them until the time of the end. The Lord Himself repeats the prediction of these solemn events when He says, "They (the Jews) shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21: 24).

This part of the prophecy was completely fulfilled about seventy years after the birth of Christ when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans under Titus.

(V. 27). At this point the prophecy passes on to speak of events that are yet future, and that will take place during the last week, or seven years, of the prophecy. When Christ was cut off, sixty-nine weeks had run their course. There only remained one week — or seven years — before His kingdom would be set up. But the Jews rejected their Messiah; consequently the fulfilment of the prophecy is deferred. From the time that they rejected their Messiah, God no longer recognised the people as in relation with Himself. During this time there is a great blank in the history of God's ancient people, a blank of which God gives no account as to its length. During this time we know from the New Testament Scriptures that salvation has come to the Gentiles through the fall of Israel. During this period we also know that God is calling out His heavenly people — the Church. It will therefore be seen that there is an immense and important interval between verses 26 and 27, of which no details are given in the prophecy. The calling out of the Church is a truth reserved for the coming of the Holy Spirit. We are definitely told that this is a truth "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph. 3: 4-6; see also Rom. 16: 25, 26). Direct prophecy always refers to earth and God's earthly people. Any allusion to the calling of the Church would have been wholly incomprehensible to Daniel. We can, then, understand why this immense interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week is passed over in silence.

Here, then, we are carried on to events that are still future. These events turn upon the activities, not so much of the Roman people, of whom we have already heard, but the head of the Empire, here called the prince of the people. Of this man we read, "He shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week" (N. Tn.). This head of the revived Roman Empire will enter into a covenant with the mass of the Jewish nation who will be back in their land, though still rejecting Christ as their Messiah. Probably, through fear of being overwhelmed by another enemy — the northern power or "overflowing scourge" — the Jews will enter into an alliance with the imperial head of the Roman Empire.

Then it seems that the one upon whom the Jews will lean for protection from other enemies will himself become their great enemy. False to his own covenant, in the midst of the week, or at the end of three and a half years, "he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." The next clause would seem to indicate the reason for causing the sacrifice to cease, for it speaks of the "protection of abominations" (N. Tn.). This is plainly a reference to that which is stated in other Scriptures, that the coming Antichrist will cause an image to be erected in the holy of holies to whom all are commanded to render divine honours (See Matt. 24: 15, 2 Thess. 2: 4; Rev. 13: 14, 15).

Nevertheless, during this last half week there will be a "desolater," an overflowing scourge from the north, from which no alliance with the prince of the Roman Empire will avail to protect the Jews. It is during this time that the Jewish nation will pass through the great tribulation. The Lord definitely says, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place . . . then shall be great tribulation" (Matt. 24: 15-21). During this terrible time the unbelieving Jewish nation will be the object of unceasing judgments until judgment is exhausted by being fully poured out upon the desolate city and nation.

PREPARATION FOR DIVINE COMMUNICATIONS

Daniel 10

The last three chapters form one complete section of the Book of Daniel, presenting a forecast of historical facts relating to the dealings of the Gentile powers with God's earthly people from the time of the Persian monarchy until their final deliverance under the reign of Christ.

Daniel 10 to 11: 1 is introductory, giving the circumstances under which Daniel received these final communications.

Daniel 11: presents a prophetic outline of events which take place in connection with the kings of the countries north and south of the holy land.

Daniel 12: foretells God's dealings with the faithful remnant of the Jews when the nation passes through the great tribulation of the three and a half years that precede the Kingdom of Christ.

Daniel 10 tells us the time when Daniel received these communications, the state of his soul, and the circumstances under which they were made.

(V. 1). These things were revealed to Daniel in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia. From Ezra 1: 1 we know that in the first year of this king a decree was made setting the Jews free to return to their land. Evidently, Daniel had not taken advantage of this decree, for, in the second year of Cyrus, he is still found by the river Hiddekel in the land of Assyria. Here the solemn truth is revealed to Daniel that, notwithstanding the partial return from captivity, there still awaits his people "the appointed time of trial" (N. Tn.), and that this sad time will be long.

(Vv. 2, 3). Though Daniel remained in the land of captivity, he was by no means indifferent to the condition of God's people. This is clearly seen by the state of his soul. For full three weeks he mourned and fasted from flesh and wine. Nature might have seen in the partial return a revival amongst God's people, and a fresh start in their spiritual history that called for exultation, feasting and rejoicing. The man of God, however, feels the sorrowful past of God's people, their present weakness, even if free to return to the land, and, above all, foresees the further sorrows that await them before they reach their final deliverance. Amongst those who returned, we know indeed that the younger generation "shouted

with a great shout," but the ancient men "wept with a loud voice" (Ezra 3: 12). In like spirit the aged Daniel mourns in the land of captivity.

Well for God's people if every gracious revival among them were made the occasion for confession and mourning remembering that there will be no full and final deliverance until Christ comes. In every true revival the people of God, *if led by the Spirit*, will be marked by prayer and confession, rather than by shouting and exultation. The more noise and display the less there is of God in any movement among His people.

Moreover, this right condition of soul prepares Daniel for the communications he is about to receive. One has truly said, "What greater mistake can be made than to suppose that we can enter into God's secrets without a moral preparedness of heart, or to think that it is possible to understand divine things merely through hearing or reading, or because we have ranged ourselves round certain leaders of God's people, and enthusiastically upheld their teachings? Humiliation and fasting were Daniel's means of receiving these revelations; and so now, it is only when we are morally outside of things here — outside of the gratification of the senses and joys of earth, having thoroughly chastened ourselves, through the application of the cross, in the presence of God — that the Spirit of God enlightens the eyes of our hearts to comprehend God's mind and will."

(Vv. 4-6). Daniel, being in a right condition of soul to receive communications from God, has a wonderful vision of a glorious angelic being, by whom God will communicate His mind. He sees the angel, not as having assumed some simple garb in order to appear to man, but in his own angelic glory, setting forth his majesty, holiness and power as a divine messenger.

(Vv. 7-11). We are then told the effect of the vision upon Daniel and his companions. The men that were with Daniel saw not the vision, but they felt the presence of this celestial being and, filled with terror, fled to hide themselves. Daniel left alone in the presence of the angel, is overcome with fear, and falls upon the ground, finding relief in deep sleep. In this position the hand of the angel touches him and he is set upon his knees and the palms of his hands. The angel then speaks, assuring Daniel that he is greatly beloved, and he is made to stand upright though trembling. He is thus set at liberty in the presence of this heavenly being to hear communications from God.

(V. 12). Before unfolding to Daniel the special truths he had been sent to communicate, the angel lifts the veil that hides the unseen from the seen and, in a unique passage, gives us a glimpse of the activities of spiritual beings, whether good or evil, that lie behind so much that takes place in man's world. One has said, "If there are conflicts upon earth, they flow from higher conflicts — the angels contending with these evil beings, the instruments of Satan, who constantly seek to thwart the counsels of God with regard to the earth."

We know that in a special way the angels are the guardians of the Lord's people, "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1: 14). Here we further learn that they are the executors of God's will behind all His providential dealings amongst men; and in carrying out their commission, they are opposed by wicked spiritual beings.

We have, moreover, in this scene the comforting assurance that God is not indifferent to the exercises and prayers of His people. From the first moment that Daniel set his heart to understand the mind of God, and to chasten himself before God, his prayer was heard. We may fret against others, and declaim against their evil, but if our prayers are to be effectual we need like Daniel to *chasten ourselves* in the presence of God.

In answer to these exercises the angel had been sent to assure Daniel that he is greatly beloved, to

comfort him in his sorrow, and to instruct him in the mind of God.

(V. 13). Though Daniel's prayer had been heard on the first day that he had poured out his soul before God, the answer to his prayer had been delayed three weeks. The angel intimates the reason for this delay. There were spiritual antagonistic forces at work. For three weeks the prince of the kingdom of Persia had withstood the angel sent to answer Daniel's prayer. The *prince* of the kingdom of Persia is evidently a spiritual being. In this verse, Michael, the Archangel, is referred to as "one of the chief princes," and in the last chapter as "the great prince."

Scripture clearly intimates that in the spiritual realm there are good principalities and powers as well as those that are evil (Eph. 1: 21; Eph. 6: 12, etc.): and that even as God has deputed certain angelic beings, under the direction of an angelic prince, to guard His people, so Satan has evil spiritual powers, under an arch-enemy, deputed to carry out his opposition to God among the nations of the world.

In this particular conflict between spiritual powers, Michael, one of the chief angelic princes, had come to help the angel sent to Daniel. This conflict with Satan's emissary deputed to oppose God's work in the kingdom of Persia had detained the angel with the kings of Persia.

(V. 14). This conflict of spiritual powers being ended, the angel comes to Daniel and informs him that he is sent to make Daniel understand what shall befall his people — the Jews — in the latter days, and emphasises the fact that the vision is yet for many days.

In the course of these communications we shall find that many events are foretold that have already had their fulfilment, but their importance lies in their connection with the future, and the way in which they lead up to the manifestation of the Antichrist and the great tribulation of the last days.

(Vv. 15-19). Overcome by the greatness of these communications made by such a glorious being, Daniel feels his own unworthiness and impotence. He bows his face in humbleness and is dumb. He is, however, sustained by an angelic being in the similitude of a man who touches his lips. He is thus emboldened to speak and own that the vision had filled him with sorrow, left him utterly weak, with a sense of his own unworthiness to converse with this heavenly messenger.

Again the angel touches him, imparting to him strength, assuring him that personally he is greatly beloved, that he has no need to fear, filling him with the peace of God, and exhorting him to be strong. Daniel, having thus poured out his soul before God, has the peace of God poured into his heart (See Phil. 4: 6, 7). The result is that Daniel is strengthened and can say to the angel. "Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me."

(Vv. 20-11: 1). From this point Daniel becomes a listener. The angel informs him that he is about to return to fight with the Satanic angelic princes of Persia and Greece. Before taking up this fresh conflict with spiritual evil, he will reveal to Daniel that which is set down in the Scripture of truth. The revelations of chapters 11 and 12 have been noted in Scripture for our benefit.

Daniel is assured that Michael, one of the chief princes, is the spiritual prince deputed to guard the interests of God's earthly people. The angel sent to Daniel had already been used to confirm and strengthen Darius the Mede. This statement may throw great light on the fact that Darius was so favourable to Daniel (See Dan. 6: 14-28). In Daniel 6 we have the outward history: in Daniel 10 and Daniel 11: 1 we see the spiritual conflict behind the history. We now learn that the hostility of the enemies of Daniel was the outcome of spiritual wickedness working behind the scenes, even as the favour shown to Daniel by Darius was the result of the king being confirmed and strengthened by God's angelic messenger, however little either the enemies of Daniel or his friends were aware of the

activities of these spiritual beings.

THE ANTICHRIST

Daniel 11: 2-15

Before receiving these fresh revelations, Daniel is assured that what he is about to hear is "the truth." For our knowledge of the history of God's earthly people during the times of the Gentiles we have the certainty of divine revelations in place of human speculations.

In the course of these revelations we have:-

First, the forecast of events that lead up to the time of the end (Vv. 2-35):

Secondly, the prophecy that takes us on to the time of the end foretelling the reign of Antichrist, as an apostate, in the midst of the apostate nation of the Jews (Vv. 36-39):

Thirdly, the northern enemy of the Jews, who, in the last days, will overflow their land during the reign of Antichrist (Vv. 40-45).

(a) *The prophetic history of events in connection with the land of Israel, leading up to the time of the end.*

The angel presents before Daniel a brief outline of the activities of Gentile powers in connection with God's land. It becomes manifest that if God records events in the Gentile world, it is only so far as these events concern His people and "the glorious land" (verse 16).

(V. 2). At the time of these communications the first great world empire had fallen. The second or Persian Empire was taking the lead in the government of the world. Daniel is first told in few words how the Persian Empire would come to its end. Four kings of Persia were yet to arise, the fourth being far greater than his predecessors. From Ezra 4 we know that the first three kings were Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes and Darius (Ezra 4: 5-7, 23, 24). The fourth king was, we know from history, the famous Xerxes who led the Persians against the ruler of Greece.

(V. 3). Then the angel tells Daniel that a mighty king would arise who would rule over a great dominion, and do according to his will. Again history tells us that this was Alexander the Great who defeated Xerxes, crushed the Persian Empire and established the dominion of Greece — the third world Empire.

(V. 4). Then we learn, as already described in former visions, that Alexander's dominion would be divided into four distinct kingdoms which would not descend to his posterity but be ruled by strangers. All this we know was fulfilled when Alexander's dominion was divided among four of his generals.

(Vv. 5, 6). One of these kingdoms would be located at the north of the land of Israel and another at the south. In the prophecy that follows, the rulers of these kingdoms are respectively referred to as the king of the south, or Egypt, and as the king of the north, or Syria. In the course of the prophecy these titles do not always refer to the same person, but are used as official titles to designate kings of the same line. The revelations that follow are mainly occupied with the activities of these two divisions of Alexander's empire, as they specially come into contact with God's earthly people and God's land.

Daniel is informed that the king of the south, one of the Ptolemies, a famous prince under

Alexander, would be strong, but one would arise who would "be stronger than he" (N. Tn.). This was doubtless the first king of the north. Profane history gives in great detail the conflict between these two powers. God gives the outstanding facts, as in the course of these conflicts one or the other took possession of the land of Israel.

After years of conflict these two powers would seek to come together by agreement, strengthened by a marriage alliance. The daughter of the king of the south would be given to the king of the north. Nevertheless, this marriage would fail to end the conflict. The daughter of the king of the south, though coming to the king of the north, would carry no power. She, her husband and attendants would be "given up" to their enemies. History tells us they were all murdered.

(V. 7-9). The brother of the murdered queen, having come into his estate as king of the south, would attack the king of the north to avenge the murder of his sister. He would prevail over the king of the north, and, having taken many captives and a rich booty, would return to his own land.

(Vv. 10-12). In due time the sons of the king of the north would seek to avenge their defeat. They would assemble a great army and pass through the holy land to attack the king of the south. Moved with rage, the king of the south would come forth to meet this attack and seek to crush his opponents. Nevertheless, his overwhelming victory would not establish his own safety nor end these conflicts.

(Vv. 13, 14). Again the king of the north would return to the attack with a yet greater army. Moreover, many others would join in this attack on the king of the south. Further, Daniel is told that insurrectionists among his own people — the Jews, here called the "violent" (N. Tn.) — would seek to exalt themselves by joining in this alliance against the king of the south.

(Vv. 15, 16). In the course of this conflict the king of the north would take the fenced cities in the land of Israel, and the glorious land would come under his power. The forces of the king of the south would be unable to stop the conquest of the glorious land.

(V. 17). Having possessed himself of the land, the king of the north would prepare to enter the land of the king of the south with all the strength of his kingdom. Apparently, however, he would change his mind and give his daughter to the king of the south, hoping through her to attain his ends by corruption. She, however, would refuse to act for her father against her husband.

(Vv. 18, 19). Trusting that by this marriage his ends on Egypt would be secured, the king of the north would attack the isles of Greece, and for a time be victorious, but a prince would arise in the west that would utterly defeat him, causing him to turn back to his own country a crushed and broken prince.

(V. 20). Consequent upon his defeat, the king of the north would have to pay tribute (as we know from history) to the Romans: therefore his successor would be known as "a raiser of taxes," or exactor. His exactions from the people of the land would lead to his assassination.

(Vv. 21-24). He would be succeeded by a vile person, known in history as Antiochus Epiphanes. He would not be the rightful heir, but by flattery would disarm opposition and obtain the kingdom peaceably. He would overflow God's land, crushing all resistance and setting aside the leader of God's people, here called the prince of the covenant. He would make a league with the people, and then work deceitfully to obtain the fattest places of the provinces by corruption and bribery. He would enforce idolatry upon the people, a thing which his fathers had not done.

(Vv. 25-28). Having possessed himself of the glorious land, he would attack the king of the south, by whom he would be met with a mighty army. Nevertheless, the king of the south would suffer defeat, as the king of the north would plan devices against him, corrupting his dependants. These two

kings would meet and seek to deceive each other at the same table. The king of the north would return to his own land with great riches, having decided in his own heart not to keep any covenant made either with the king of the south or with the people of God.

(Vv. 29-35). Finally, the king of the north would again attack the king of the south. In this attack he would be opposed by a power from the west. The ships of Chittim come against him — a fleet of the Roman Empire. Thwarted in all his plans by this new enemy, he would be forced with indignation to return from the south. His indignation would apparently be vented upon the Jews. From the middle of verse 30 to the end of verse 35 we have in great detail the actions of this vile man in relation to the Jews and their land. It is to these events that these historical details have been leading, as setting forth the enmity of man to God and His people — an enmity that the Jew will have to meet in all its culminating horror in the last days.

In the day of this vile king, as in the latter days, apostates will be found among the Jews — those "that forsake the holy covenant." To these men he will "direct his attention" (N. Tn.), and "corrupt by flatteries." Succeeding for a time by his corruption, he will have power on his side, which he will use to pollute the sanctuary, take away the daily sacrifice, and set up an idol in the temple.

Nevertheless, in this terrible time, there will be among the Jews those "that do know their God." They will be strong and act for their God and instruct many in the ways and mind of God. In result, they will have to face persecution, violence and imprisonment for many days. Nevertheless, in all their sorrows they will be helped. All will be allowed of God to try and prove them in view of the reward and glory that will come in the end, for the end, being appointed of God, will surely come.

The leading events foretold in this prophecy are given with such precision that it is easy to see, from profane history, their exact fulfilment, and even to give the names to the different actors, and the dates and places of their victories and defeats. Moreover, the final events in this prophecy, presented in verses 21 to 35, describing the activities of the vile Antiochus Epiphanes, are given in greater detail, as they not only present history in relation to God's people, which has already been fulfilled, but they very accurately typify the yet greater sorrows that the Jewish nation will pass through in the future day of the great tribulation.

(b) *The Antichrist* (Vv. 36-39).

To the end of verse 35 we have the prophecy of events which, though future in Daniel's day, have long since been fulfilled. From verse 36 the angel speaks of events, the fulfilment of which is yet future. This becomes clear from the angel's words which speak of these things continuing till the indignation be accomplished (verse 36); and again by the reference to the time of the end (verse 40). Already the angel has used this expression "the time of the end" to show that the persecutions the faithful remnant pass through have an end in view (verse 35); now, in verse 40, it is used to describe events that will immediately precede the time of the end. Further, it is important to notice that, in verse 36, the angel introduces into his prophecy an entirely new personage under the designation of "the king." From verse 40 we learn that both the king of the south and the king of the north will come against this fresh person. Evidently, then, the angel is no longer speaking of either the king of Egypt or Assyria, but of a king that reigns in the land.

The characteristics of this man, as given by the angel, so entirely correspond with the description of the man of sin, or Antichrist, as set forth in the New Testament (2 Thess. 2), that it can only be concluded that both passages refer to the same person. The difference is that, in Daniel the Antichrist is presented in connection with the Jewish apostacy, whereas in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians he is presented as the outcome of the apostacy of Christendom. It is the prophetic delineation of this

terrible man that gives such deep importance to this final section of the prophecy.

First, we learn that he will do "according to his will." He will act in entire independence of God, recognising no will but his own.

Secondly, he will exalt and magnify himself above every god. These two things marked the fall of man. Adam acted independently of God under the temptation of exalting himself to be as God. In the Antichrist, these two things will be seen in their final manifestation, the culmination of all the evil that has ruined Adam's race.

Thirdly, he will not only profess to be superior to every god, but he will speak blasphemous things against the God of gods.

Fourthly, in spite of the wickedness of this fearful man, he will be allowed to "prosper till the indignation be accomplished." The prophet Isaiah clearly shows that the expression "indignation" is used to refer to the time of God's dealing in governmental judgment with the nation of Israel (See Isa. 5 to 10 and Isa. 14).

Fifthly, we learn that this man will not "regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all." Evidently, then, he will be an apostate Jew, that rejects, not only Jehovah, but the Messiah, whose birth was the desire of Jewish women.

Sixthly, having magnified himself above all and set himself up as God, he will press upon man a new god, "the god of forces." Apparently, he sets up the rule of might over right.

Seventhly, under this new god of might, he will organise the whole land of Israel, dividing it up for gain and as a reward to those who carry out his will.

Such are the fearful characteristics of the coming Antichrist in connection with the Jew and the land. It is manifest he will be the exact contrast to all that is so blessedly seen in Christ, who ever did the will of God, never exalted Himself, and sought only the honour of the Father and the blessing of man.

Thus, in a few brief words, we have set before us the Antichrist, himself an apostate Jew reigning over an apostate nation. In this passage we learn nothing of his overwhelming judgment. This is given in the Revelation.

(c) *The King of the North* (Vv. 40-45).

(Vv. 40-43). In the Antichrist there is brought before us the great enemy of God and His people that, in the last days, will be found in the midst of the Jewish people. The closing verses of the chapter prophetically announce that, at the same time the Jewish nation will be opposed by an enemy without.

In "the time of the end," when the Jews are back in their land under the reign of Antichrist, they will be attacked by the king of the south and the king of the north. Evidently the king of the north will be their great and serious opponent, for we read he will come like a whirlwind and overflow and pass through the land. For a time he will pursue his victorious career, for "many countries shall be overthrown." Edom Moab and the children of Ammon will escape; but the land of Egypt will fall under his power.

We may gather from this Scripture that when the Jews are reinstated in their land, these ancient nations that formerly surrounded the land will re-appear, according to the bounds of their lands originally allotted to them by God. We know from Isaiah that the judgment of God upon these three nations will be exercised by Israel (Isa. 11: 14); therefore it may be that the king of the north is not

allowed to touch them. Nevertheless, he is permitted to overthrow the Egyptians and despoil them of their riches. The Libyans and Ethiopians will apparently do his bidding.

(Vv. 44, 45). In the midst of his successes, he will receive news of approaching enemies from the east and the north which will compel him to turn upon these fresh foes "with great fury." On his homeward march he seeks to establish his palace in the glorious holy mountain.

In this passage no details are given of the circumstances that close his career. This only are we told that he shall come to his end, and there will be none to help him, an expression that would seem to indicate that God will deal directly with this foe apart from human agency (See Ezekiel 39: 1-7).

Connecting the different statements of verses 36 to 45, we see a vivid picture of the Jews at the time of the end, when they will be gathered back in their own land in unbelief, rejecting Christ as their Messiah. They will have rebuilt their temple and resumed their sacrifices. Having rejected their king, they will, according to the Lord's own words, receive another that "shall come in his own name" (John 5: 43); thus they will accept Antichrist as their king. On the north of the land, Syria will be established under a powerful king. On the south, Egypt will prosper under its own king, having "treasures of gold and silver." Ethiopia and Libya will exist as distinct nations. On the east, Edom, Moab and Ammon will be re-established. In these circumstances, the Jews, having accepted the rule of Antichrist, will become apostate and their land will fall a prey to their northern enemies

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Daniel 12

In this closing chapter we are taken on to the last three and a half years that will precede the reign of Christ — the time of the great tribulation that will end the sorrows of the Jews and the scattering of God's earthly people (verse 7).

(V. 1) . For his comfort, and the encouragement of the godly remnant Daniel is assured that at that time — the time of the end — Michael, the great spiritual prince appointed as the guardian of God's earthly people, will stand up on their behalf. Behind all the trials they may have to endure, they are assured of the support of spiritual powers in the unseen world. The special call for this spiritual aid will be that, for the Jewish nation, it will be "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Nevertheless, this great tribulation will end the sorrows of the nation and lead to the deliverance of the godly whose names are found written in the book of life.

Revelation 12: 7 to 17 gives further details as to these special activities of Michael and his angels at this time. It is evident that these passages refer to the same period — the three and a half years (Compare Dan. 12: 7 with Rev. 12: 14). There we learn of the conflict in heaven between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels. Michael will prevail, so that there will be no more room found in heaven for Satan, who, with his angels, will be cast out into the earth. Immediately there follows upon earth the time of unparalleled trouble for "the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea." The special object of Satan's persecution will be "the woman," or Israel, who brought forth the Man Child, Christ. Moreover the passage clearly indicates that the special rage of Satan will be directed against the godly in Israel, described as "the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12: 12, 13, 17).

It is clear, then, that at the time of the end, during the reign of Antichrist, there will be in the

midst of the apostate nation a godly remnant who confess Jesus Christ, and keep the commandments of God. Such will be very precious to the Lord, and, like the remnant of Malachi's day, will have their names inscribed in God's book of remembrance (Mal. 3: 16).

Great light is thrown upon this unparalleled time of trouble by two other Scriptures. In Jeremiah 30, the prophet, looking on to the future, says, "The days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it." The partial return, under Ezra and Nehemiah, evidently does not fulfil this prophecy. It looks on to yet future days. The prophecy goes on to tell us that this final deliverance will be preceded by "the time of Jacob's trouble," a day of such great sorrow "that none is like it" (Jer. 30: 3-7).

Then, in the New Testament, the Lord refers to this time of trouble, of which He says, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." The Lord definitely states that He refers to the time when "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet" is found in the holy place (Matt. 24: 15, 21).

During this terrible time, behind the scenes, Satan will be the instigator of all the trouble. The Antichrist will be the enemy within the land, while the head of the Roman Empire and the king of the north will be the great enemies outside the land.

(V. 2). At that time there will be a great resuscitation of the Jewish nation. Using resurrection as a figure, the angel shows that the nation will arise from their degraded position as the dust of the earth, to take once again their distinct place as a separate nation. Nevertheless, some will shine forth as the godly, to everlasting life, while the mass will still be in unbelief. For such this national revival will only lead to shame and everlasting contempt.

(V. 3); The godly, here called the wise, will give in the time of this great tribulation a clear witness for God and for Christ. They "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." Through their witness they will "turn many to righteousness."

(V. 4). Having completed his revelation, the angel instructs Daniel to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." For the Christian these things are not sealed. In the Revelation John, who testifies in the assemblies of God's people, is told "*Seal not* the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" (Rev. 22: 10, 16).

The Christian, walking in the light of the coming of Christ, sees that the time is at hand, and has the full light of prophecy to guide him in this dark world. For the world, and the Jew, so long as the Church is here, "the time of the end," to which these prophecies apply, has not yet come. Until that time these things are to them incomprehensible, even as a sealed book. Until that time the world pursues its way actively engaged in its own interests, increasing in knowledge, but wholly ignorant of the mind of God and the judgments that are coming.

(Vv. 5-7). The prophecy closes with this last vision of two angels standing one on one side of the river Hiddekel and one on the other. Daniel hears one ask, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" "These wonders" refer to "the time of trouble" of which the angel has been speaking. Now Daniel learns from God's word, confirmed with an oath, that the time of trouble will last for three and a half years. Further, when this period is completed, the scattering of God's earthly people will be accomplished, the persecution of the godly will cease, and the judgments of God on the living nations will end.

(Vv. 8-10). In the presence of all these revelations, Daniel has to own that he heard, but

understood not. So again he asks, "What shall be the end of these things?" Daniel was deeply desirous of knowing to what end they would lead. We know that they will lead to the glories and blessedness of the Kingdom of Christ. But, while the revelation given to Daniel tells of the judgments that precede the kingdom, and thus brings us up to the kingdom, it is left to Isaiah and others to unfold the glories of the reign of Christ.

Daniel is told to go his way, for the words are sealed up until the time of the end. He is told however, that all the coming sorrows for his people will be used by God to try and purify the godly. None of the wicked nation who do wickedly will understand; but "the wise shall understand." This seems to be the answer to Daniel's remark, "I understood not." He is told to wait and fear God and in due time he will understand, for the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

(Vv. 11, 12). Daniel is definitely told that, from the time when the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, there will be one thousand two hundred and ninety days, and then blessed will be he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and thirty five days. Both these periods are in excess of the three and a half years which start with the taking away of the sacrifice. (See Dan. 9: 27 and Matt. 24: 14). The reason for this is not clear, but it may be to leave time for the gathering of all Israel after the judgment of the Antichrist. The day will make clear the exact meaning of these numbers. All we know is that, from the taking away of the sacrifice to the end of the reign of Antichrist will be three and a half years, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days (Jewish reckoning), and to the bringing in of the full blessing one thousand three hundred and thirty five days.

(V. 13). In the presence of these solemn events Daniel is encouraged to wait and rest in peace of soul for, he is assured, he will stand in his appointed place in the coming kingdom at the end of the days.